Making yourself almost indispensable:
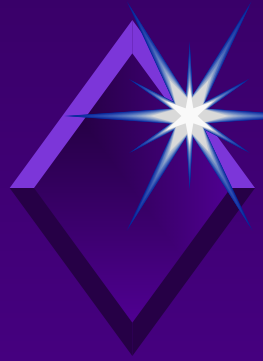## Science and Technology Community Librarianship in Academic Institutions

Steve Lee

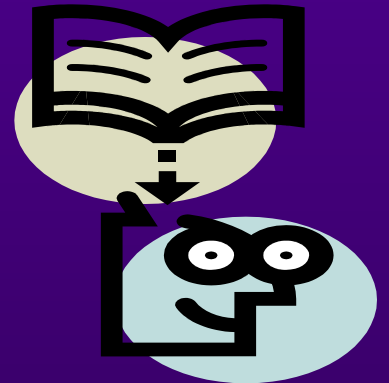*University of Glamorgan*
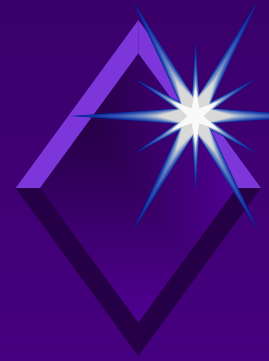
USTLG Newcastle 2012

If we want to be indispensable

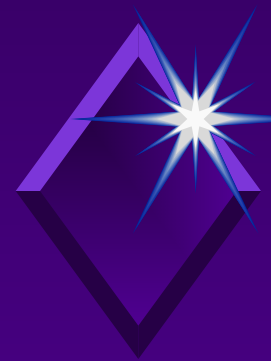- We have to be valued by our users/customers/partners.

How do you make yourself valuable?

- Get Out
- Find Out
- Plan Out
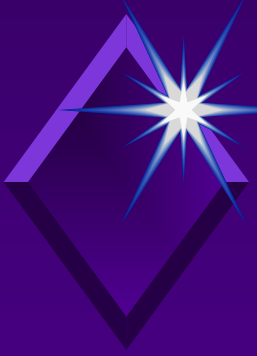- Action Out
- Check Out
- Stay Out

Firstly what is our Job as science and technology librarians?

- I believe it is to make the lives of our users/ customers/ partners easier.
- All of our other talents and skills are there to support this.

Why should we make life easier for our customers/users/partners?

- Because if they value us and the services we supply they will fight to keep us if we are under threat. (Note the staff boycotts in London when specialist library staff were dismissed recently).

- If we make their lives harder then why should they value what we do? They will think things will probably be better without us!
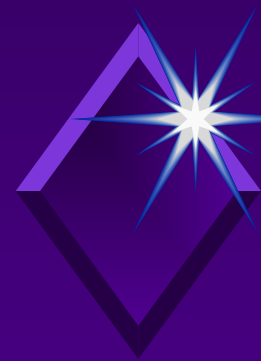
So if we are going to try and make life easier for them – how?

- Get Out of the Library!

- Most of your users/customers/partners are not there most of the time

So if we are going to try and make life easier for them how? 2

- Go out and visit all of your academic staff individually in their rooms and departments.

- (This is important you are on their turf not yours).

- Ask them what their problems are with the Library and its sources and services and how you might be able to help.

- With them work out an action plan to try and resolve their problems.

Find Out! (Some lists)

- Problems for me are often around managing my time in relation to students, teaching, research and admin. Usually admin and students impinge upon research time and getting a good block of time to get research off the ground is quite difficult.

- Managing the timetable to block or organise time.

- Dealing with email and telephone enquiries from students and potential students and previous students.

- Accessing journals on line can be problematic - often the papers needed are not subscribed to.

Continued:

HELP!

- Sometimes searches on LRC eDatabases do not throw up papers you know should be there and sometimes you can get them more easily on Google!

- Marking large numbers of scripts and getting them turned around in a relatively short period of time.

- Filing papers and organising lectures and information, booking rooms etc. - this kind of general admin often suffers due to time constraints.

- Keeping up to date and developing new courses

- Developing new research links and ideas.

Another List:

HELP!

- 1. Excess of long meetings - both internal and external community consultations.

- 2. Yearly update of modules with current literature.

- 3. Only being allowed 15 books out at a time from the library.

