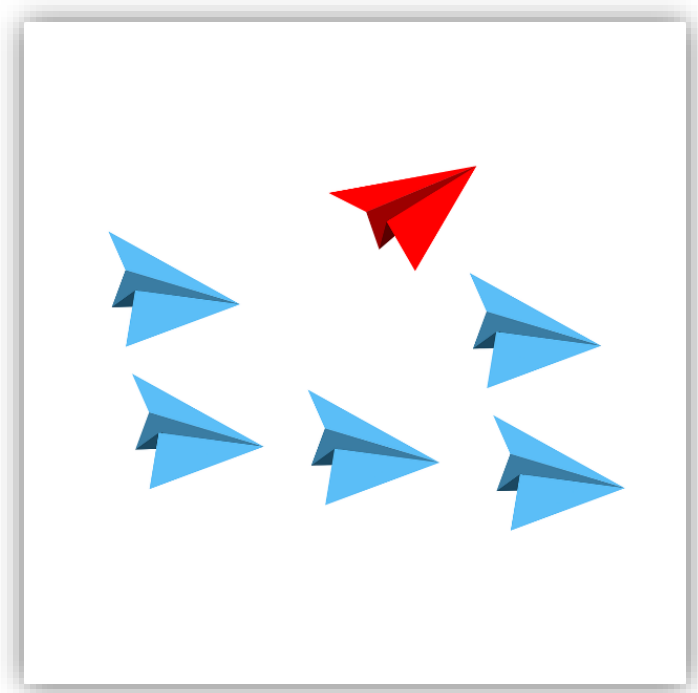# The Mercian Collaboration Conference 2023

Putting change into action: development, diversity and drive.

September 7th.

Hosted by the University of Birmingham.

Keynote

Embracing Change to Create Opportunity – through the lens of The Chimp Model.

Ben Davies, Chartered Psychologist and Researcher from Chimp Management.

This session will be set out to be practical and engaging. Using The Chimp Model, we will explain why we can find change so challenging and potentially stressful. We will demonstrate how to accept the reality of uncertainty and unwanted change and deal with it effectively. We will work on individual change management plans to apply to participants' personal and professional lives, both for themselves and to support those around them.

Parallel Sessions

Breakout Sessions 1

Breakout Session 1A: How to make weird things accessible.
Lara Skelly, Open Research Manager: Data & Methods, Loughborough University.

As researchers undertake more Open Research practice, and share non-traditional outputs from their research, the question I've been exploring is how to make these non-traditional outputs, in their non-traditional file formats accessible to those with various impairments. How to make videos accessible to those with impaired hearing/Deafness, how to make 3D models and tables accessible to those with visual impairments, and how to accommodate the wide variety of needs of the neurodiverse? And how much of these modifications would be considered a "disproportionate burden"? Complicating the situation further, are license and ethical restrictions around what can be done with the original files.

Exploring each file type, a how-to manual was created which detailed how to legally and ethically modify files to improve their accessibility, including a note on what would be considered a disproportionate burden for Loughborough University.

Breakout Session 1B: Using customer service apprentice roles as a means of widening staff diversity in academic library and customer services.
Karen Stevens & Tarandeep Rai, both Service Delivery Officers from De Montfort University.

Having investigated apprenticeships initially as a route for staff development with our current staff, within De Montfort University's Library Services team we've used the need to recruit for 2 full-time Information Assistant posts as a way of bringing customer service apprentice roles, the Level 2 Customer Service Practitioner apprenticeship, into our service. We hoped this would bring in a

younger range of applicants, from a wider range of backgrounds, and encourage applications from people who wouldn't see libraries as being a place for them to work.

This session covers how we made these decisions, our recruitment process and how recruiting apprentices differs from standard recruitment processes, differences in terms of managing and mentoring new apprentices rather than standard Information Assistant roles, and what we've taken from this whole process to inform our recruitment and staffing going forward.

Breakout Session 1C: Student Life and the Library: a holistic UX approach.

Claire Browne, Customer Relationship manager & Kate Spencer-Bennett, Academic Skills Advisor, University of Birmingham.

In Spring term 2023, Library Services at the University of Birmingham conducted a User Experience cultural probe with ten taught students. We wanted to understand not just how they use Library Services, but to have a holistic view of their lives and their wider experience of higher education.

This presentation will share the initial findings of this research, our thoughts on the UX methodology, and offer insights into the student experience in post-pandemic HE.

