UCL Library Services: Developing the 21st-century Research Library

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Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv9sX_iFlAM&t=3m35s

Mission

University College London [UCL] is a research-intensive university, one of the great universities in the world. It was ranked 7th in the QS World University Rankings in 2017.[1] The Mission of UCL Library Services encompassed in the Library Strategy[2] is to:

- provide an information infrastructure to enable UCL's research and education to be world-class;
- offer an outstanding student experience in partnership with UCL's academic and Professional Services departments;
- enable effective learning and discovery, by designing and managing world-class and sustainable spaces in partnership with the UCL community;
- develop library and information professionals who are innovative and can offer leadership to UCL and to the national / international library community;
- work in partnership with the UK National Health Service [NHS], providing support for research, clinical practice and patient care;
- support UCL's global outreach, contributing leadership in engaging with new audiences and partnerships in London and beyond.

This is supported by a Vision for what the Library wishes to achieve:

- In 2015-2018 UCL Library Services will deliver a transformative user experience that is founded on service excellence, spaces that are innovative and world-leading in range and number, a first-rate digital library and efficient underlying processes that put the user first.

- We will measure and communicate our value to UCL and our key partners and raise UCL's global profile through our outreach activities and our support for Open Scholarship.

- Delivery of the Strategy will be characterised by engagement with UCL staff, students, users and external partners and underpinned by investment in the development of Library Services staff, to continue to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to realise our vision. The 2015-2018 Strategy builds on our successful partnerships with the NHS and further strengthens partnerships with UCL Professional Services.

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1. QS World University Rankings: https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2016; last accessed 18 July 2017.

2. UCL Library Services: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/about/strategy; last accessed 25 February 2017.

- The 2015-2018 UCL Library Services Strategy will empower UCL in its mission[3] to engage with and change the world.

The Library Strategy, which will deliver the Library's Mission and Vision, has six key performance areas [KPAs], which have been identified as priorities for development:

- user experience

- staff, equality and diversity

- finance, management information and value for money

- systems and processes

- sustainable estate

- communication, Open Access [OA] and outreach

The implementation of the Library Strategy is overseen by the Leadership Team. Each KPA is led by a Working Group, which reports to the Leadership Team a minimum of three times a year. The Pro-Vice-Provost uses this analysis to report on Strategy implementation to the UCL Library Committee three times a year. The Leadership Team has produced an overview of the aims of the Strategy,[4] which places the Library at the heart of academic endeavour at UCL.

The success of the Leadership Team in delivering the Library's mission was recently recognised by gaining the Highly Commended Award in the Times Higher Education Leadership & Management Awards (2016).

Target Users

The role of UCL Library Services is to meet the information needs of its staff, students and partners, such as the NHS, and external researchers / visitors. Student evaluation of the services and facilities which the Library has to offer is regularly monitored by a number of national / international surveys. The key survey for undergraduates is the National Student Survey [NSS]. This is currently recording a satisfaction rating of 88% against the question 'Are the Library services and facilities good enough for your needs?' Another set of survey statistics are those of the Student Barometer / International Student Barometer [SB / ISB]. The Library received good results in the Autumn 2015 SB / ISB survey. The SB survey ran between May and June 2015 and achieved a 16% response rate, with 6510 students responding.

The Library scores sit in the Learning satisfaction section:

Autumn 2015	% UCL satisfaction
Online library	94%
Physical library	86%

Table 1. % satisfaction with UCL services in the Autumn 2015 SB / ISB survey.

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3. UCL: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/2034/; last accessed 18 July 2017.

4. UCL Library Services: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/about/strategy/library-strategy-download.pdf; last accessed 25 February 2017.

