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Re-imagining Library Spaces

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Mercian 2025 Conference: Resilience, Relevance, and Reach: Libraries making an impact!

Re-Imagining Library Spaces

- The university library of the future
- Flexibility and convergence
- Sustainability/Biophilic design
- Thinking differently about library opening
- Co-creation of spaces
- Inclusive library spaces - Neurodivergent-friendly spaces, Supporting student choice
- Developing skills for a post-AI world

The University Library of the Future



Q. What will the university library of the future look like?

- In 2030?
- In 2040?
- In 2050?



Flexibility and Convergence



Flexible, Multi-use Spaces



Partnership Events





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Sustainability

Sustainability





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Biophilic Design

Biophilic Design

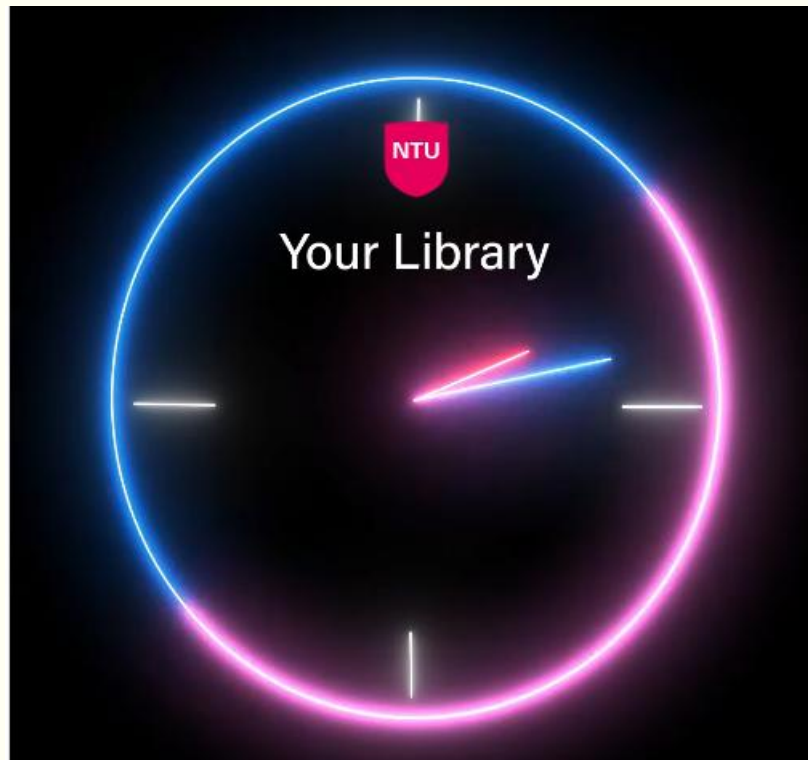




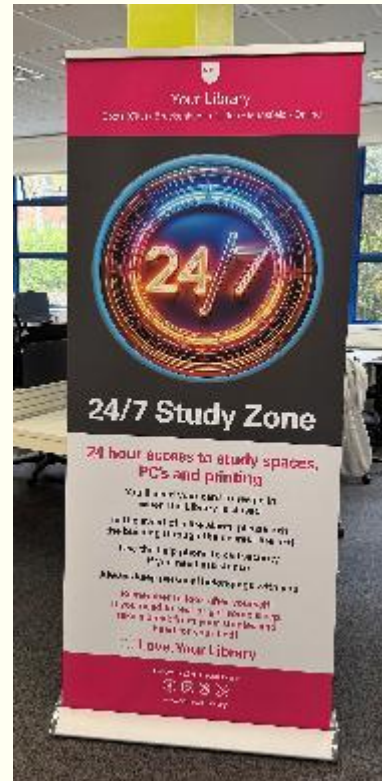
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Thinking Differently about Library Opening

Q. Does your service operate 24/7 spaces?



Thinking Differently About 24/7...



Co-Creation of Spaces



Creative Collaborations with Students



Inclusive Library Spaces



Haven, Boots Library

A place for reflection, meditation, prayer and stillness.

A quiet space where students of all faiths and none can find peace, solace and emotional well-being.



