



# Changing libraries – new ways of working

*Rachel Van Riel*  
[www.openingthebook.com](http://www.openingthebook.com)

# Changing the culture of public libraries

- Move from passive provision of books and computers to actively engaging the audience
- Explosion in the UK of conversations, displays, reading groups, websites, events, promotions, outreach projects
- Changes to physical layout, displays, guiding, collection management, staff behaviors and work tasks

# Experience

- Training programs which have reached 20,000 library staff in 3 continents
- Installed 100+ public and school library interiors – first university libraries this year
- Whichbook.net – unique way to find your next book
- Stock Quality Health Check for UK government to evaluate quality of adult fiction collections
- Book display furniture and graphics tailored to library needs bought by 95% of UK library services – now available in US through Brodart

# Changing libraries from control and process...

## Children's Libraries How the books are arranged:

<b>NON - FICTION, OR INFORMATION BOOKS</b>	<b>SPACE</b> (PURPLE)	
<b>ALL ABOUT ME</b> (WHITE)	<b>SPORTS, HOBBIES &amp; PASTIMES</b> (DARK BLUE)	
<b>THE ARTS</b> (CREAM)	<b>THE SUPERNATURAL</b> (PINK SPOT)	
<b>COMMUNITY</b> (RED)	<b>TRANSPORT</b> (BLACK)	
<b>COUNTRIES</b> (GREY)	<b>FICTION, OR STORY BOOKS</b>	
<b>THE EARTH AND ITS RESOURCES</b> (LIGHT BLUE)	<b>BOARD BOOKS</b> (NO LABEL)	
<b>FAIRY TALES, MYTHS &amp; LEGENDS</b> (ORANGE SPOT)	<b>UNDER FIVES</b> (YELLOW SPOT)	
<b>FAITHS &amp; FESTIVALS</b> (DARK PINK)	<b>PICTURE BOOKS</b> (NO LABEL)	
<b>HISTORY</b> (ORANGE)	<b>PICTURE BOOKS FOR OLDER CHILDREN</b> (SILVER SPOT)	
<b>LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGES</b> (YELLOW)	<b>BEGINNING READING</b> (GREEN SPOT)	
<b>PLANTS &amp; ANIMALS</b> (GREEN)	<b>STORIES</b> (NO LABEL)	
<b>POETRY AND PLAYS</b> (LIGHT PINK)	<b>TEENAGE</b> (BLUE SPOT)	
<b>REFERENCE BOOKS</b> (NO LABEL)	<b>LARGE PRINT</b> (GOLD SPOT)	
<b>SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY</b> (BROWN)		



... to imagination and engagement



A new school where the first intake of 57 children speak 33 languages

# Typical library entrance



# Same library after refurbishment



# Opening the Book research

- 40,000+ patron interviews carried out by library staff on our online training courses
- 1000+ observations carried out by library staff as part of our face-to-face training courses
- 500+ in-depth interviews about reading as part of setting up reading groups

# What we learn from observation and customer interviews

- Most people are 'chance' browsers – only 1 in 3 is looking for something specific
- Few people ask staff anything
- A tiny proportion use the catalog
- The average length of visit to a public library in the UK is 5-10 minutes. If this is the average, then many people must be coming in for less than 5 minutes.

# Benefits of a self-service library

- It's more accessible
- Helps readers find something for themselves
- Makes transactions efficient, quick and easy
- Ensures readers' choices are private
- Enables staff to engage with more readers