Usage of the physical library remains steady, supplementing the outstanding nature of UCL's digital library. Provision of cutting-edge library and learning spaces remains a challenge. UCL currently has 10.4 students for each learning space against a Russell Group average of 9.6 students. The Russell Group comprises research-intensive universities in the UK.[5] The UCL numbers here include all Library-managed learning spaces, department-managed spaces which can be used by others and UCL's use of the adjacent Senate House Library. It excludes UCL-provided Information Services Division [ISD] spaces (which are primarily teaching spaces) and department-only spaces.

This ratio is projected to decline in the next two years as student numbers increase in excess of learning spaces, before improving to approximately 8.9:1 in 2018-2019 as a planned new Student Centre with 1000 learning spaces is completed (see fig. 1). The main issue therefore is how to provide more learning spaces and improved use of them for students prior to the Student Centre opening. Longer term, with student numbers expected to continue increasing, learning space provision should be kept under review to ensure an excellent student experience.
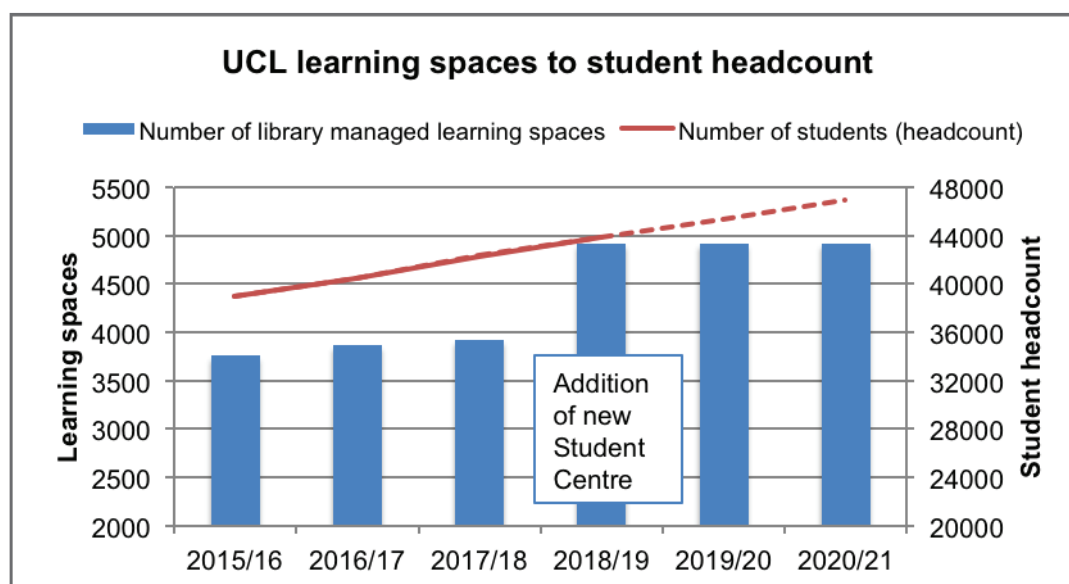

Fig. 1. Projected UCL student numbers to 2020-2021.

Students per learning space	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Russell Group average
Headcount	10.4	10.5	10.8	8.9	9.2	9.5	9.6
FTE	8.6	8.7	9.0	7.4	7.7	7.9	8.0

Table 2. Ratio of UCL students by headcount / full-time equivalent per learning space.

Table 2 shows how the UCL ratio (headcount) of students to available learning spaces will improve by 2020-2021. This will be achieved by the construction of the Student Centre, which will provide 1000 new digitally enabled learning spaces (no paper provision) by 2018-2019.

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5. The Russell Group: http://russellgroup.ac.uk/; last accessed 25 February 2017.

Factual Library Data

UCL Library Services comprise 18 library sites[6] in the UCL family of libraries and one library partnership. UCL is the third oldest university in England after Oxford and Cambridge. The university was founded as the original University of London in 1826, and the library service was begun in 1829. To measure the importance and success of its services, UCL has created a Value for Money dashboard. This is linked to the Key Performance Area in the Library Strategy 'Finance, Management Information and Value for Money' (see table 3 [the numbers in the headings below refer to this table]).