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Breakout Sessions 2

Breakout Session 2A: Are Systems Librarians an endangered species? Lessons learned from implementing a new library platform.

Georgina Dimmock, Head of Library Systems, Skills, Collections and Archives & Fiona Watkins, Digital Resources and Collections Manager, University of Northampton.

In July 2022, the University of Northampton successfully implemented three library systems: Alma, Leganto and Primo VE. The systems went live on time and on budget. En route to the go live date, management decisions were made to ensure the effective and successful delivery, but the process exposed staffing vulnerabilities. This session will be a two-part workshop led by members of the University of Northampton new library system project team. The first part will be a presentation enabling delegates to learn about key management decisions that were made, technical skill set vulnerabilities that were exposed and solutions that are being explored for future recruitment and succession planning. The second part will be a workshop where delegates will be given the opportunity to share their experiences and ideas by means of facilitated discussion. The session will identify institutional commonalities and differences, with a view to disseminating the findings within the sector.

Breakout Session 2B: Feeling seen - students filling gaps in decolonisation.

Sarah Akhtaruzzaman, Academic Support Librarian, University of Warwick.

Many universities have increased their efforts of decolonisation and diversification following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. However despite best intentions the aim of making minorities feel seen can be missed.

This is a case study of course reading lists not fulfilling Black students' need to be seen in their curriculum even though the faculty aimed to include them, how the students set out to create their own reading list to supplement the readings for their course, and how the library acted as a mediator between the Black Student Network and their corresponding faculty.

Breakout Session 2B: Seconded! A personal account of career development through the power of secondments

Matt Hunt, Librarian – Electronic Resources Management and Library Engagement Advisor, Birmingham City University.

In November 2021 Matt Hunt was offered the opportunity to take a secondment with our Library Engagement Team. This presentation aims to

display the benefits of taking a step outside of your comfort zone and pursuing opportunities to build your knowledge and experience. Matt will explain the benefits the secondment bought to our teams and to their own career development, and what lessons you can learn if you are looking to develop your own career in libraries.

Breakout Session 2C: Re-Discovery: launching five core systems within nine months - innovation or insanity?

Matt Cox, Content and Discovery Manager & Adam Robinson, Content Manager, University of Derby.

What does it mean to lose 20 years of data such as your journal holdings, your inter library loan history and order data?
This is the situation the University of Derby Library found itself in due to implementing five core systems in the space of nine months. Moving at such pace meant the reality of losing important data.
Was this innovation or insanity? Well, frankly both.
This session will explore the lessons learnt, what it means to lose 20 years of data and other anecdotes from the experience.

Breakout Session 2C: Inclusive recruitment, trying new approaches.

Chris Addleton, Library Operations Manager, University of Nottingham.

In the University of Nottingham Libraries, our aim is to be a diverse and inclusive community where every person is welcome and valued.
In Spring 2021, Libraries launched a departmental survey into staff's lived experience of the workplace through an EDI lens. Following analysis of the survey an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Libraries programme was launched with 5 workstreams.
Our story is about the activities that the Inclusive Recruitment workstream have been working on. Our aim was to review and change (where appropriate), our recruitment practices within Libraries. The initial focus was to get the basics right and to ensure we better reflected our local demographics and student community. The work has focused on role profile forms, adverts and

the language and tone to make the jobs more appealing and hopefully attract a more diverse number of applicants.

Since launching the templates, we've reviewed 25 adverts and role profiles. It's early days to see any changes in the number of applications but we plan to monitor our application data when it becomes available. There's still more work to do and we have plans for the next year.

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Breakout Sessions 3

Breakout Session 3A: Bringing our users with us: keeping UX at the heart of discovery platform development.
Emma Brown, Learning, Teaching and Research Support Librarian & Laura Percival, Systems, Discovery and Access Librarian, Birmingham City University.

During the academic Year 2021/22 Birmingham City University's Library and Learning Resources updated their Library systems and discovery platform to improve user experience. It was essential that any new changes had a measurable impact to ensure that our efforts were benefitting users and meeting discovery needs.

In our talk, we will focus on two key UX projects that were undertaken at different stages of the introduction of our new discovery platform:

1. Which UX methods were used in our journey to understand discovery needs

2. Exploring the practicalities of undertaking UX research for a new discovery platform

3. Highlighting key lessons learned.

We will welcome audience discussion on other Library's experiences of UX and library discovery.

Breakout Session 3B: It's all about the money: My experience of managing the library budgets in the LMS.
Natalie Baker-Fosker, Newman University.