Family Study Room, Boots Library



Communicating Our Values



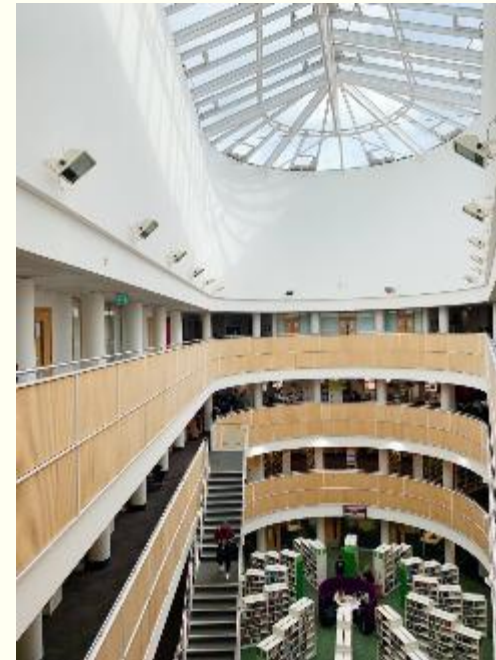
Neurodivergent-friendly Spaces



Neurodivergent-friendly Spaces

Drivers for change:

- Zoned study space but silent areas are formal
- Lack of quiet relaxation/ deregulation space
- Students facing overwhelm
- Confusing signage
- Daunting buildings!



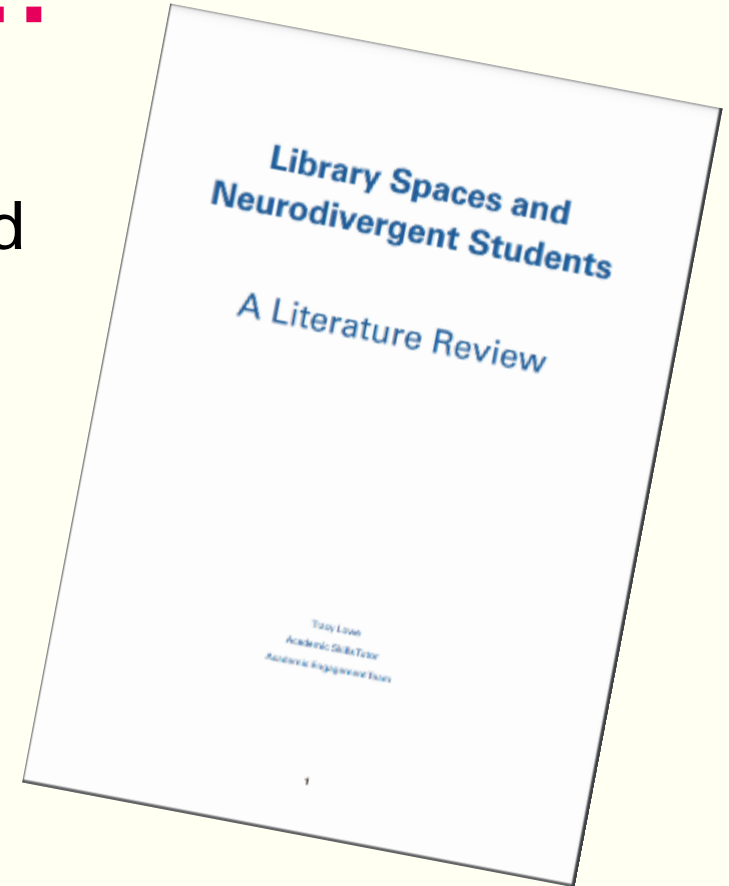
What the literature told us...

General Spaces:

- Choice of spaces, predictable and well-managed
- Offer mitigations such as earphones
- Individual spaces

Bespoke Spaces:

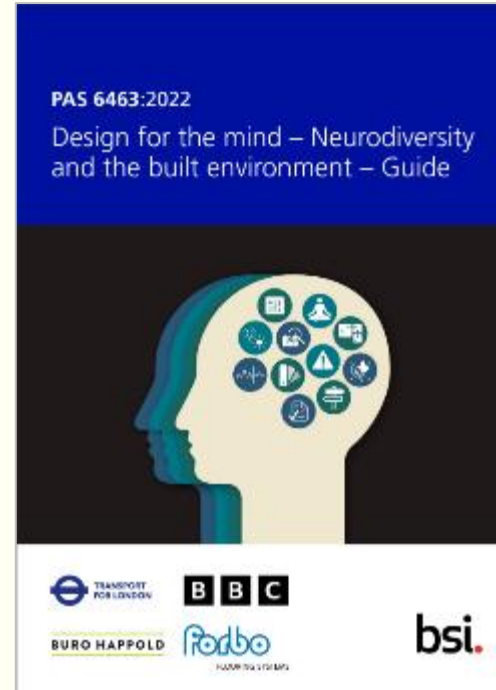
- Relaxation
- Sensory break
- Natural/biophilic elements