Surveys (1-2)

The NSS and SB / ISB results have been analysed above.

There is a clear correlation between the funds spent on e-resources and the online digital library satisfaction rate. This pays testament to the Library's financial strategy, which has concentrated on a high level of investment in e-resources to fulfil student needs.

Further evidence of the success of this investment can be seen in the positive contribution towards the large information expenditure per student (listed under SCONUL Strategic Data), which shows a high ratio and again has put UCL Library Services in the top five in the Russell Group. At UCL, this directly supports UCL 2034's ambition to embed research-based education across all faculties, schools and departments.

Two postgraduate surveys mirror the NSS results, with a very respectable 88%, and the new UCL arrivals data provides very healthy scores – 96% and 89% respectively. The arrivals survey (the library element) indicates the fact that several libraries are being used, and also, thanks to our skilled librarians, students are able to access information 'on arrival'.

SCONUL Strategic Data (3)

Five key statistics have been extracted from the data set to provide an overview of the Library's value to its users. Points to note are:

- The number of visitors in UCL's libraries has increased considerably over the past three years and demonstrates the Library's pulling power. Some of the increase in footfall is attributable to the high increase in student numbers, which includes the recent mergers of the School of Pharmacy and the Institute of Education. The Library is the 2nd most heavily used academic library in UK higher education, only marginally behind the University of Sheffield.

- In terms of finance, the Library receives 1.8% (budget from the centre) of the overall institutional £1 billion+ expenditure to accommodate all libraries, which is a decrease on 2013-2014; and efficiency savings have also had to be made.

- The person hours for information literacy training remain high.

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6. UCL Library Services: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/sites/libraries; last accessed 18 July 2017.

Library Finance (4)

These figures highlight the key areas of expenditure, which are paramount for supporting the Library Strategy.

The sector average for percentage of budget spent on staff is 50%-55%. The smaller levels of UCL staffing spend demonstrate how well the staff has coped with the increase in student numbers and footfall to maintain the 88% student satisfaction rates.

Within this period, there has been an emphasis on increasing e-resources, which accounts for approximately 33% of the total core library budget.

For staffing and e-resources, there is a healthy 81% expenditure (core) on these key components of the Library.

Following a recent Library restructure, staffing costs are expected to rise just above the 50% mark. This follows the Library's mission to embrace the new approaches of the 'modern' library where the student / institute is supported by a greater engagement by librarians. This should help towards increasing the satisfaction ratings for both the Library and UCL, as well as supporting the Library's ambition to attain Customer Services Accreditation.

Project funds, largely research funds, have been greater than £2 million in the past two years and greatly support the Library's core budget to enable additional expenditure, especially in the area of Open Access (see section 7).

Table 3. KPA FINANCE – DEMONSTRATING VALUE	2014 UCL Library Stats	2015 UCL Library Stats	2016 UCL Library Stats
Andy Pow (UCL LIBRARY SERVICES)	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**
1. SURVEYS			
National Students Survey [NSS]: 'The Library resources are good enough for my needs'	88%	88%	88%
Student Barometer [SB] Autumn wave: Online satisfaction rate	93%	94%	
2. UCL STUDENTS ARRIVAL DATA			
Use one or more of the libraries within UCL			96%
Access online library resources e.g. e-journals, e-books			89%
Postgraduate Research Experience Survey [PRES] : 'There is adequate provision of Library services'			88%
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey [PRES] : 'There is adequate provision of Library services'			88%
3. SCONUL STRATEGIC DATA			
Total Annual visits	1,953,153	2,302,680	3,004,058
UCL BLOCK Grant as a percentage of Total UCL Expenditure	1.94	1.80%	1.81%
Student numbers [FTE]	25,589	30,395	31,793
Expenditure on material resources per student	379	303	312
Number of person hrs. of information literacy training received by users	21,384	35,904	33,983
4. LIBRARY FINANCE			
% Core Expenditure on staff (CORE - The budget from the Centre)	48%	47%	48%
% Core Expenditure on material resources	32%	35%	33%
Project funds received (including Research)	£1.8m	£2.3m	£2.4m