- 4. Dealing with student problems and complaints.

- 5. Meeting deadlines for administration support for degrees.

Continued:

- 6.   Finding time to research and write several academic papers each year.
- 7.   Finding time to obtain external funding for research.
- 8.   Time it takes to organise marketing of the degrees to all target groups.
- 9.   External examining work for other universities.
- 10. Responding to emails - on average 70-80 per day.

Final List

- I have only 3 problems.
- And they are probably all joint first priority:_
- Too much time answering general emails.
- Too much time spent repeating instructions/explanations to students --- who generally didn't turn up or listen the first time!
- Dealing with too may issues ---so only spending little bits of time with/on each---so never making much progress on any!

What am I saying with these lists? The Golden Rules

- Our customers needs are different to ours. Library matters are not a priority.

- Our job is to help solve their problems.

- We should try to make their life easier (they have got a lot to do), not harder by our systems and bureaucracies.

- Before we do anything at all we should ask will this make our users/customers/partners lives easier or harder?

Can we trust them?

- In most cases if you trust people they will live up to the trust.
- There are always exceptions.
- We should try trust with Staff, Students and Researchers before we put into effect draconian regulations for the worst case scenario.
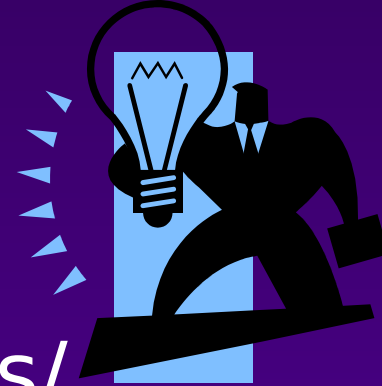
Get Out and Find Out 2

- Repeat the same exercise with your researchers. Visit them where they are.

- Find out about their research interests and what their problems are. (Do this with your Academic Staff as well).

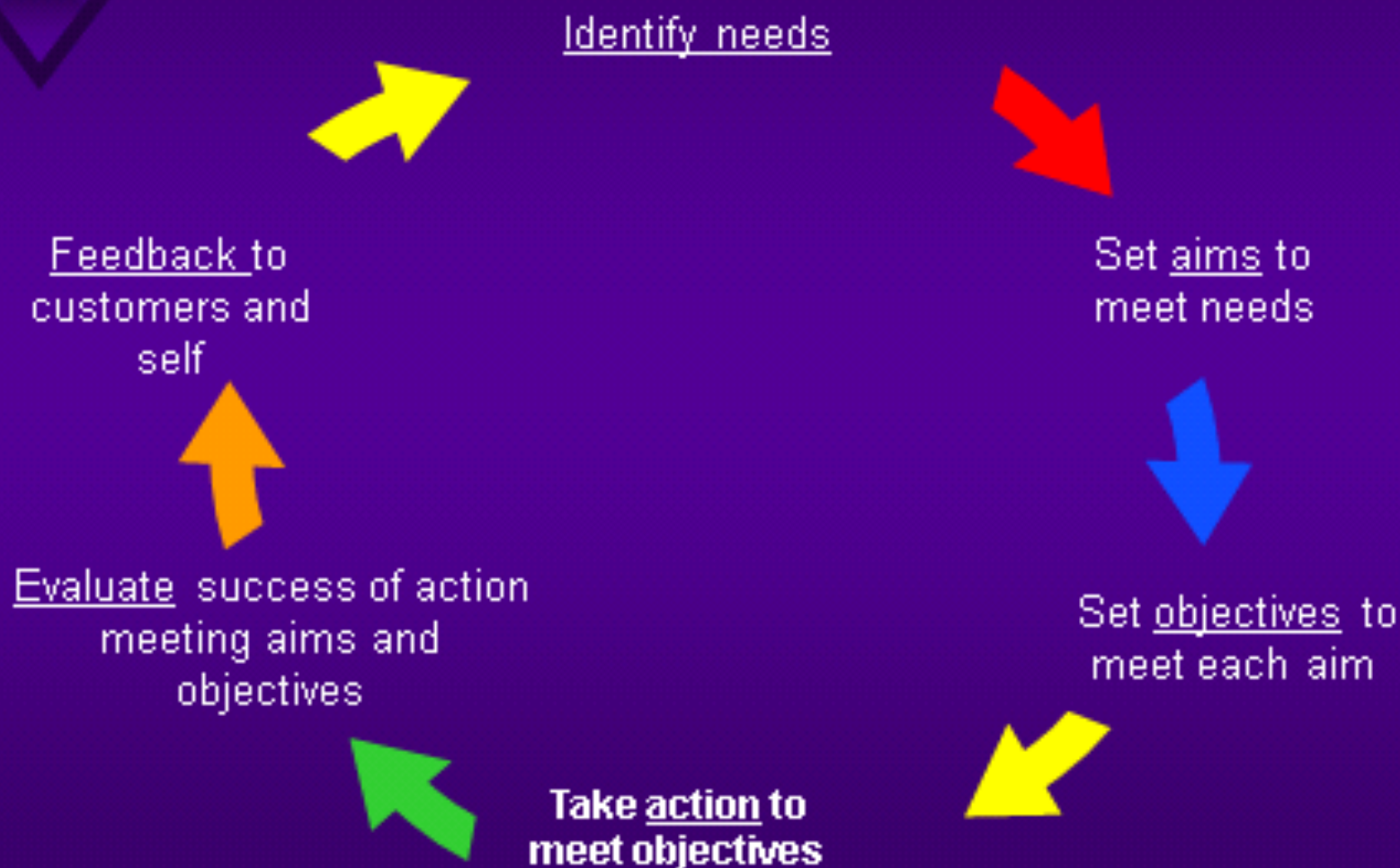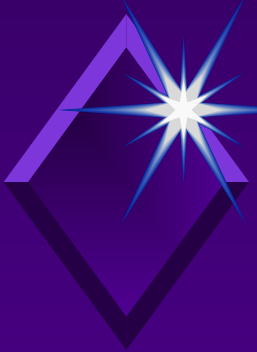- Write what you find out you can refer to it later.

