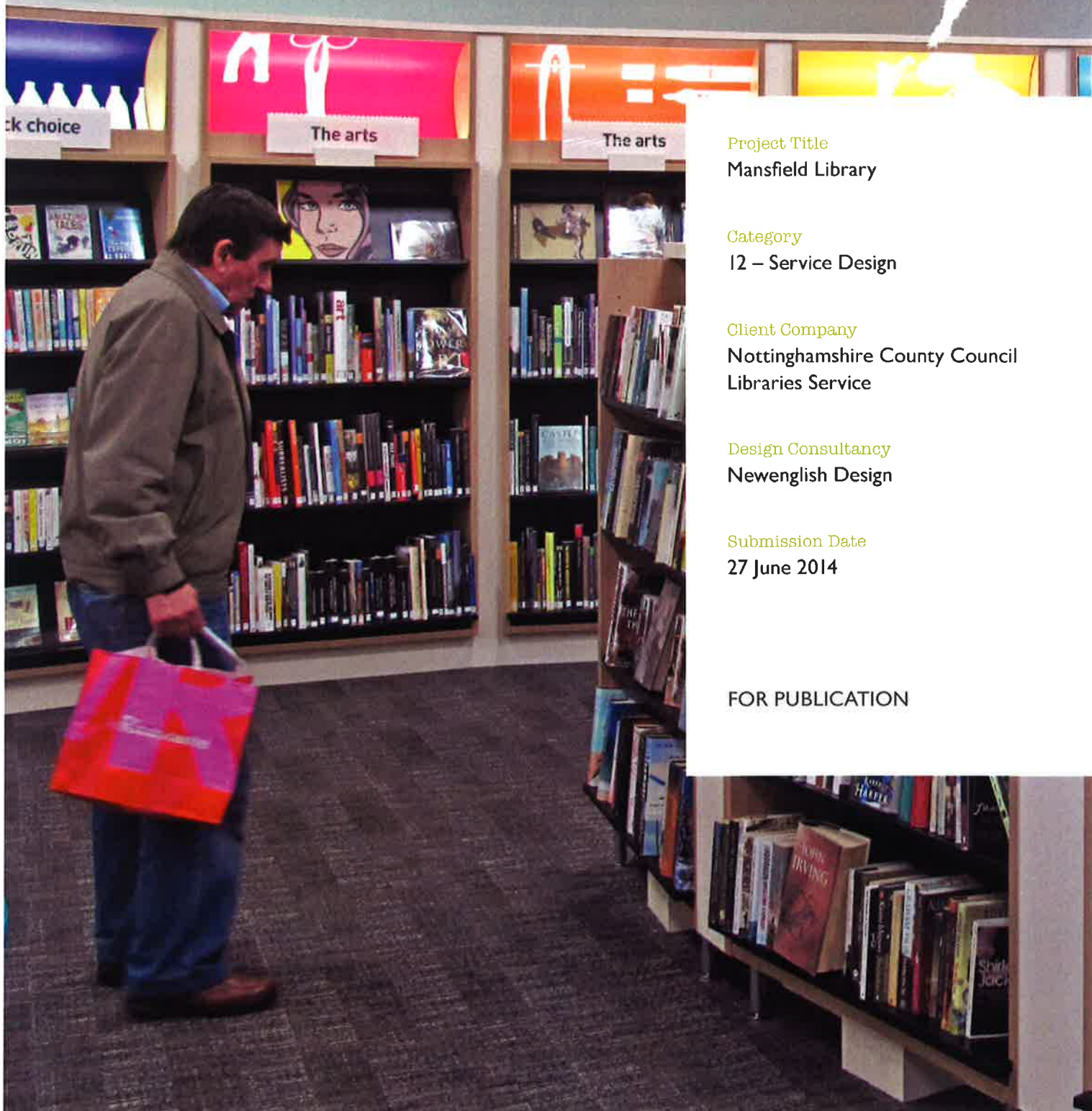


7.2.3



Project Title
Mansfield Library

Category
12 – Service Design

Client Company
Nottinghamshire County Council
Libraries Service

Design Consultancy
Newenglish Design

Submission Date
27 June 2014

FOR PUBLICATION

Executive summary

Mansfield Central Library was a tired and dull example of a public service that was failing to address the needs the local community. The elevated location above a shopping centre was effectively hiding the library from public awareness, and the dated and uninspiring interior made the learning environment unpleasant for both public and staff alike.