# Self-service library may have some/all of:

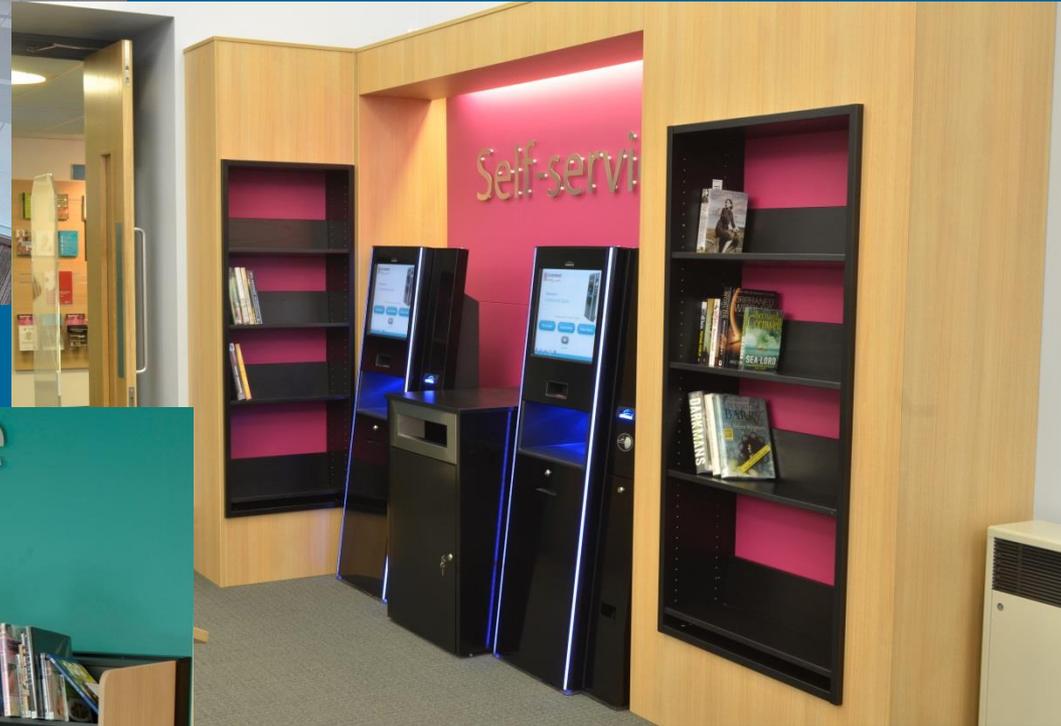
- Book, ebook and media issue and return
- Self-collection of reservations
- Self-service payments
- Self-service bookings – computer time, rooms
- Library staff are still essential but their work changes



Express area open longer hours



It can look smart too



# Invisible patrons

- If you're serving at the help desk you are most aware of the people who come to the help desk
- If you're good at responding to enquiries, you are most aware of the people who ask you something
- But what about the people who don't ask?

# INFORMATION DESK

LOCAL INFO  
THEATRES  
MEDICAL  
LOCAL HISTORY  
FILE  
2004 Occupations  
Summary Report for  
Options for the Future  
LOCAL INFO  
LOCAL HISTORY  
FILE

Calendar  
SECURITY  
INFORMATION  
IS IN USE

SECURITY  
INFORMATION  
IS IN USE

You can now pay by Credit or Debit card

Mobile Phones  
PLEASE  
Do not use mobile phones in the library as they can interfere with the computers and other equipment. Thank you.

IN

OUT

Richard Judy's  
Book Club





quick choice

quick choice

aids

check in  
& out

bestsellers

VIKING

WINTER

THE

# First impressions

- 80% of judgement is made in first 30 seconds
- View from the entrance is crucial
- With most libraries the experience gets better the further you go in
- Works for those who are familiar with libraries and know what they have inside, doesn't work for those who haven't grown up in library culture

# Start from the street



# Clear sightlines and routes through



# Rethink visible work processes





**A R G E**

**P R I N T**

**B O O K S**

**GRAINGER**  
FOR THE ONES WHO GET IT DONE

24  
**Coors LIGHT**

**STAPLES**

that was easy.