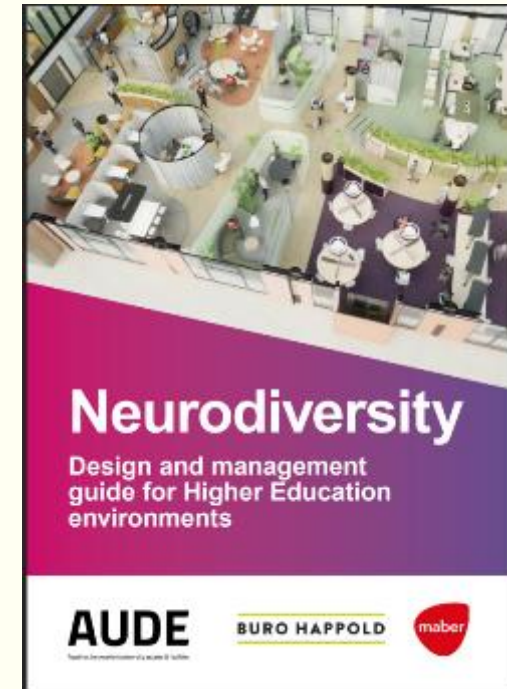
Best Practice Guidance



https://issuu.com/magdamostafa/docs/the_autism_friendly_design_guide



<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/insights-and-media/insights/brochures/pas-6463-design-for-the-mind-neurodiversity-and-the-built-environment/#contact-form>



<https://www.aude.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/edi/inclusive-environments/>
(AUDE members only)

Consultation and Co-creation

- Specialist colleagues in Student Support Services
- External consultant on universal design
- Academic colleagues
- LLR colleagues
- LLR Library Advisory Board
- Student forums, feedback and focus groups

Inspiring Spaces – Key Deliverables

- Successful funding bid for spaces to support neurodivergent users and those with anxiety
- Creation of video guides to library spaces
- Creation of sensory maps
- A review of signage and wayfinding

Glow Sensory Rooms



Glow Sensory Rooms



**POV: You find the
library sensory room**

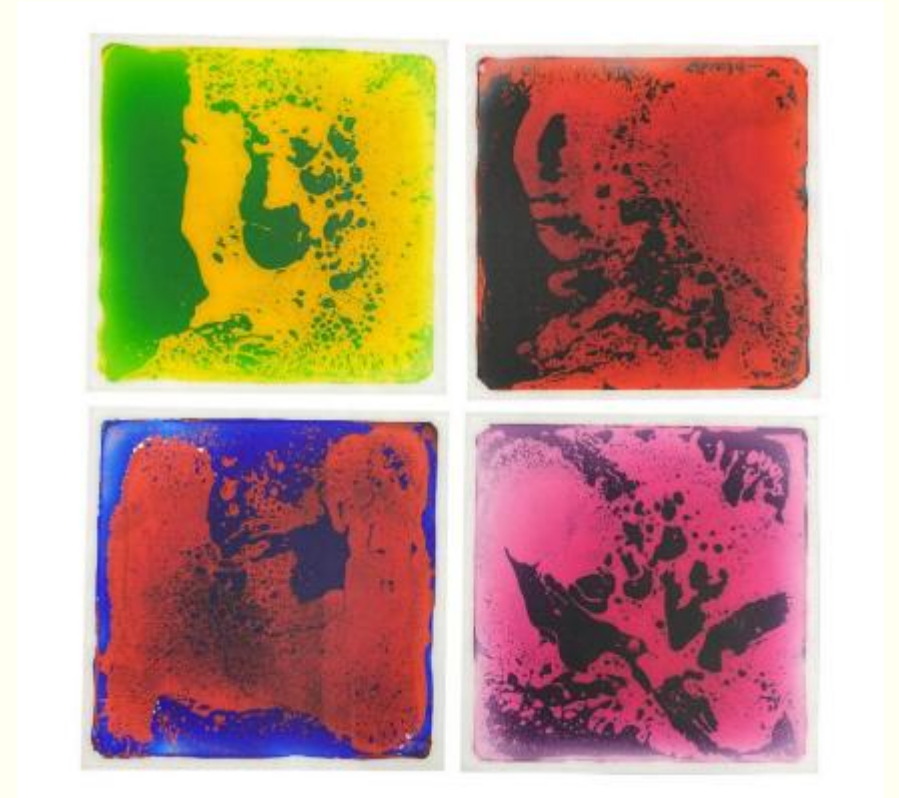


The Rest Nest



Sensory equipment for a range of budgets

- <https://www.glow.co.uk/>
- <https://www.mikeayresdesign.co.uk/>
- <https://www.sensorytoywarehouse.com/>
- <https://www.schoolfurniture-direct.co.uk/>
- <https://www.sensesensory.co.uk/>