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5. USER EXPERIENCE [Ux]			
Library RFID implementation c.£1m	4	9 (cum)	13 (cum)
Self Service Circulation stats. – Staff / Self-service 2015	31%/69%	16%/84%	11%/89%
Opening Hrs	<24/7	24/7 term time	24/7 All yr
Reading lists	20%	45%	55%
6. USAGE STATS			
E-Resources - downloads (cost per download on Big deals)	0.70	0.64	0.59
Full text article electronic requests	6.1m	7.3m	8.7m
E-book section requests	1.2m	2.9m	3.8m
UCL Discovery downloads	1.8m	2.1m	2.2m
7. OPEN ACCESS [OA]			
Spend on APCs	4,052,087	£4,090,097	£4,055,592
8. UCL PRESS			
Books published		17 books	22 books
9. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT [PE] / WP / Outreach			
Lectures / exhibitions / workshops 2014-2015 (incl. website 'hits' and views)	3.8m	7.7m	7.6m
10. SPACE MANAGEMENT			
Total number of Study Spaces	2,351	3,432	3,864
Student / Space ratio	10.88	8.86	8.23
11. DIVERSITY (ref NSS)			
Race [BME – Black and minority ethnic students]	85%	87%	89%
Disability	90%	85%	89%

User Experience (5)

Based on the key indicators, this is very much a success story and welcomed by students.

Radio frequency identification [RFID] self-service implementations, following a three-year £1.2 million project, have resulted in the installation of 16 RFID machines in the UCL family of libraries.

The circulation statistics demonstrate the present success of the RFID implementations, reaching a high of 89% self-service for all online digital transactions compared to staffed service of 11% for 2015-2016.

The Library is presently open 24/7 for the three largest hubs in the family – Main, Science and Cruciform.

The Reading Lists service provides full-text digital versions of reading list material for modules in Portico, the UCL Student Information System. Coverage has gone from 20% in 2013-2014 to 55% in 2015-2016.

Usage Statistics (6)

Much effort has been spent on investigating the number of downloads that have occurred for e-resources, essentially targeting the 'big deals'. Once again, the focussed expenditure on e-resources is proving to be good value for money. As the number of downloads has increased, the costs in turn have fallen considerably to 59p per download. E-requests have correspondingly increased, and the number of downloads in UCL Discovery, UCL's Open Access repository, is now over 2 million a year.

Open Access (7)

For Open Access in the Research Excellence Framework [REF] 2020, the UK's national research evaluation framework, the Library is making provision for substantial advocacy, technical platforms and support to engage with academics. This is supported by funding Gold OA and Green OA, publications from UCL Press and work with academic departments to ensure REF compliance.

UCL Press (8)

UCL Press is the first UK university press to be launched with a completely Open Access business model, that is, all books from the Press are made available digitally free at point of use. Launched in June 2015, UCL Press materials have already been downloaded in over 200 countries, with nearly 200,000 downloads. UCL Press won the UCL Brand Ambassador Award at the 2017 UCL Professional Services Conference on 15 February 2017.

Public Engagement [PE], Outreach and Widening Participation (9)

Often an area not highlighted in the role of the Library, the interests of the staff in this activity are growing. The list of events, which includes school visits to UCL, exhibitions and broadcasts, is impressive. This area has been expanded, and a Public Engagement Strategy is being progressed for even greater impact. The output presently provides excellent value, as the staff who participate operate from virtually a zero budget.

Space Management (10)

This is a challenging area for UCL and has affected the Library's satisfaction rating for the physical library in the SB Survey. However, despite the increase in UCL student numbers, the Library has been proactive in adding additional study space, and as a result the student / study space ratio has reduced. The Library is instrumental in the UCL East and Student Centre projects, which should increase the number of study spaces and reduce the ratio further, subject to additional growth in student numbers.