How does your library manage its funds?
Are you interested in hearing about how our small institution has used new technologies to manage all our non-staff budgets within the Library Management System (LMS)?
No more duplication of work or manual entry of information into spreadsheets; Our LMS does it all for us!

Breakout Session 3C: Menopause - what it is, how does it affect the workplace and how to create an environment where every woman can thrive!
Jane Dashwood, Library Accessibility Officer and Menopause Staff Network Co-Chair, University of Warwick.

Menopause is killing women's careers quite literally, but why and what is it exactly?

Menopause is not something you may have considered affects the workplace, however in order to create an inclusive, happy and healthy work force it is something that you should most definitely know about.

In this presentation Jane will inform you about the menopause, what it is, how it affects the workplace and how to help create an environment where wellbeing and inclusivity help women to thrive through this period in their lives.

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Breakout Sessions 4

Breakout Session 4A: How to write a business case.
Anna O'Neill, University Librarian, University of Warwick.

This presentation will be a practical guide to building a business case for a Library estates project. It will work through the key steps needed to build a successful case based that can be applied to any project or service. It will provide practical examples and exemplars where possible. It will also draw in the options of decision makers and what they both expect and need in order to agree a business case.

Breakout Session 4A: It's time to try TikTok.
Lizzy Cross, Assistant Librarian for Engagement, Newman University.

Many university libraries use social media to advertise services available to their patrons, primarily through established platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. I'll be sharing how and why you should use TikTok to increase student awareness and engagement with their University Library. This presentation will demystify this new platform for librarians wanting to add another strand to their existing social media presence.

Breakout Session 4B: Supporting our staff's wellbeing: buttons, books, and wine!
Ann Stairmand-Jackson, & Mercedes Malloy both Collection Management and Engagement Librarians at Birmingham City University.

In 2022 the Library at Birmingham City University established a Wellbeing Group, with support from the senior management team, in response to staff demand for more wellbeing support. Utilising staff skills the group has facilitated a range of activities, receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback. We'd like to share our journey as a group, including our ethos, activities, feedback, and how we've used the same activities to engage with both academics and students.

The workshop consists of a 15 minute presentation, followed by a 30 minute craft activity – we'll supply all the materials; no prior skills required. Come away from our session with an understanding of our wellbeing group, first-hand experience of a wellbeing craft activities, and ideas to take back to your library.

Feedback received: "I really enjoyed the craft session as it bought people from different teams together, created a sense of community and allowed me to chat to colleagues I don't know well"

Breakout Session 4C: Thinking differently about recruitment.

Kate Marshall, Head of User Experience and Environment, Nottingham Trent University

Research highlights the lack of diversity within the library sector. By placing undue weight on prior library experience we are reinforcing a lack of diversity and excluding able candidates from a broader customer service background, who may bring new perspectives and be more reflective of our users. This session will explore changes which have been undertaken at NTU to think differently about recruitment. The session will aim to challenge current thinking about recruitment and share best practice and resources to make processes more inclusive, which will be of relevance to many organisations within the information sector.

Breakout Session 4D: Develop@Derby: Derby's developmental Skills Hub: capitalising on collaboration and cooperation!

Michelle Bennett, Library Assistant & Naomi Bowers-Joseph, Senior Skills Officer, University of Derby.

The University of Derby library has been at the forefront of Develop@Derby – a university wide project to create a 'one stop shop' delivering a cross-section of skills support from around the university. The Library's Skills Team capitalised on existing working relationships and forged new ones with colleagues from across the university to deliver on this truly collaborative project, with the library as its operational lead.

In this workshop we will use an informal, narrative approach to show you the journey the project took from its earliest beginnings to where we are today, before looking forward to our next steps. You'll hear the voices of the people with whom we collaborated telling their parts of the story through a range of formats and media. We'll share the lessons we learnt from the experience and our goals for the future, and invite you to share your thoughts, questions and suggestions.

Breakout Session 4D: Let's talk about SEG!
Jess Mercuriadi, Academic Support Officer, University of Warwick.

University libraries are championed as the heart of the campus, the place for students to get support and find the assistance they need with their studies and wider issues. But how does the University of Warwick Library support its staff?

Join Jess Mercuriadi, Academic Support Officer and chair of the Staff Engagement Group in this talk explaining how the SEG team are relaunching with a focus on staff mindfulness, wellbeing and skill development opportunities, along with the positive impact this group has on staff and the services that are provided for the University of Warwick Library's customers.

If you are interested in hearing more about the scheme and its benefits to both staff and user groups, then this talk is for you.