As part of a £3.2 million refurbishment, Newenglish were commissioned based on previous successes, to create an interior personality for Mansfield Library that was unique and uplifting, a place that the community would want to visit time and time again, that they could call their own, irrespective of age. The graphics were also required to help intuitively guide users around the building and allow them to find what they were looking with minimal staff intervention.

Using a simple and bright illustrative approach, Newenglish have transformed the feel and perception of the library to the users and its staff. The solution has seen a positive change in use of the services, particularly in comparison to nationally declining figures in library use¹.

At a time when library budgets were being hard hit, any investment needed to see positive results – and we have. Comparing figures from 2010 (pre-refurbishment) to 2012 (the first full year after refurbishment and our work was completed):

- Issues (items borrowed) were 164,406, rising by 118,317 to 282,723 – an increase of 72%.
- New Members more than doubled to 4820.
- Public computer/internet use increased by 29,234 user hours, an 88% increase. Growth has continued into 2013, with 75,934 hours logged in the year.

The impact on staff has also been hugely positive, with improved morale and engagement with their working environment and the public. Despite the increase in users, the library is able to work effectively with reduced staffing levels.

Word count: 297



1. SOURCE: CIPFA Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

Project overview

Outline of the project brief

Project Launch
January 2012

Design budget
Design fee £27,650
Production £16,879
Total £44,529

Newenglish had worked with Nottinghamshire County Council previously on a number of smaller local libraries with great success in terms of customer feedback and an increase in visits, issues and new members.

Our task was to make the interior feel unique and appealing to an age range from 0 (babies) - 90 years olds + and across a wide demographic.

Signage needed to promote independent navigation around the library, making it easy to find what you're looking for.

The library is located on the first floor above a 1960's shopping centre with the entrance lobby next to the shopping centres entrance/exit. The main library itself being virtually invisible from the public view at street level. It was therefore important that the entrance stood out.

Exterior of library from shopping centre



Window frost of objects



Ground floor showing Sanderson map



Top of stairs showing Sanderson map

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Project overview - continued

Arrow on ground floor by lift



**“It’s so much easier
to find things,
great signage –
thank you!”**

Customer, Mansfield Central

To create an interior personality for the library, with graphic interventions to walls, book cases, wayfinding signage throughout the library and meeting room areas on the 2nd floor: Increase street level awareness of the library.

Visually indicate that Mansfield Library is a modern relevant and inviting place for all.

Our task was to create an interior personality that was unique and felt special, a place that the community would want to visit time and time again, that they could call their own, whatever their age.

The client requested that a George Sanderson map from 1835 showing the local area was used somewhere in the library.

Key project objectives

- tackle negative perceptions of libraries as being old and stuffy
- engage with the people of Mansfield
- increase issues (borrowings)
- increase internet usage
- increase visitor numbers
- increase new members to the library - re-engage with reading and borrowing from the library
- serve as a unique local resource, a place for more than just books
- introduce a gallery to the library
- create a breakout area for customers to have a coffee
- become a place that’s fun
- create a place of discovery



First impression of Library on first floor

Project overview – continued

Second floor – meeting rooms, auditorium etc



Directional signage



Discovery Room - used by local colleges



Large scale signage

Project description

Mansfield Central Library was struggling, with a dated persona that was leading to lack of interest and engagement with the community. The library had suffered staff redundancies which had affected team morale. The public were regularly complaining about the state of the building.

Undoubtedly a time for change, and with the budget secured, the library service set out to make the following changes to Mansfield Library.

What we needed to integrate within the library

- County Contact Centre
- Gallery
- Large space for hire
- Meeting rooms for hire
- Auditorium (The Central)

The Gallery

The library needed to attract touring exhibitions and provide a professional space for local artists to hire - bringing high quality art to the community. A gallery space was included and needed defining visually.

The Central (on the second floor)

The second floor is dedicated to a cultural and community venue named 'The Central'. Complete with theatre, studio floor and a range of meeting rooms, The Central provides a creative space for cultural events and venue hire.

Newenglish collaborated with the architect, library managers, and the supplier of the bookcases. Our job was to weave a creative theme that fulfilled both the needs of the library users and supported the day to day practicalities of the library staff.



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Project overview - continued

Overview of market

At a time of budget cuts across the local authority and scrutiny of budget spending by the local community, it was important that the library was a place that was 'owned' by the community. Any large scale spend needed to be seen to be a good use of the council's strained financial resources.