Diversity and Disability (11)

The Library has performed well in both these areas with high satisfaction ratings. Most notable has been the great improvement in black and minority ethnic [BME] satisfaction, which has gone from 80% to 89% in the past four years. In 2012 the BME satisfaction rate was 70%.

Lessons to be Drawn

The conclusions from this data show how UCL Library Services has spent its funding compared to its size; the staff's ability to cope with the much higher number of students and footfall; and the ability to maintain a high information spend per student ratio, a mark of a research-based education. To hit a satisfaction rate of 88% consistently in NSS is commendable. The Library has responded to student requests and opens the 3 larger libraries 24/7. RFID and ReadingLists@UCL have also proved to be popular amongst the student population. Open Access continues to be a shining light, and the Library has excelled further with the growing success of UCL Press. UCL Library Services has been integral to learning space developments in UCL and continues to participate in space-related projects. Public engagement and outreach now have the platform for expansion once the many activities are further aligned, and the Library also has the opportunity to make in-roads with regards to diversity.

UCL Library Services repays the investment given by UCL by delivering aspects of the institutional UCL 2034[7] Strategy; being cost-effective in terms of its spend on staff and materials; prioritising research-based education and the student experience as primary drivers in its activities; and using technology to offer innovative services, reinventing the role of the Library in the 21st century.

Old Terms versus New / Shifting Concepts

Led by the UCL Library Services Strategy,[8] there are a number of new concepts which the Library has willingly embraced. Amongst the more important are these:

- Learning Spaces – the Library now manages all centrally provided learning spaces (digitally enabled learning spaces), as well as traditional library spaces and services.

- The Library has embraced a culture of 24-hour opening.[9] This means that the larger libraries and learning spaces are open 24 hours a day in term and vacation alike. The Library is now working to make this pattern of 24-hour opening available 7 days a week. The Library has done this at the direct request of students, who identified this as the development in library provision they most wished to have funded.

7. UCL: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/2034/; last accessed 25 February 2017.

8. See note 2 above.

9. UCL Library Services: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/opening; last accessed 18 July 2017.

- The Library has pioneered a centrally provided ReadingLists@UCL[10] service to support education, whereby core readings set by academic members of staff are available digitally to students 24/7 on-campus and off-campus. As of January 2017 58% of all modules in Portico have a digital reading list attached – 2760 lists out of 4799 modules.

- Open Access is an agenda which is now led by UCL Library Services for the whole of the UCL community – staff and students. The Library runs the UCL repository UCL Discovery;[11] and it manages large funds for Article Processing Charges [APCs] from UCL and from external research funders.

- Research Data Management and Open Research Data are agendas which are being supported by the Library, and the Library takes the lead in UCL in terms of policy development and advocacy to researchers. The Library is running an EU-funded project on Research Data Management called LEARN.[12]

- There is a new role for Rare Books, Manuscripts and Archives in the projected creation of a new London Centre for the Arts, Humanities and Recorded Word (paper and digital) with cutting-edge research facilities, services, support for education and outreach to new communities.