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Roundtable Discussion

Chaired by: Jo-Anne Watts, Mercian Collaboration Steering Group Member and University Librarian, University of Wolverhampton.
With:

Helen Curtis Director of Learning Resources and University Librarian at Oxford Brookes University; Ruth Houghton, Head of Education, Research and Skills at Cranfield University; Tamasine Ashcroft, Head of Library Engagement University of Birmingham, Elizabeth Pardoe, MA Student (Art History and Curating) from the University of Birmingham.

Speakers

Adam Robinson.

Adam began his career in 2010 at the University of Liverpool. During his time here he was involved in driving innovation and enhancing services and successfully launched the copyright MOT service. In 2020 Adam took up the position of Content Manager at the University of Derby where he led on establishing new schemes such as Reading List Driven Acquisition and the eTextbook service. During the Library Systems Replacement Project, he developed new processes and workflows for the new systems. Adam is also Chair of ShERIF which works on behalf of the sector to improve eResource services and meet user needs.

Ann Stairmand-Jackson.

Ann Stairmand-Jackson is a Collection Management and Engagement Librarian at Birmingham City University (BCU) Supporting the Schools of Nursing, and Midwifery & Education and Social Work. She's worked in HE Libraries in various roles, and has extensive experience in Collection Management and Engagement, with specific areas of interest around Engagement, and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. In her spare time Ann is a Scout Leader, Range Conducting Officer (NSRA), allotmenteer and enjoys a range of craft activities.

Anna O' Neill.

Anna O'Neill joined the University of Warwick in November 2022 and was previously Director of Library Services & Arts Strategy (University Librarian) at the University of Southampton (2019-2022). Anna has worked in the library sector for over 30 years and has a range of experience across a number of sectors, including the NHS, heritage, charities, law, and financial services. She has been responsible for a wide range of services throughout her career including IT Services, E-learning, Academic Skills, Print Services, Galleries and a Concert Hall. Anna is Chair of the Technology and Markets Strategy Group, an RLUK board member and has previously been a member of the JISC Library Strategy Advisory Group.

Ben Davies.

Ben is a British Psychological Society (BPS) chartered psychologist and published researcher, who has worked for Chimp Management for over 8 years. Within this time, he has predominantly worked within the world of elite sport supporting Olympic and professional athletes, coaches and staff to better understand the way in which their mind works and develop tools to optimise how they use their mind. In doing so, Ben has gathered experience in consulting across Europe, America, and Asia.

Chris Addleton.

Chris is the Operations manager for Libraries at the University of Nottingham. He has been part of the Strategy and Planning team for the last 4 years and provides inclusive recruitment support across the department. He also represents Libraries on the EDI professional services committee. In other parts of his role, Chris leads the Libraries training and development group and all compliance work associated with the risk register and information security.

Claire Browne.

Claire is Customer Relationship Manager for Library Services at the University of Birmingham and is motivated by collaborative and creative working. She has over 10 years' experience working in library customer support roles, and currently has responsibility for communications, marketing, service development and UX projects. Claire is also on the events planning group for CSGUK Libraries and a committee member of the Mercian Collaboration's Marketing & Communication Group.

Elizabeth Pardoe.

I recently graduated with a Bachelors of History from the University of Birmingham and begin my Masters there in Art History and Curating this September. I work as a Visitor Assistant for English Heritage and volunteer regularly with museum collections and archives teams.

Emma Brown.

Emma has worked in Academic Libraries around the West Midlands since 2015 and completed her Library MA in 2020 from Aberystwyth University, with a focus on impact of digital services. Emma was the first in post of our flagship UX dedicated role within BCU Libraries.

Fiona Watkins.

Fiona Watkins is the Digital Resources & Collections Manager at the University of Northampton and was one of the team working on implementing the new library platform. Fiona has worked in HE libraries for nearly twenty years she has interests in referencing and inclusive practices and has spent the past seven years managing the teams responsible for acquisition, metadata, access and licensing. She is currently co-deputy chair for the SUPC Library Group.

Georgina Dimmock.

Georgina (George) Dimmock is Head of Library Systems, Skills, Collections and Archives at the University of Northampton (UON) and recently led the team implementing the new library platform at UON. She currently sits on a number of sector groups, including the SCONUL Technology and Markets Strategy Group and the JISC Transnational Educational Licensing Advisory Board. George is a CILIP Fellow and a Fellow of the HEA.

Helen Curtis.