KEEP REFRIGERATED

EGGS

KEEP REFRIGERATED

EGGS



# Keep seating areas inviting ...



... not awkward



# Maintaining a showcase area is a priority



# It will repay the effort



# Sutton Central Library, London



**Holds 850 paperbacks, 0.5% of collection  
30% of fiction circ, 20% of total circ**



# The library as an experience

- Somewhere you want to go because it's pleasant to be in
- No barriers – open not controlled
- Layout entices you into the space
- You can't see everything at once – you are tempted though by a series of small discoveries
- Areas have different identities – choose where you want to sit

# Key principles to help invisible users

- First impression
- Shapes that draw people in
- Dynamic use of colour
- Books in the eyeline each way you turn
- Clear and attractive signage
- No clutter – let the books sing

# First impression is the staff desk



# First impression same space after refurb



# Traditional straight rows



18-Aug-08 15:13



Rece

Fiction A

Crime

Crime

Crime

Fiction M

W & W

W & W



Science,  
nature & sport

History &  
local history

Arts

body, spirit

style

lifestyle

Quick choice



DVDs

Information books

Information books

Information books

Information books

Information books

Stories

Stories

Stories

Can You Hear Me?



Large Print  
Print B

Large Print  
Print B

Media and Entertainment  
Adloniant a'r Cyfryngau

Crime  
Trosedd

Crime  
Trosedd

Reservations  
Llyfrau ar G



# Reader-friendly signage

- Libraries are under-signed at the global level and over-signed at the local level
- You don't need to explain everything
- Use the book covers to aid navigation
- Change the way you shelve so staff look at the books not the labels

# Public library guiding explanation



By space  
 require about  
 ease contact  
 you soon.

...which also should be made in a published form...  
 ...availability of that the policy...  
 ...specifically included by name...  
 ...the regulations...  
 ...specify the amount of cover provided by the relevant policy.

signed by production of A22 UK Limited

Name: **COMPETENT PERSON:**  
 Location: **ELAINE FENTON**  
 Group:  
 Name: **FIRST AID : ELAINE FENTON**  
 Location:  
 Group:

equipment, noise and radiation.  
 - avoid hazardous manual handling operations, and where they cannot be avoided, reduce the risk of injury;  
 - provide health surveillance as appropriate;  
 - provide free any protective clothing or equipment, where risks are not adequately controlled by other means;  
 - ensure that appropriate safety signs are provided and maintained;  
 - report certain injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences to the appropriate health and safety enforcing authority (see box in column 3 for who this is).

is set out in HSE publications, such as:  
*Essentials of health and safety at work*  
 HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0716 X  
*An introduction to health and safety. Health and safety in small business* Leaflet INDG239(Rev 1)  
 HSE Books 2003 (single copy free)  
 HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books,  
 PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA  
 Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 513995  
 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk  
 (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 1998. First published 1998. Approved by the Health and Safety Executive 1 October 1998. ISBN 0 7176 0402 1. Reprinted 2002. Price £7.50 including VAT.



RGES 2008 / 2009

Language Courses

Compact Discs  
 Double discs  
 £p per week  
 Priority Passports £5.30p  
 Set of 3 - 9 discs  
 £0 per week  
 Priority Passports £9.50p  
 Set of 15+ discs  
 £.00 per week  
 Priority Passport £1.00

Language Courses  
 Free

will apply on overdue items  
 charge for each reminder sent  
 charged at £0.15 per day overdue

Kirklees

**WELCOME! to the DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM**

Shelf numbers between...	...cover this general subject...	...which includes these more specific subjects
000 and 100	Generalities (Miscellaneous)	004 - computing 070 - journalism
100 to 200	Philosophy & psychology	136 - supernatural, astrology 150 - psychology 170 - ethics, including animal rights
200 to 300	Religion	230 - Christianity 280 - other religions
300 to 400	Social sciences	320 - politics 330 - economics 340 - law 350 - local government 360 - social problems & services 370 - education 380 - transport 390 - customs, fashion, ethnology and folklore
400 to 500	Language	420 - English 430 - German 440 - French 450 - Italian 460 - Spanish & Portuguese 490 - Asian languages
500 to 600	Natural sciences & maths	510 - maths 520 - astronomy 530 - physics 540 - chemistry 550 - earth sciences, including earthquakes, volcanoes, weather 570 - botany 580 - plants 590 - animals (and animals)