Plan Out!

- Now you know what your users/ customers/partners needs and interests are you can set about planning individual strategies to try to meet these needs.

- Following the Action Plan on the next slide you CAN change things and become a very valued member of your customers/ users / partners support team.

Creating an Individual Library Service Action Cycle

Identify needs

Set aims to meet needs

Set objectives to meet each aim

Take action to meet objectives

Evaluate success of action meeting aims and objectives

Feedback to customers and self
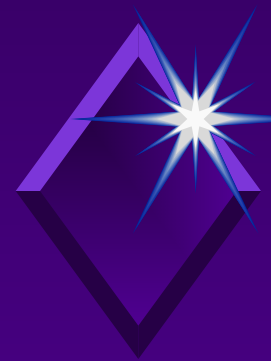
But it's as lot of work haven't got the time

- It seems like a lot of work at first but you can automate many processes these days. In the end you save time.

- You can email targeted new book and Journal information regularly.

- You can set about solving individual problems. e.g. Not enough book loans.
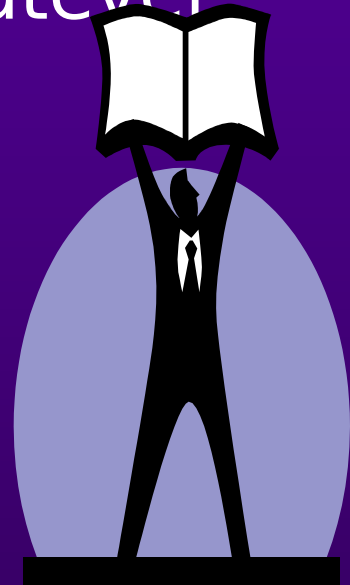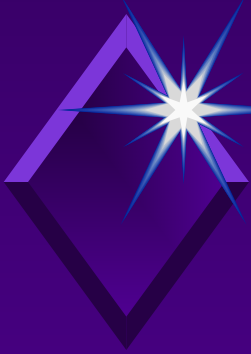
Most importantly

You will show them you are on their side.

So what have I found out that our academic customers want?

- For the books, Journals and other items that are required to support their teaching to be in the Library in sufficient quantities when they are needed.

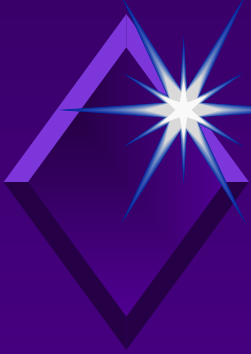- When this does not happen, for whatever reason, fast help to resolve the problem/s caused by this.