Two Perspectives which UCL Sees as Positive for the Future

1) The creation of new digitally enabled learning spaces in UCL, managed by the Library, open 24/7, which meet the ways students now wish to work. This is represented by two major building projects – the creation of 1000 new learning spaces in the Student Centre (opening 2018-2019; see fig. 2) and 400 learning spaces on UCL's new research campus in UCL East. The new Student Centre[13] builds on earlier work in the creation of 400 digitally enabled learning spaces in the new UCL Cruciform Hub (see fig. 3).
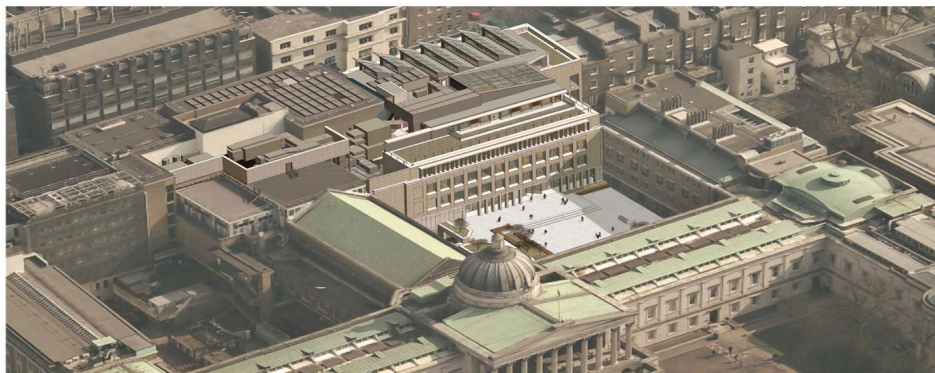

Fig. 2. The new UCL Student Centre, to be managed by UCL Library Services.

10. UCL Library Services: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/teaching-support/reading-lists; last accessed 18 July 2017.
11. UCL Library Services: http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/; last accessed 18 July 2017.
12. LEARN: http://learn-rdm.eu; last accessed 25 February 2017.
13. See UCL: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transforming-ucl/current-projects/new-student-centre; last accessed 25 February 2017.

Fig. 3. UCL Cruciform Hub, part of UCL Library Services.

2) The Library is not only a collector, curator and cataloguer of knowledge; it is now a creator of knowledge. It houses UCL Press, which is the UK's first fully Open Access university press. This press is 18 months old and has published 26 books and 6 journals. Downloads number over 190,000 in over 200 countries (as of January 2017). The development of the Press, the initiative of UCL Library Services, has created an important new service to support the dissemination and visibility of UCL research.

Two Perspectives which UCL Offers as Challenges

1) Funding: Student and research income at the University level may be affected by the UK's decision to leave the European Union. Will EU students still want to come to the UK, with a requirement to pay higher fees? What will the relationship of UK universities be to Horizon 2020 funding? Whilst UCL is not pessimistic, these are challenges which face UK higher education.

2) Open Science: Open Access to publications and good practice in research data management (and Open Data) are part of an emerging global agenda called Open Science. Open Science has the potential to revolutionise the way research is conducted, recorded and disseminated, just as the invention of moveable type printing did in the West in the 15th century. How much will this cost? What needs to change? Who in the University will offer leadership? And what is the role of the Library?

Conclusions

What are the conclusions which can be drawn from this analysis of the growth and diversity in UCL Library Services? Three overall themes can be identified. First, the Library itself is nearly 200 years old, but it has recognised the need to change and develop into a service fit for the digital age of the 21st century. It has done this by adopting a clear and transparent strategic planning framework, with clear objectives and deliverables, and a monitoring regime which measures success. Second, in developing its vision, the Library has redefined the mission of an academic library. Traditionally, libraries have collected, curated and catalogued learning and research materials. Now, however, there is a new role – not simply collecting, curating and cataloguing, but one of creating knowledge. Open Access and the related concept of Open Science allow libraries to take on this proactive role in the new information

landscape. The model of UCL Press is worthy of note – the UK's first fully Open Access university press. In creating knowledge, the Press is also able to support the University's Global Engagement Strategy,[14] with downloads of UCL authors in over 200 countries around the globe. Third, whilst some things change, others remain the same. User satisfaction remains key to the success of any library operation, and this is underscored by the immense care with which UCL Library Services monitors and seeks to improve its standing in surveys of student satisfaction.

In a digital age, UCL has shown that the Library is a core component in the learning and research infrastructure of the University. With over 3 million physical visits a year, that role is key in maintaining the reputation of UCL as one of the great universities of the world.

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14. UCL: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/global/strategy; last accessed 25 February 2017.