**WELCOME! to the DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM**

Shelf numbers between...	...cover this general subject...	...which includes these more specific subjects.
600 to 700	Technology	610 - health & medicine 620 - engineering 630 - agriculture, including parks, gardening 640 - home economics, cookery, childcare, DIY 650 - management, business 680 - building & buildings
700 to 800	The arts	711 - town planning 720 - architecture 730 - sculpture 740 - drawing, antiques 750 - painting & paintings 760 - graphic arts, printing 770 - photography & photographs 780 - music 790 - performing arts, including sport
800 to 900	Literature	810 - American literature 820 - English literature 830 - geography & travel 840 - biography, genealogy 850 - history of Europe, including WW1 & WW2 860 - history of Asia 870 - history of Africa 880 - history of North America
900 to 999	Geography & history	

Library & Information Centre





Board books

Picture books

Early learning

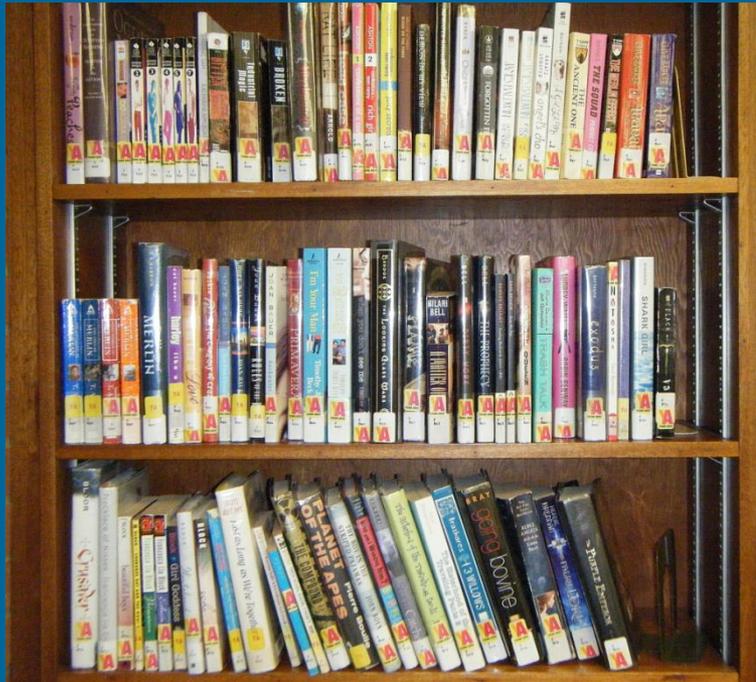
Easy stories

Fiction

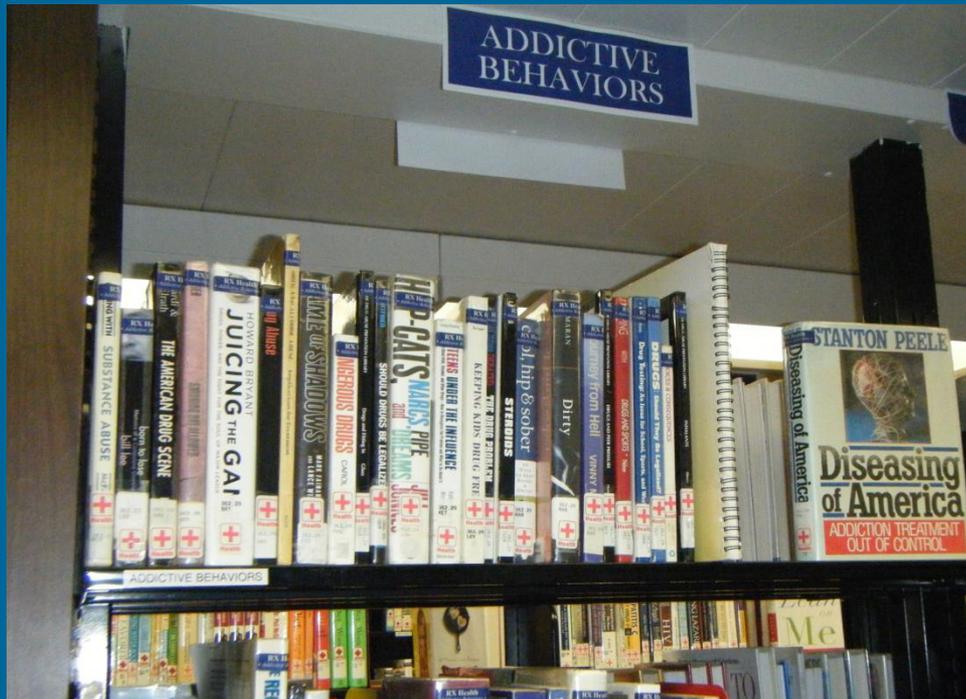




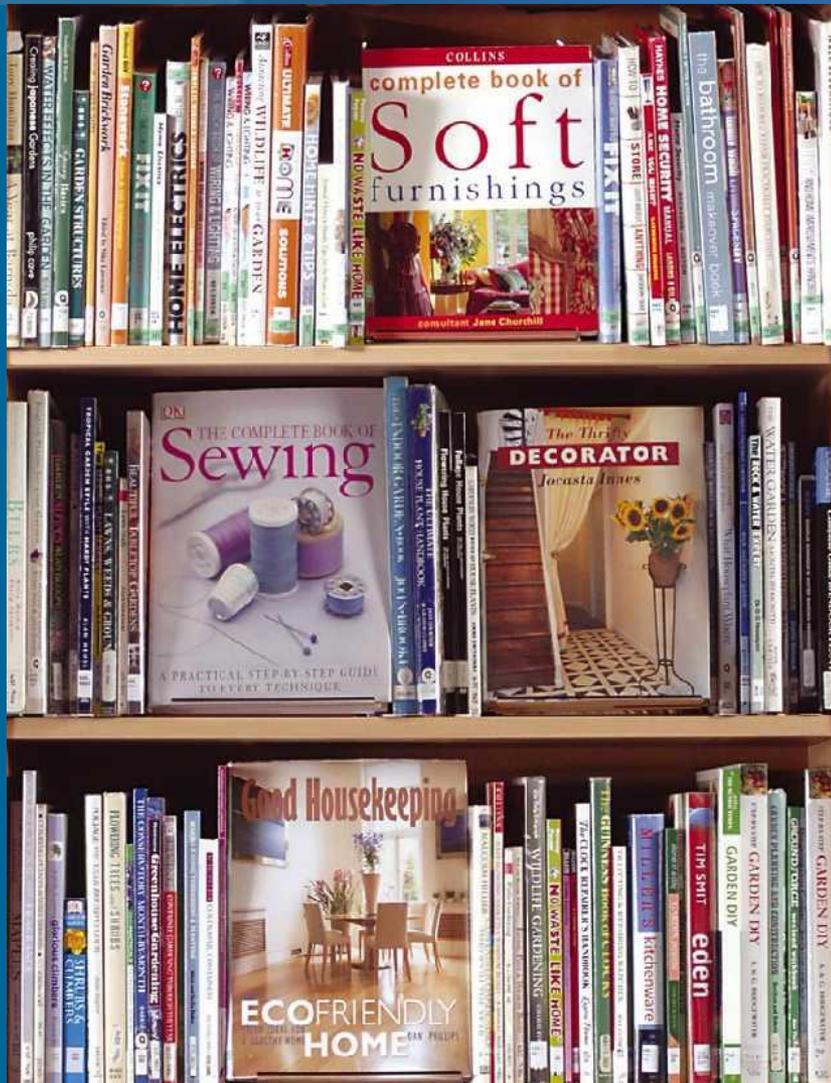
# Alphabet labels look like kindergarten