Helen is Director of Learning Resources and University Librarian at Oxford Brookes University where she leads the University Library, Special Collections and Archives, Digital Services, and Design and Media teams. She has worked in Higher Education for 20 years and has developed library services, projects and teams supporting activities across learning and research. Particular areas of interest include relationship management, leadership, and workforce development. Helen is a Fellow of Advance HE and is engaged with SCONUL as a member of the Organisational Development Strategy Group.

Jane Dashwood.

Jane is the Library Accessibility Officer at the University of Warwick and for the past 4 years has also co-chaired the university Menopause Staff Network. Jane is passionate about educating people about the menopause and breaking down the stigma that surrounds it, as well as helping women to advocate for themselves whilst going through this difficult period in their lives.

Jess Mercuriadi.

Jess Mercuriadi is an Academic Support Officer at the University of Warwick Library. Jess graduated from Coventry University in 2016 and began her career in higher education at the University of Warwick in 2019. After working for various teams across the Library, Jess has a wide range of knowledge of Library services with interests and specialisms in digital learning, decolonising, and diversifying.

Karen Stevens.

Karen Stevens is a Service Delivery Officer in the Library Services Team within De Montfort University's Library and Student Services directorate. She is one of the service's longer serving members of staff and manages a portfolio of financial administration for the department as well as her library role. Karen liaised with DMU's Apprenticeship Employer Facilitator to set up the recruitment for the apprenticeships and was chair on the interview panel. She is now line manager for the 2 Information Assistant Apprentices who were recruited.

Kate Marshall.

Kate Marshall is Head of User Experience within the Libraries and Learning Resources department at Nottingham Trent University, leading the User Experience Team. She has a keen interest in promoting inclusive practice. She is vice-chair of the Mercian Collaboration Staff Development Group and a member of the CILIP East Midland Committee..

Dr Kate Spencer-Bennett.

Dr Kate Spencer-Bennett is an academic skills advisor at The University of Birmingham, supporting students with writing and teaching across the university. Her PhD studied the role of libraries in women's lives, and she has published research on women's education and the value of the library. Kate has lectured in Education and taught English and Drama at secondary school.

Lara Skelly.

Dr Lara Skelly is the Open Research Manager for Data and Methods at Loughborough University where she works to support the institution's Open Research agenda in the weird and the wonderful. She has previously worked as a research manager, research librarian and an academic librarian in various South African universities. She has published on Open Research topics in recent years and is currently exploring focused topics around accessibility and uptake of Open Research practices. She is an obsessive crocheter.

Laura Percival.

Laura is the Systems, Discovery & Access Librarian at Birmingham City University, having completed her MSc in Library & Information Studies in 2015 with Aberystwyth University. Laura leads the development of discovery services and library systems with UX and accessibility at the heart.

Lizzy Cross.

Lizzy is an Assistant Librarian at Newman University. She has a degree in English Literature and spent a year working in a secondary school as an academic mentor. She had no formal librarian qualifications or experience prior to her current job role. She has spent the past year working closely with, and learning from, academic librarians and customer service professionals. Lizzy is particularly interested in how we market to and engage audiences in library services. She is passionate about the use of social media as both a promotional tool and way to connect with the diverse patron base at Newman.

Matt Cox.
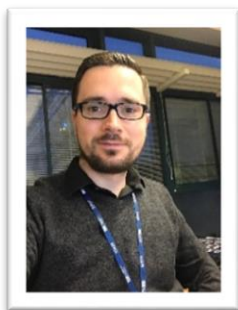
Matt joined University of Derby Library in 2017, and in 2019 became the Content and Discovery Manager, becoming responsible for the team who acquire, catalogue, and make available print and electronic information resources. Matt has a particular interest in offering alternative mechanisms for discovery for students. Matt is a member of the NEYAL Books Purchasing Group as well as the SCONUL Content Strategy Group. In 2019, Matt and team were successful in winning the 'National Acquisitions Group Award for Excellence'.

Matt Hunt.

Matt Hunt is currently Librarian for Electronic Resources Management at Birmingham City University. Matt has worked in various library roles over the past 12 years, focusing mainly on electronic resources, but also in customer service and academic engagement. Matt has previously presented at the WHELF Colloquium and last year's Mercian Staff Development Group event. Having started his library career replenishing shelves at UoB's medical library, Matt has taken on a variety of roles and secondments and is ideally placed to discuss the highs and lows of life working in temporary roles.

Mercedes Malloy.

