

Weston Education Library at King's College London

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A visit to the Weston Education Library at King's College London was arranged through London Health Libraries on January 17th 2013.

Being based in a health education library myself, I was particularly interested in visiting the Weston Education Conference centre library at King's, partly to see if there were any procedures that King's used that could be transferred into the library where I work to make it run more effectively. One of six Libraries across the university, and on their Denmark Hill campus, the Weston Education Centre Library is a multipurpose library, supporting both the Schools of Medicine and Dentistry, and clinical work and research of staff at Kings College NHS Trust and South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.

The study desks being up against the walls made the library seem open plan and inviting, and having recently put all of it's paper-based journals into storage, there was plenty of shelf space for when books were return, or for when new books are purchased. The height of the windows combine with the new lighting also create a comfortable environment for students to research and study

The library has been recently refurbished, with any material published before 1992 being moved to the Institute of Psychiatry, one of it's partnering libraries. The library is open planned, and has facilities to account for people studying on their own, and separate study rooms for those studying in groups and who may wish to carry out group discussions.

Rather than using signage to indicate whether a part of the library is silent, quiet or talking permitted the library uses a colour coded carpeting scheme.



The library has two study rooms which are accessible to students all of the time, and can be accessed by students using their magnetic ID cards. These cards can also be used by students so rent out laptops, in a new scheme recently adopted by King's called "Lapsafe".

After showing us around the library at the Weston Education Centre, we were spoken too about the recent refurbishment process that the library had gone through, which overcame several problems which included : -

- Space – library was almost at maximum capacity
- Modernisation – furniture previously in the library was old and out of date
- Insufficient use of space – The change of the layout to the way the library is now means that library space is being used more efficiently and effectively.

During the refurbishment process, importance was drawn on how to communicate the justifying of the procedure to general library users, and inform them about what the alternative were. During the refurbishment period medical students were advised to use the medical library at St Thomas' in Waterloo as an alternative.

Attention was also given toward the importance of knowing who your target audience is when you are going through a refurbishment procedure, and that if there is something you are not sure about within the initial plans, or as the project develops it is important to speak.

Conclusion

Coming from a comparatively small library, that is not part of an educational institution, this visit enabled me to see how larger health libraries that are part of a university function, and that although they have similar problems to smaller libraries, they can go about resolving the problems in different ways, going “e-only” with journals being an example of this.

While I found the visit useful as a way of comparing how a university health library operates compared to how a medical school library similar to where I work operates