What do our academic customers want? Continued

- For the Library to provide them and their students with education on how to undertake effective literature searching and to use effectively the different electronic and other resources available.

- For Library staff to order requested items to support their research needs.

- For the library to put in place effective inter-library-loan facilities of differing speeds and costs. (Fast Digital on-line SED or Ordinary ILL)
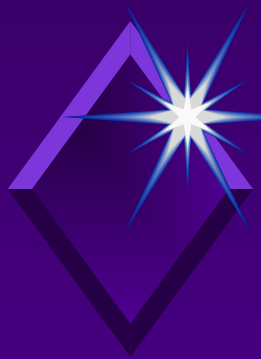
What do our academic customers want? Continued

- To be able to renew books, request books reservations and inter library loans on-line, via e-mail, by phone, by text and via mobile devices.

- For our resources to be available in formats which can be accessed on different mobile devices. e.g. eBooks.

- For Librarians to OWN their problem and see it through to completion, not just refer it on to someone else and forget about it.

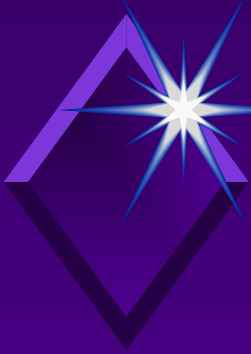# *Some things our academic customers DO NOT want*

- Continued aggravation from students because they cannot get what they need from the Library.

- Library staff blaming them when things are not in the library rather than setting about solving the problem.

- Library staff creating barriers and bureaucracies which make their lives and their students lives harder for no apparent good reason.
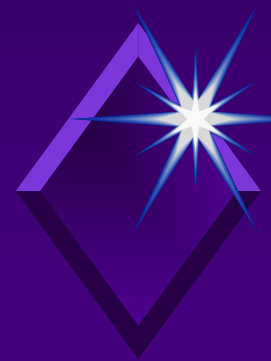
What have I found out that our researchers and student customers want?

- Help NOW or as soon as possible NOT next week.

- For the books and Journals and other items that are required to support their Learning to be in the Library in sufficient quantities when they are needed.

- When this does not happen, for whatever reason, fast help to resolve the proble

What have I found out that our researchers and student customers want? Cont.

- To be able to renew books, request books reservations and inter library loans on-line, via e-mail, by phone, by text and via mobile devices.

- For our resources to be available in formats which can be accessed on different mobile devices. e.g. eBooks.

- For Librarians to OWN their problem and see it through to completion, not just refer it on to someone else and forget about it.

- Education about finding and evaluating information and help on how to use the Library's electronic and other resources and self service facilities, both on and off campus.

What our Students DO NOT want!
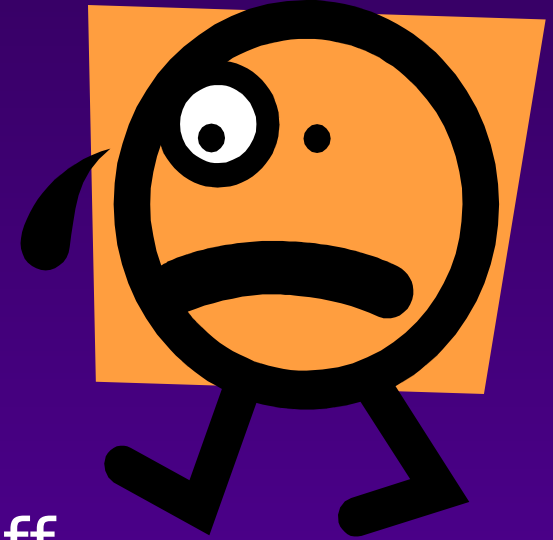
- Excuses.
- Us blaming the Academic Staff.
- To be referred to someone else and then be forgotten about
- To be given an appointment next week to deal with a problem they have now.
- THEY WANT SOMENE TO HELP THEM NOW. If this is not possible they want people to own their problem and see it through so they get help at the first possible opportunity.