Mercedes Malloy is a Collection Management Librarian based at Birmingham City University (BCU). With over 16 years of experience in the library sector including public libraries, Her Majesty's Prison Leicester, University of Leicester, and Pinsent Masons law firm. A committee member for the Association of Law librarians in Central England for three years which requires event planning for training sessions and roundtable discussions. Previously presented at Customer Services Group UK (CSGUK) conference in 2021.

Michelle Bennett.

Michelle graduated with a degree in History followed by achieving postgraduate qualifications in Law. She worked in the legal sector before moving to the University of Derby library 12 years ago.
Working predominantly as a library assistant, she has a strong background in customer service, interdepartmental collaboration, and student experience. Michelle stepped into the role of Senior Skills Officer for a period of 6 months last year, exploring innovative ways to improve the library skills service..

Naomi Bowers-Joseph.

Naomi has worked at the University of Derby library for 13 years in several roles, including library assistant at two sites, working in the library's frontline 'Enquiry Service' and leading support for students studying at a distance. Naomi has worked as Senior Skills Officer for the last four years, a time in which the Skills Team has radically changed the services and modes of delivery offered to students. Naomi has a strong professional interest in reflective practice which began during her degree studies of criminology, law, and social relations, and has continued throughout her professional career.

Natalie Baker-Fosker.

If you have contacted the Mercian Collaboration in the past 8 months, you may recognise her name; Natalie Baker-Fosker provided interim cover from July 2022-March 2023, to help keep the collaboration's activities ticking over until the new Executive Officer was appointed in April 2023.
In her substantive role, Natalie works as the part-time Library Service Support Administrator at Newman University, Birmingham.
Natalie observes that Mercian Collaboration events are seldom aimed at Library Administrators, so she will share her experience of participating in streamlining the library's finance workflows and will outline how her team uses technology to manage the budgets more efficiently.

Ruth Houghton.

Ruth Houghton started working for Cranfield University in April 2020 and is now the Head of Education, Research and Skills. She began her career in libraries in 2008 as an Information Assistant and, after graduating from Robert Gordon University in 2012, went on to work as a Subject Librarian supporting Business, Criminology and Sociology. Ruth is particularly interested in exploring new ways to engage students and has written and presented on her work using owls and therapy dogs (not at the same time!) to engage students who may not regularly use the library. She is also keen to support her dedicated team, encouraging them to develop their own practice and ensure they are up to date with the latest developments in HE. This includes investigating ways to develop early career professionals and widening recruitment to ensure libraries are attracting a diverse pool of talent.

Sarah Akhtaruzzaman.
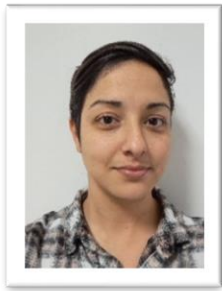
Sarah Akhtaruzzaman is Academic Support Librarian for English & Comparative Studies, Modern Languages & Translation and Philosophy at the University of Warwick. After completing her MA in Information and Library Management at Loughborough University she worked as a Library Assistant at Halesowen College before working as Assistant Information Specialist at Aston University for six years. Outside of her professional interests in decolonisation, equality and inclusion she enjoys cats, pop culture, and answering an average 400 questions a day.

Tamasine Ashcroft.

Tamasine Ashcroft has 26 years' experience working in academic support and collections engagement in UK academic Libraries. She is currently working as Head of Library Engagement at the University of Birmingham and is responsible for promoting relevant services and collections and negotiating support for College and School level strategic priorities. Tamasine joined the University in 2004 as Academic Support Team Manager for Medicine and Health before taking on responsibility for all of Medicine, Health, Sciences and Engineering and managing a team of subject specialists in those areas. Her previous roles have also been in the area of academic liaison. She was as Senior Information Specialist at King's College London supporting Medicine and health-related

subjects whilst leading on the development of Information literacy. Prior to that she worked at City University as a Learning Facilitator working with the School of Nursing. She has had a number of papers published nationally, both working with researchers in Medicine and Nursing supporting systematic reviews and most recently with her team focusing on Engagement.

Tarandeep Rai.

Tarandeep Rai is a Service Delivery Officer in the Library Services Team within De Montfort University's Library and Student Services directorate. She is one of our newer staff in this role and has an extensive background in retail and retail management, which has brought fresh eyes and a new insight into our service. Tarandeep was part of the recruitment and interview panel for the apprentices. She is now acting as mentor for the 2 Information Assistant Apprentices who were recruited, a role which is required for apprentices in addition to their line manager.