The media story nationally around Libraries has been very negative on the whole, stories of library closures, poor staff morale, lack of investment and Libraries being seen as almost irrelevant in the age of the internet and eBooks.

Mansfield's population is around 100,000, of whom the vast majority live in Mansfield itself. Historically, the area has been influenced heavily by its industrial past with coal mining and textiles thriving, until their decline in the 1990's. The towns current population is predominantly working class, with an above average level of unemployment.

before



after



before



Coffee area



Computer area

after



Coffee area



Computer area

"The chandelier and cat on the table are my favourite! (mezzanine area)"

Child/Young person, Mansfield Library

Key issues and challenges

- to challenge perceptions of libraries
- re-engage with lapsed library users
- engage with a new audiences
- engage with young people

Word count: 557

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Outline of design solution

The thinking - how it was arrived at

A library is a place where anyone can find out about literally **ANYTHING**. This might be via a book, a video, a CD or via the internet, all of which can be found in the library.

In order to convey this idea we used random objects. Every object has a story behind it. The random objects encourage enquiry, whilst at the same time adding visual interest. Local objects were also integrated into the mix. We decided that illustration would be an effective design solution as it would allow great flexibility whilst enabling us to visually convey the concept. By using stock vector illustration we were able to achieve a great deal within a tight budget. This also allowed us to add in localised elements.

George Sanderson's map was integrated into the entrance area on the ground floor: The eye is drawn up revealing a continuation of the map on the stair wall that leads to the first floor and into the main library.

The ground floor entrance wall of windows that wrap around behind the staircase have objects applied in frosted film, this makes for a visually interesting external effect whilst screening the stairs and back of the welcome desk. In order to make the lift on the ground floor stand out more, the wall is painted in a vibrant rich colour; and a 4 metre high arrow made of random objects acts as an excellent wayfinding sign whilst making a strong visual statement at the same time.



Study desks and computers under the mezzanine

Outline of design solution - continued



On arriving at the first floor the first impression is one of colour and space. The curved bookcases have illuminated header graphic panels. These follow the theme of 'objects' also relating to the subject area of the book case, for example the gardening section features garden tools. The panels are colour coded by section, to differentiate them from each other, and help customers to navigate.

A long blank wall beneath the mezzanine, where the computers and desking is located, was transformed with an 18 metre long wall graphic. A colliery pit head tower from a local pit (Clipstone) is one of the objects shown.

Large scale graphics are used to identify toilets, and are carefully positioned to ensure visibility from across the library.



"You've done a great job with this place!!!
I will come every day now!!!!!!!"

Customer, Mansfield Central Library



Outline of design solution - continued

The Children's library

We felt it was important that the children had a part of the library that was a place for them, where they could have fun with their parents.

We created a children's character called Scribble. Scribble is seen doing lots of fun things, interacting with the illustrated objects – climbing trees, sliding down a slide, hanging from letters etc.



Scribble has become extremely popular with children and staff and is even now used in the story sessions that happen in the library.

What it set out to achieve

We set out to achieve a stimulating, vibrant, fun, interior that engaged with its audience, that the public loved. We wanted to change peoples perceptions of what a Library is.

Word count: 499



"Designs are all fantastic, especially love the children's library"

Customer, Mansfield Central Library

Yeah



I love scribble
(children's library mascot)

Child customer,
Mansfield Central Library

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Summary of results

Community engagement

The impact on the local community of the refurbishment and subsequently improved service shows in significantly increased visitor numbers, new membership and event attendance statistics.

The anecdotal customer feedback and official customer surveys are all extremely positive. The service was awarded Customer Service Excellence (the independently accredited Government Standard for UK Public Sector organisations) across the whole service since the refurbishment.

By the end of 2012, more than 341,000 visits had been made to the transformed library. Visitors come for a variety of reasons - from borrowing a book or using a PC, to taking a course or enjoying one of the library's fun packed events. Around 400 people enjoyed a special story time with the Gruffalo, and some 1,700 visits were made when the library hosted a farm yard family fun day – complete with live animals.