<https://www.sensorytoywarehouse.com/>

“

**Walking into the sensory room
felt like entering a completely
different mind space**

”

“

It felt calm, quiet, and very chill – somewhere I could see myself going when I need a break from noise or sensory overload...As a neurodivergent student, knowing there's a dedicated sensory-friendly room on campus makes me feel more supported.

”



Supporting Student Choice

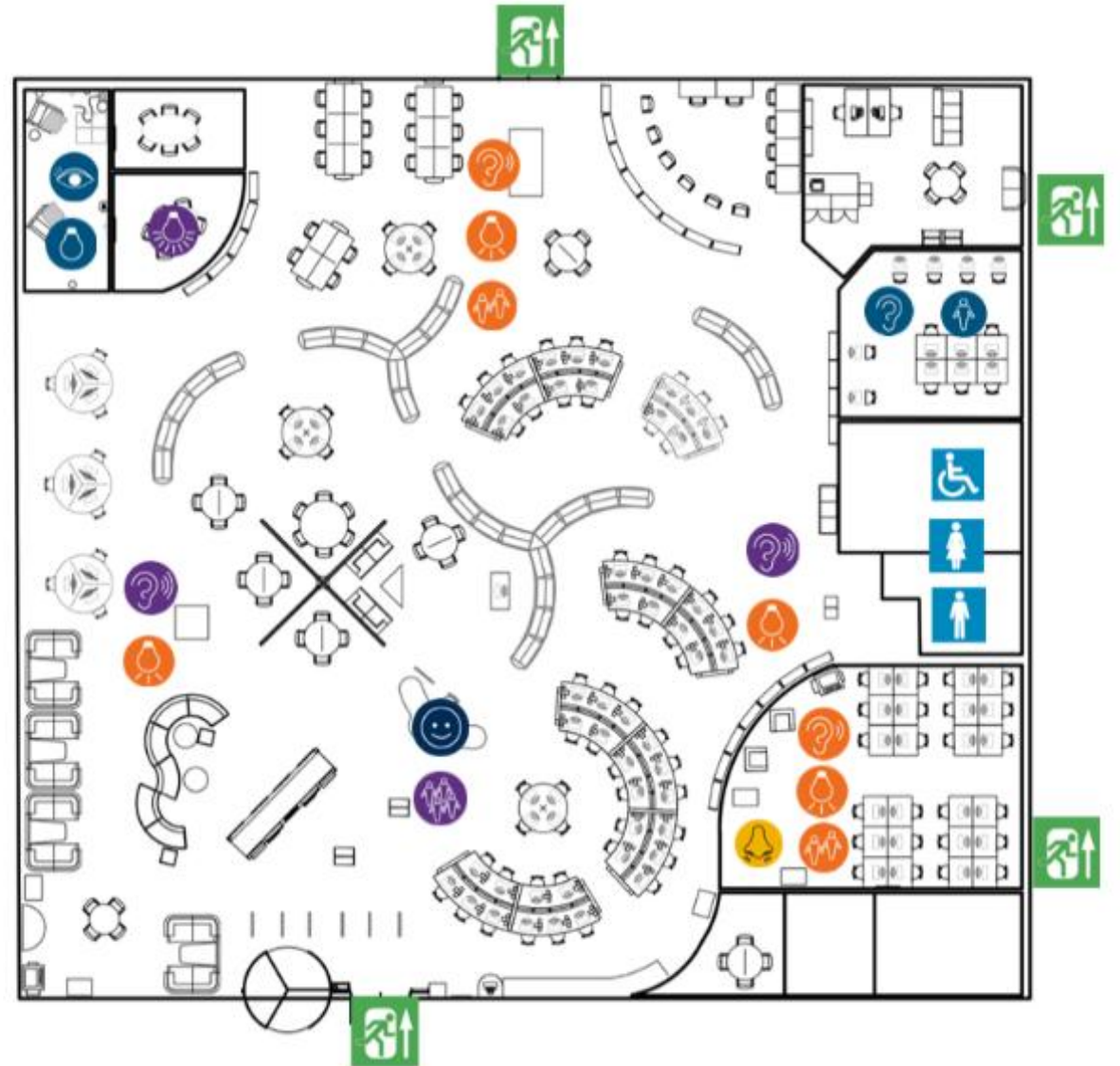


Wayfinding and Sensory Mapping

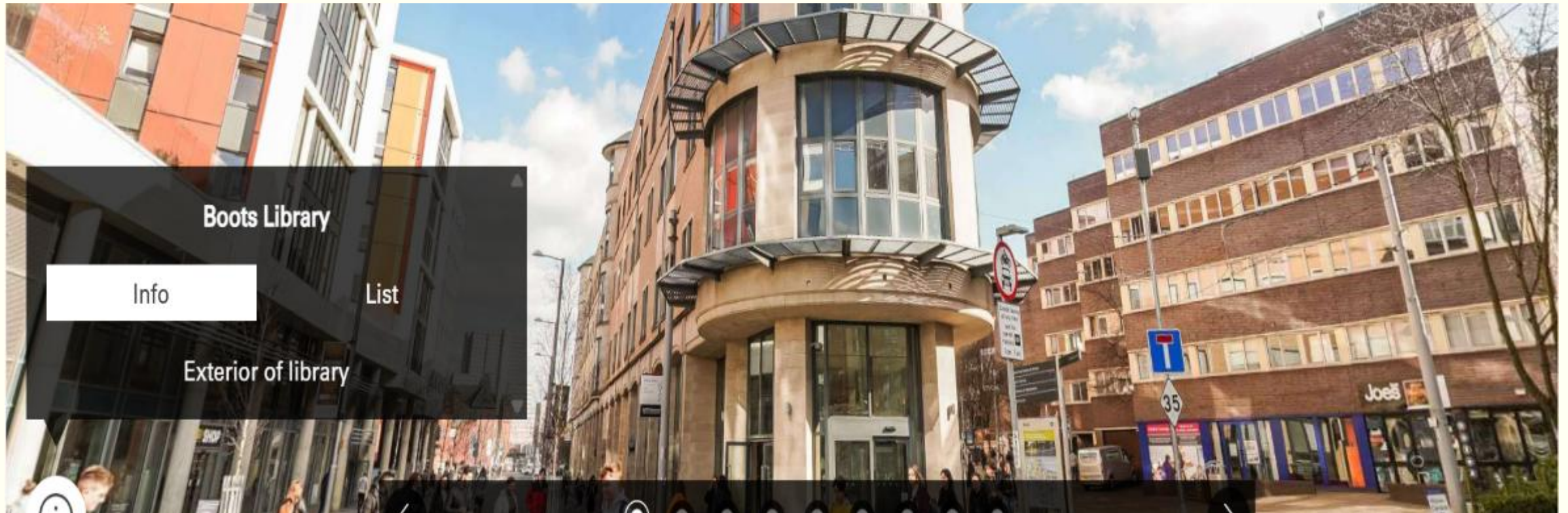
- Sensory maps of buildings
- Quiet route mapping
- Improvements to signage and wayfinding

	Conversations not allowed in this area. Low level background noise can be expected.		Brief conversations allowed. Low level background noise can be expected.		Conversations allowed, group work taking place. Noise levels can be above average during tours and events.
	Lighting in this area can be adjusted to different shades. Area also has a range of lighting options available.		Natural light during the day, bright artificial lighting at night.		Main source of lighting is bright artificial lighting.
	Few people.		Less crowded.		Can be crowded.
	Visual stimulation.		Area near Food points: Food and Drink smells possible.		Staff.