To Recap.
How would we solve the problems?
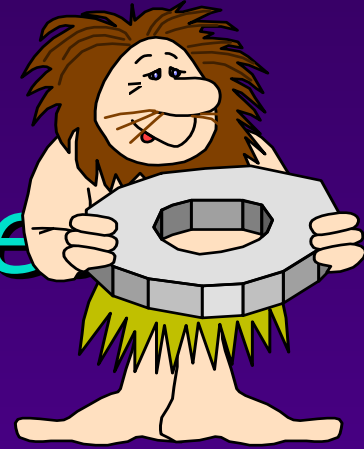
- Get Out - Of the Library

- Find Out - Ask the Staff Researchers and Students what they need from you and the Library and write these needs down.

- Plan Out - In the light of these needs set about identifying things you can do something about straight away. Make these into immediate aims.   Set obtainable objectives to meet these aims.

- Action Out -Take action to achieve your aims and objectives.

- Check Out - Evaluate how successful you have been

How do you do this? A staff example? Find Out!

- One example in one of the lists earlier was the staff member who needed to be able to borrow more books than we used to currently allow.

- So my aim was to address this need for more books.

- I set the following objectives to meet this aim.

Plan Out - Objective

- To ask if it is reasonable for staff to expect to be able to borrow more?
- To do research on Lis-link and elsewhere to establish what numbers of items other Institutions loan to their staff.
- Present evidence to library colleagues and if justified propose an increase in loan items for staff.
- If agreed request that the matter is considered by the SMT and Library Committee.
- Get Number of loans increased for staff.

Action Out!
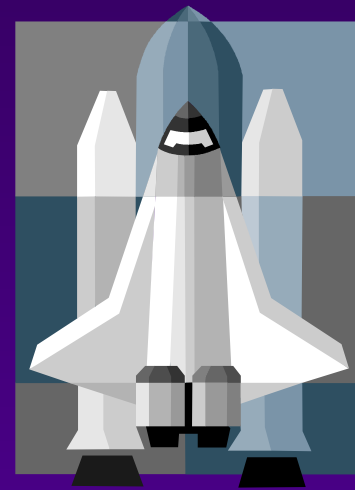
- Address each objective. As one objective is achieved move on to the next so you have measurable progress towards your aim.

- At any stage your action might fail. For instance you might find that staff members at your institution already get way over the average number of items that most other institutions
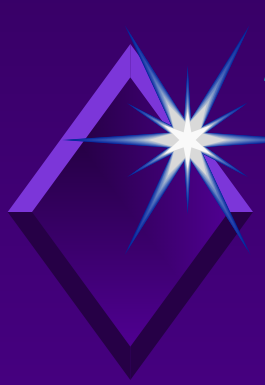
Check out!
Evaluate and Feedback

- If they are already getting above the average-feed this back to the Academic.
- Explain that because of this you might not succeed in getting the policy change needed but you will try.
- Continue with the action towards your aim until you either succeed or fail.
- When you do either make sure you feedback what happened and why it happened.
- We did this at Glamorgan and as a result increased staff and researcher loans to up to 22 items.
- Tackle each specified Need in the same

Stay Out !
Periodically revisit academic staff and researchers' and reassess their Needs.

- Then go round again Get Out - Find Out – Plan Out – Action Out – Check Out – Stay Out

- Set new aims and objectives to meet their new needs. Take Action, Evaluate success and failure. Feedback and so on.
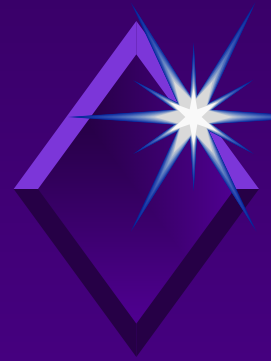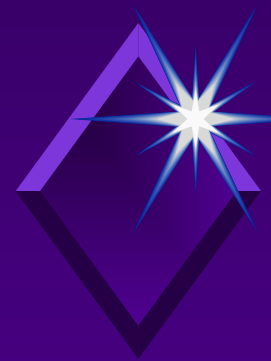
If you do this

- Your staff and researchers will know you.
- They will know you are there to help.
- They will work with you.
- They will know that you are interested in their problems and getting them resolved as soon as you can.
- Where you cannot do what they need they will know you have tried your best and why you cannot help.

How do you do this student example? Get Out!

- When we moved the Faculty of Health Sport and Science to the Glyntaff campus in 2009 Chiropractic students, who are part of the faculty, were left in a kind of no mans land.
- As their Librarian I was based at the Glyntaff campus library (although still timetabled on the help/ISD desk at Treforest at various times).
- The Chiropractic books remained at the Treforest Campus and their teaching took place in the Chiropractic Buildings half way between the two campuses.

A student example? Cont Find Out!

- It soon became obvious that students were no longer approaching the Information Librarians with their Chiropractic queries in the numbers they were prior to the move.

- Chiropractic Studies are one of the most intense and concentrated of all subject areas within the HESAS faculty with students needing access to a very wide number of

How do you do this? A student example? Plan Out!

- I spoke to Chiropractic Staff, Students, and the HOD and it there was general agreement that the Chiropractic students still needed the Librarians help.

- So we agreed an Aim of providing Librarian Surgeries in the Chiropractic Clinic Buildings so the students felt supported and knew they always had direct access to their Information Librarian.
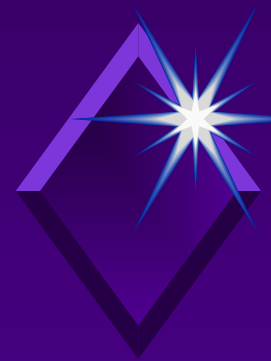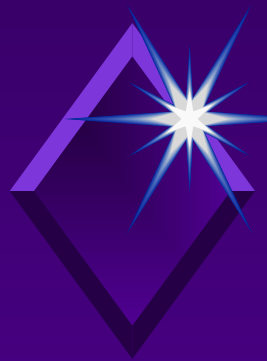
# *How do you do this? A student example. Plan Out cont*

- We set objectives to meet this aim.
- Identify the best Times.
- Identify the best Places.
- Identify which Years of students when.
- Seek permission from my boss, the Faculty, and the SMT.
- Ask the Graphic Artist, (Cath Wright-Jones), for help with Publicity Posters and PowerPoint Slides for Plasma Screens

How do you do this?
A student example?
Action Out!
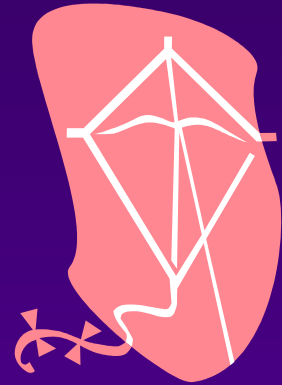
- Get publicity out onto all campus plasma screens and posters.
- Mark places where you will be available, on what days, and at what times.
- Do the surgery sessions as agreed.

Chiropractic Clinicians Work Room
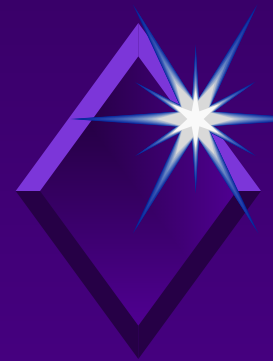
My two chiropractic surgery places

Check Out

- The surgeries were very successful from the start.

- I became part of the student hub bub in clinicians room very quickly.

- Lots of queries and needs identified.

- Need for access to SED identified so students can research their patients needs between weekly

Stay Out!

- It soon became clear that these surgeries could work elsewhere in other places for other subjects.
- Went around the cycle again to identify student needs.
- Set aims and Objectives.
- Took Action.

Are you a Police Sciences Student?

Your Librarian will be here to help you and to answer your queries at the following times:

**Every Thursday
3pm – 4pm on the Balcony
Elaine Morgan Building**

Help with Library Queries

Learning Resources

Learning and Corporate Support Services

Are you a Science or Sport Student?

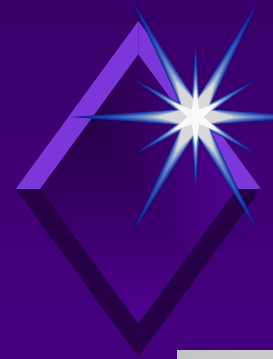**Your Librarian** will be here to help you and to answer your queries at the following times:

Help with Library Queries

**Every Thursday
1:00pm – 2:00pm
in the link section
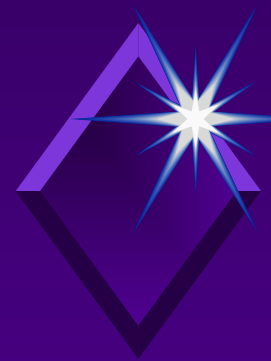Alfred Russel Wallace Building**