The following figures compare 2010 (last full year before refurb) and 2012 (the first full year operating after reopening):

% increase in library visitors (2010 vs. 2012)	+30%
% increase in new members (2010 vs. 2012)	+207%
% increase in event attendance (2010 vs. 2012)	+481%

Stock loans and IT use

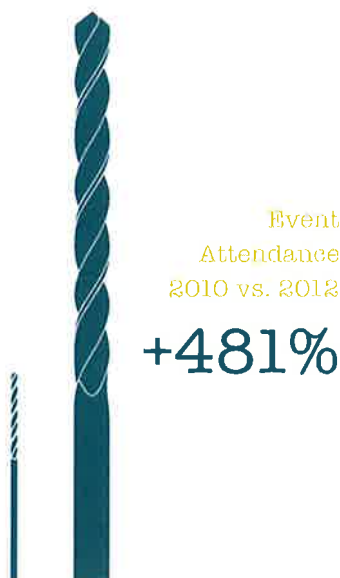
The positive impact on book issues and public computer use (including access to internet) can be attributed to both increased numbers of people visiting the libraries, as well as improved graphics and signage to engage visitors and allow them to locate what they are looking for:

% increase in book/stock issues (2010 vs. 2012)	+72%
% increase in computer/internet use in hours (2010 vs. 2012)	+88%

2013 figures

The figures for 2013 also saw an increase, not to the same exceptional level as when the library re-opened, immediately after we carried out the work, which is to be expected.

Increase in visitors (2012 vs. 2013)	+16,244
New Members 2013	4,372
Computer/internet use in hours (2012 vs. 2013)	+17,154



Summary of results - continued

Fear of
vandalism
to new
graphics

UNFOUNDED

Building design impact on staff

Before the refurbishment, library staff were constantly dealing with customer complaints and comments about the state of the building infrastructure (i.e. roof leaks, lack of fresh air; poor lighting) and on its appearance (i.e. dull interior; very 1970's style, dark and uninspiring).

Since the refurbishment these comments were almost completely eradicated, having a dramatic impact on staff morale overall. It is also apparent that staff have become more engaged with their work environment and alongside the community. They value it as their space and are very proud of it.

Staff also find the library a safer place to work due to the layout of the space and increase in how bright and welcoming the library is as a whole. Although there were staff fears that the graphics especially may be vandalised, this was completely unfounded and the library still looks almost new two and a half years on, showing that we produced a place people can be proud of and want to look after:

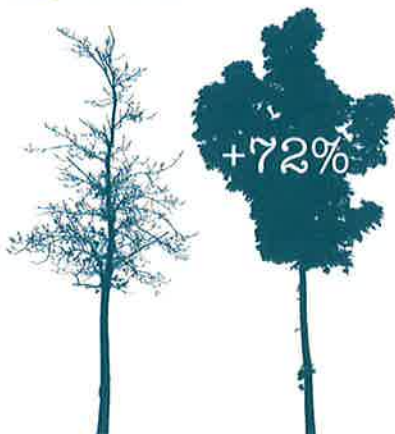
Public Computer
and Internet use
2010 vs. 2012



**“Wow! What a fantastic Library!
So light and airy and colourful.
Such an improvement on the dreary
old fashioned colours before!”**

Customer, Mansfield Central Library

Book/stock Issues increase
2010 vs. 2012



Staffing levels

Although visitor numbers and borrowing levels significantly increased, there was no additional resource for extra staffing. The design improvements addressed this issue by creating a 'self-service' approach to the layout, including intuitive guiding and bold signing to key areas, stock and services.

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Other influencing factors

The refurb as a whole.

The success of the refurbished library lends itself to a number of factors, the vast majority of the 3.4 million budget that was spent to get the substructure of the library in order; new roof, heating system, lighting etc, this was combined with re-decoration, new carpets and book cases. The effect of these aspects of the project have contributed to the overall experience and comfort of the library. However the structural, hard furnishing and shelving elements of the project although are extremely important are almost invisible and generally functional. It is the graphic elements that add the personality to the space and bring it to life, this was neatly summarised by a number of key library staff.



“The library was looking good, but when you came and installed the graphics the whole building came to life... we are all SO excited now, it feels like our library”

Aileen Prince, Nottinghamshire Library Service



When the newly refurbished library was completed, there were local flyers produced by the inhouse design team at Nottinghamshire County Council, and regional media were invited to the official opening. BBC East Midlands Today covered the story of the completion of the 3.2 million library.



Research references

Where the figures came from....

All the statistics relating to Mansfield library have been supplied by Nottinghamshire County Council. These have been gathered from data collected in the library. Through the electronic logging out of loans, these accurate figures can be obtained. Counters on the main entrances give a reliable visitor count. All other figures are understood to be reliable.

National statistics on library usage:

SOURCE: CIPFA Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy