**DEMONSTRATING MARKETING EXCELLENCE**

**Further Education Libraries - Highly Commended**

Marketing Excellence Award entry by: Ms Jan Morgan, Library Services Manager

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Organisation Profile/ Overview:

Coleg Sir Gâr is an FE College based in South West Wales offering a comprehensive range of academic and vocational programmes that include 14-19, Further Education, Work Based Learning, Adult and Community Learning and Higher Education. Annually it enrols in excess of 12,000 learners. The College has five main Campuses located at Llanelli, Carmarthen (Pibwrlwyd and Jobs Well), Ammanford and Gelli Aur and primarily serves the unitary authority area of Carmarthenshire. The College has four libraries which cater for the needs of learners and lecturers across a wide range of curriculum areas, from Entry level to Higher Education.

Category Entered: Further Education Libraries

Project Title: QR = QR (Quick Response = Quick Research)

Context:

Imagine an essential Reading List of 20 titles – in 2013 this equated to 20 separate searches of the library catalogue to locate the individual items. Time consuming, tedious and open to error.

Now imagine – in 2015 - zapping a QR Code on a mobile device, up pops the required Reading List in the library catalogue – less time, effort and likelihood of error – instant access to resources.

All HE courses in CSG have a handbook containing a list of essential, recommended and background reading for every module. Searching for these resources requires typing individual resource titles into the library catalogue to check availability and location of item.

With this in mind we looked at what could be done to simplify and speed up this process - something which would be of benefit to both staff and learners. The project that developed involved using module codes on the library management system (LMS) to create individual Reading Lists accessible via the catalogue. Typing in the module code would bring up a list of all resources for that module. These titles could then be read on the click of a button if they were e-resources, reserved on-line to ensure availability or transferred from another campus in one easy search.

To make it even simpler and to help with the marketing of the project we decided that the creation of a QR Code to link to the individual modules on the catalogue would be even easier for users who are increasingly utilising mobile devices to carry out their research – one of the aims was to bring the Reading Lists out from the library into the classrooms, closer to the staff and learners and linking the physical content to the digital world.

The first step was to add Reading Lists linked to module codes to our LMS – this was done for all HE and a smattering of FE modules. Step two was the creation of QR Codes and finally step three (to aid those who preferred to use a browser to a QR Code) we created Tiny URLs.

In order to publicise this simplified system, posters were created for displaying in lecture rooms and digital copies showing the QR Codes, Tiny URL and Module Codes were sent to tutors to insert into their Course Handbooks.

The main challenges included:

• Obtaining the Reading Lists

• Time constraints – on both staff and implementation

• Staff training in the procedure for creating Reading Lists, Tiny URLs and QR Codes

Aims and Objectives:

The main aim of the project was to provide learners with easy access to their Reading Lists, using any cross-platform device. Our objectives were:

• develop a new marketing approach with little cost implication (apart from staff time and printing costs)

• commence project on 01.05.14

• achieve 60% project completion by 02.09.14 (beginning of term)

• increase number of book loans/reservations

• develop handouts with Module Code and relevant QR Codes and Tiny URLs for tutors to insert in to Course Handbook in order to publicise the system

• create poster with QR Codes and Tiny URLs for tutors to display in lecture rooms

• enable users to search the library catalogue by Course Module to eliminate search errors

• allow users to connect instantly to their Reading List on any mobile device, laptop or PC

• allow users to easily reserve items on their Reading List

• target new and existing learners in a novel and innovative way

• extend project across all curriculum areas

• maximise use of purchased material

• evaluate project success based on books loaned, feedback from learners and tutors by end of May 2015

Strategy and Planning:

The Library is constantly exploring novel marketing ideas to target new audiences as well as developing innovative ways to engage our existing users. We continually strive to increase awareness of our resources and improve our user’s information literacy skills – developing QR Codes for Reading Lists seemed a perfect way forward. Many of our HE learners carry a mobile device, be it phone or tablet and as their usage increases, this seemed to be a perfect way to provide quick and easy access to their Reading Lists.

This increase reinforced our decision to develop and roll-out the project and expand our marketing position; combined by the fact that QR Codes are a low-threshold application, no-cost, easy to implement and easy to use.

The library has been using QR Codes for some time on our website, marketing bookmarks and posters to provide access to our App, Facebook and Twitter accounts; however something on this scale and detail was a new venture for us.

No research was necessary; it was just a way of simplifying access to individual Reading Lists to benefit all users.

The cost implications of the project were minimal, apart from staff time and with budget cutbacks forecast for the sector this low cost project fitted perfectly within our strategic planning constraints.

Planning:

• deliver presentation to staff at HE conference

• obtain current HE Reading Lists from tutors

• check Reading Lists on LMS for books in stock and purchase new books and/or e-books (if available), plus any new editions for essential Reading Lists and possibly some recommended books where budget and subject coverage dictated

• create a procedure for entering “Reading Lists” in to Heritage

• create a procedure for generating “QR Codes”

• follow both above procedures for each course module

• create “Template Poster”

• send completed posters for display and electronic document for insertion in Course Handbook to tutors

• bound document of all posters to be retained at all campus Library counters for use with learners when required

• deliver a presentation to the HE development group to increase awareness of the project

Tactics and Implementation:

The presentation at the HE conference proved really successful and the majority of staff were forthcoming with their Reading Lists having seen the advantages the project provided.

The project started in earnest at the beginning of May 2014. Library staff on every campus were involved with checking all the available Reading Lists and recording details and prices of stock to be purchased; this process continued in to the summer holidays. From May onwards all essential new books and e-books were given priority and purchased from both the 2014 and 2015 Library budget allocations.

In June 2014 the two procedures were written, tested and implementation commenced; this process was ongoing throughout the summer and our objective of achieving 60% completion was achieved by the start of term (02.09.14).

A demonstration was given to new learners attending library inductions on how to retrieve their Reading Lists using QR Codes and for those that didn’t have a mobile device they were instructed on how to use the Tiny URL link or insert the module code into the library catalogue. We also took the opportunity to promote this project during library delivered skills sessions to new and returning learners.

Our social media Facebook and Twitter pages are being used to promote this service to staff and learners.

The promotion of specific modules is timed to coincide with tutors introducing the modules in their lectures.

The on-going promotion of the project is now part of the daily routine for staff when they assist learners’ within the library especially when it transpires that learners are looking for specific books from Reading Lists.

In order to keep costs to a minimum all posters were printed in-house using the Reprographics department. No other costs were incurred.

Results/Measurements/Outcomes

As not all modules were set up at the beginning of the academic year it is difficult to provide evidence of the success of the marketing of this project to date. All HE modules have now been allocated module codes on the LMS, URLs and QR Codes will be fully promoted from September 2015. The true success of this project will not be evident until May 2016 however we do currently have 281 Reading Lists available to view from the catalogue.

In an attempt to capture data the library will insert a question into the next learner survey asking whether learners know of the QR Codes linked to Reading Lists and whether they are using them. This should give us some indication of its value.

We are hoping to see an increase in book reservations using our online catalogue due to the success of the QR Codes/URLs/module codes at the end of the project.

It has been accepted positively by college staff especially as it allows easy access to their Reading Lists. On a couple of occasions the libraries have been contacted by enthusiastic teaching staff, who wanted to tell us that learners had used the QR Code poster in their lecture room. This is a really positive outcome as if staff are enthusiastic and engaging this is then shared with their learners.

Quotes:

"Putting the module code in the library catalogue is a really handy way to find things - better than going book by book which we had to last year"

Amber Richards, Foundation Degree in Social Care Studies Yr2

"This project has been an absolute game changer for HE students in Coleg Sir Gâr making it easier to access the necessary resources available to them in the library."

Mike Williams, Assistant Principal Planning, Information and Finance

"This is an innovative project developed by the library team providing Higher Education learners with an efficient means of sourcing reading and other research materials directly linked to the essential reading lists associated with their programme and module(s) of study. The annual review of student handbooks ensures that students are directed to the most up to date reading and research materials. An excellent initiative to support learning in higher education. Well Done!"

Sian Treharne, Quality Manager

"These QR codes are a really positive step forward in encouraging our students to search the college's electronic catalogue for credible sources of information to support their research informed literature studies. It also makes them aware of the number of e-books now available within the college. Students have shown good levels of enthusiasm towards them as they are making use of the latest technology and they have another use for their smart phones. One student suggested the codes could be placed in the assignment briefs next to the research tasks."

Robert Davies, Programme Director for HE Electrical and Electronic Engineering

“When I first heard about this project I thought what a wonderful idea and asked Judith to set it up for the “Beth Nesaf” extended Reading List for my A level learners. Feedback from the learners has been positive and anything that makes life easier for them has to be commended! It also means that when I update the Reading List I can forward the changes to the library and they can immediately update their records. "

Charles Freitas-Smith, A-Levels and Access Lecturer

“This project has given us the opportunity to use existing everyday technology to link the library to the curriculum. The simple process of searching by Module Code or zapping the QR Code appeals to leaners and feedback has been very encouraging. Tutors also appreciate the fact that they can easily update their Course Handbooks by downloading an up to date Reading List. Streamlining access to our resources enhances the learner experience and helps to promote the library in a very positive way.”

Jean Sullivan, Pibwrlwyd Campus Librarian

Library staff “buy in” to the benefits of the project and active promotion has all been key to successful promotion, with the realisation that it ensures our viability in challenging times.

The project is sustainable on two levels: now that the reading lists are set up, their content can be edited at any time as reading lists are updated without changing the QR Code or URLs that have been publicised and can also be extended to all college courses that have Reading Lists.

Creating the procedure documents allows us to tweak or amend the process should software changes be implemented in future. The library teams have been working on these Reading Lists throughout the year so take up from learners has been steady to date. All HE module Reading Lists have now been processed on the catalogue, Tiny URLs and QR Codes created to simplify access. This will enable all four libraries to promote these at the start of the new academic year when the new HE learners attend their library inductions.

We have already expanded this project to a collection of books which we have purchased specifically to support learners on the ACE programme (Academic, Cultural and Educational) as requested by an A level tutor. There is scope to offer this to other collections of resources to support specific tutorial requests on subjects such as Global Citizenship, Healthy Colleges and Study Skills Collection or the digital literacy components of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

The Library has created and become associated with using an innovative approach to sourcing library information in the minds of learners and teaching staff. This project has successfully engaged learners and provided a positive experience for all, allowing learners easy access to their resources to help them with their studies.

Date of Project: 01.05.14 – Initial project completed December 2014, however the process will be on-going as and when new modules are introduced, Reading Lists updated or new requests received.

Summary:

QR = QR (Quick Response = Quick Research)

Imagine an essential Reading List of 20 titles – in 2013 this equated to 20 separate searches of the library catalogue to locate the individual items. Time consuming, tedious and open to error.

Now imagine – in 2015 - zapping a QR Code on a mobile device, up pops the required Reading List in the library catalogue – less time, effort and likelihood of error – instant access to resources.

A project aimed at bringing the Reading Lists out from the library into the classrooms, closer to the staff and learners and linking the physical content to the digital world.

This has successfully engaged learners and provided a positive experience for all, allowing learners easy access to their resources to help them with their studies.