Wayfinding and Sensory Mapping



Guides to Spaces



360 Degree Virtual Tours

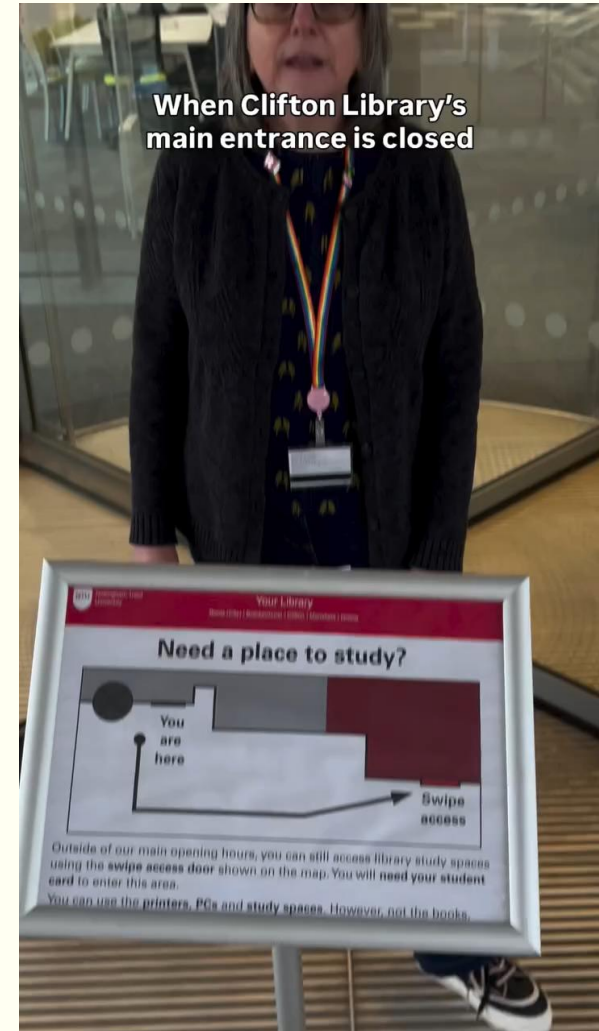
Central Marketing
360 tours

[Boots Library |
Nottingham Trent
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Video Guides

- Video tour and promotional content
 - Library walk-throughs
 - 24/7 spaces
 - Glow Sensory Rooms
 - Rest Nest
 - Knowledge Cafes
 - Family Room
 - The Haven



Developing Skills for a Post-AI World



“

**Skills like creativity, critical thinking,
and emotional intelligence are still
absolutely vital.**

Department for Education

”



GRASP

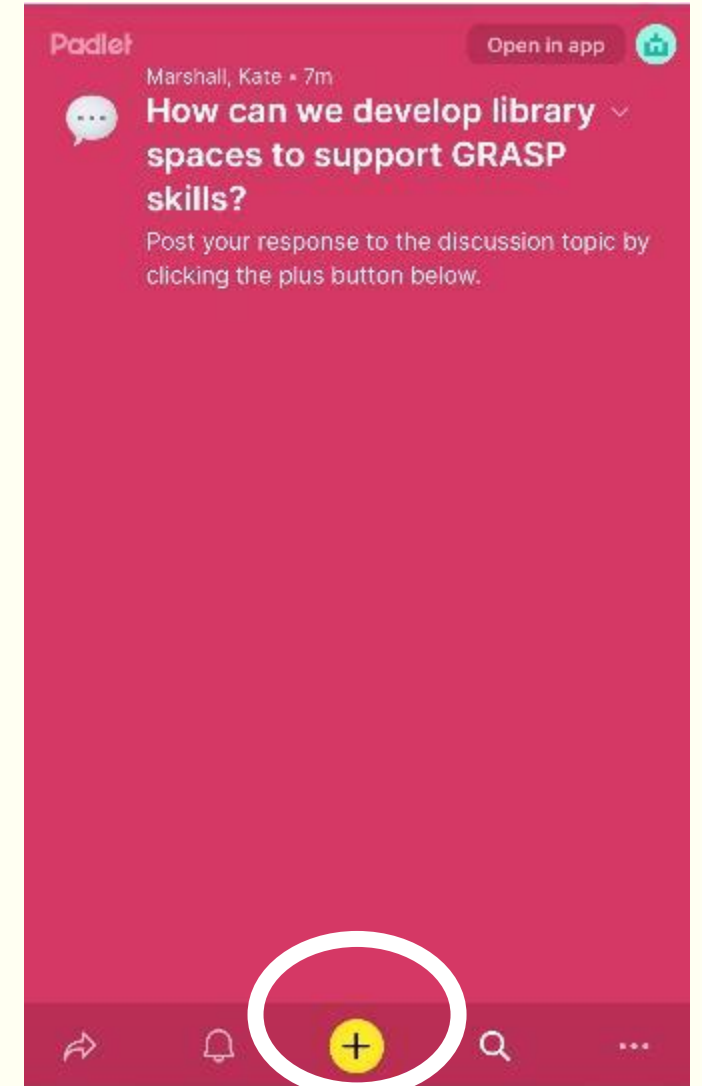
General Relational Analytical Social and Personal skills:

- Analytical skills
- Social and relational skills
- Personal skills



How can library spaces help?

<https://padlet.com/katemarshall6/Mercian2025>



Questions?



Get in touch!

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Thank you