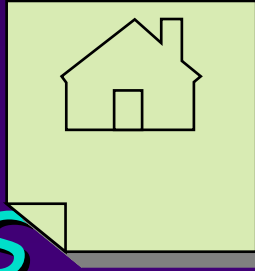Learning Resources

Learning and Corporate Support Services

UNIVERSITY OF GLAMORGAN · PRIFYSGOL MORGANNWG
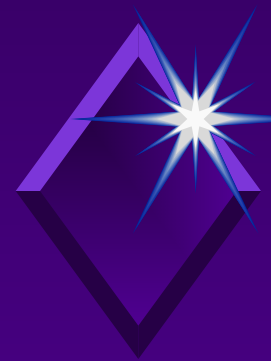
My Two Other Surgery Places

Taking the Library to your people – Surgeries the benefits

- You can get to know your students and their surroundings better.

- On average you answer at least one or two good queries or provide some training during each half hour surgery session.

- Staff and Researchers also drop in and chat tell you their problems and what is going on in the faculty.(This has been one of the best things). I see hourly paid staff I would not have seen before.
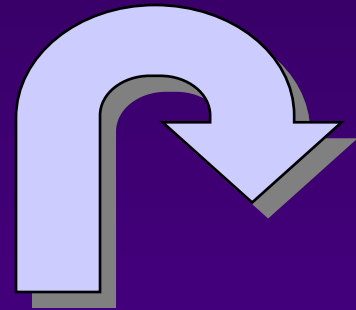
Taking the Library to your people – Surgeries the benefits cont.

- It is often easier to understand and address student, staff and researcher problems in situ.

- You can then respond straight away to the needs you find.

- Student use of SED is a good example this was achieved for 4th year Chiropractic Students.

- From this need SED now available to

Bad bits

- Sometimes you do not get any queries at all, especially around exam time.

- Sometimes you have other pressures that feel they should be a higher priority than the surgeries.

- Sometimes students email you and ask you to keep time for them in a surgery but then do not turn up.

- So what? I am now able to work anywhere using Wi-Fi and a Laptop or ipad so can do most of my other work if I get no queries.
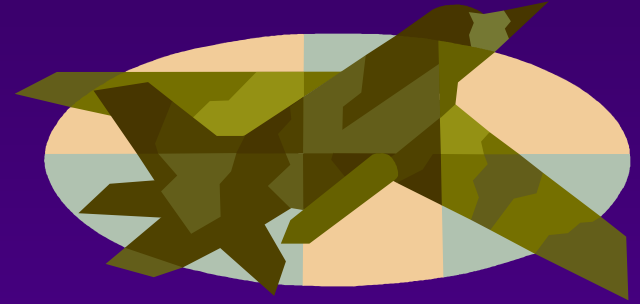
Stay Out!

- If you start cutting back on your surgery times if no one comes you get into a self fulfilling cycle.

- Students come - your not there – students don't come.

- You need to be proactive in the beginning you have to talk to the students and staff. Roving skills are a help. Good Roving courses available
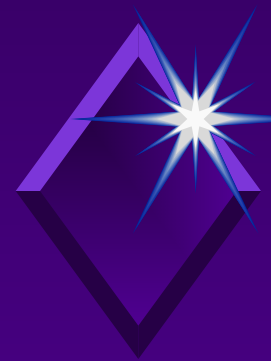
To Sum Up

- Get Out – Find Out – Plan Out –
- Action Out – Check Out – Stay Out

JUST DO IT

If you provide a valued service your customers will not want to lose you.

- The way to keep and develop the Science and Technology Librarian role long term is to make yourself so proactive in solving your customers problems that they cannot afford to lose you. If they do they will know that they will have to do all the things you do for them, themselves.

For Managers

- If your Staff employ this model you must be prepared to change things in the light of what customer needs they discover.

- To raise people hopes and expectations that their needs will be met and then do nothing to meet them devalues us and our job role more than anything else.

Any Questions?

Thanks for Listening

Make yourselves indispensable!!!

Good Luck

- Steve Lee   2012
- Contact Details
- E-mail srlee@glam.ac.uk
- Phone 01443 483391