# Genre labels are as bad!



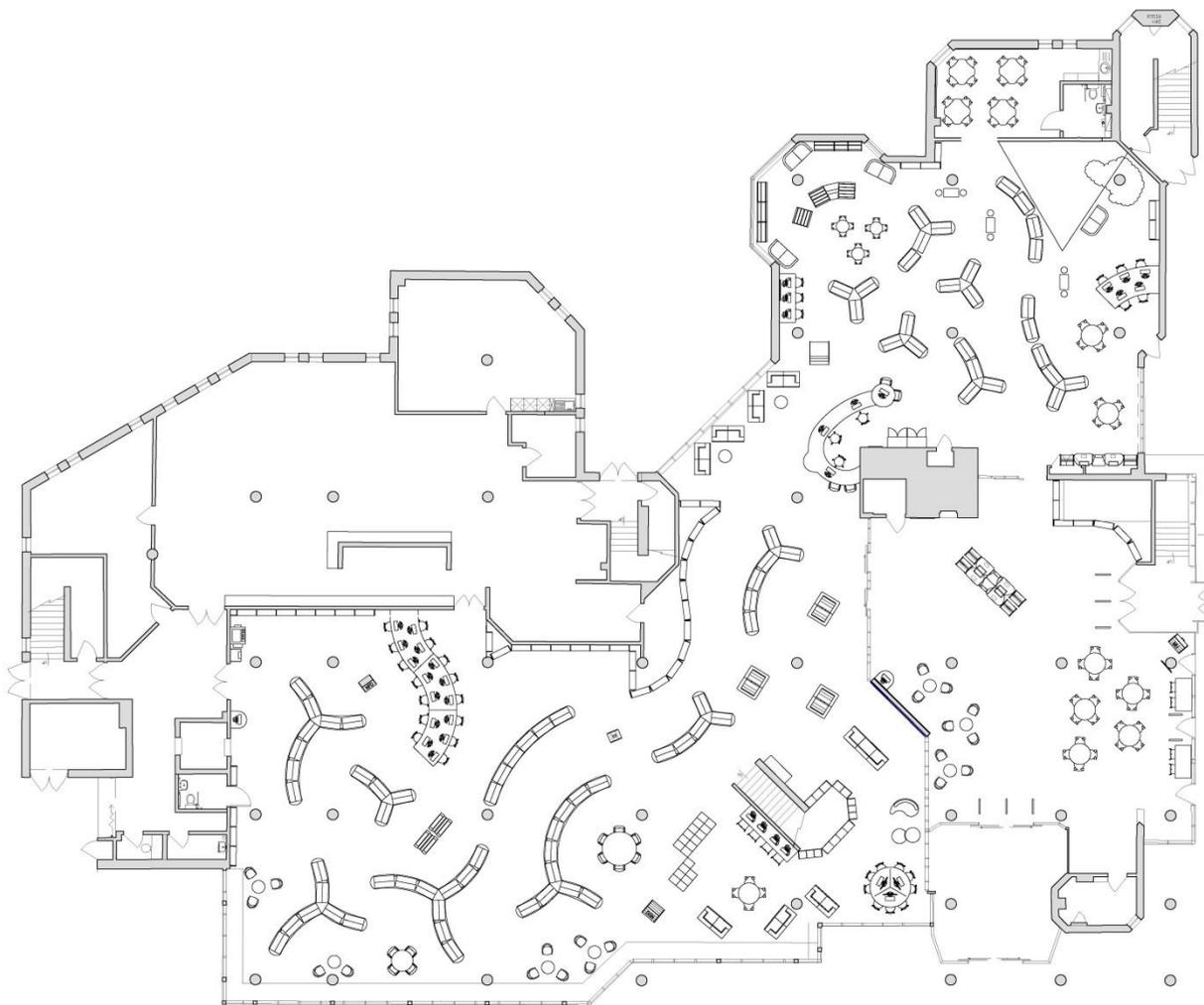
# Use book covers to aid navigation



# Change the main desk

- Move the desk back from the entrance and put the products first in view
- Reduce the size
- Reduce the height and sense of barrier
- Use pods and walk-to points





# Counter signals different relationship with customer

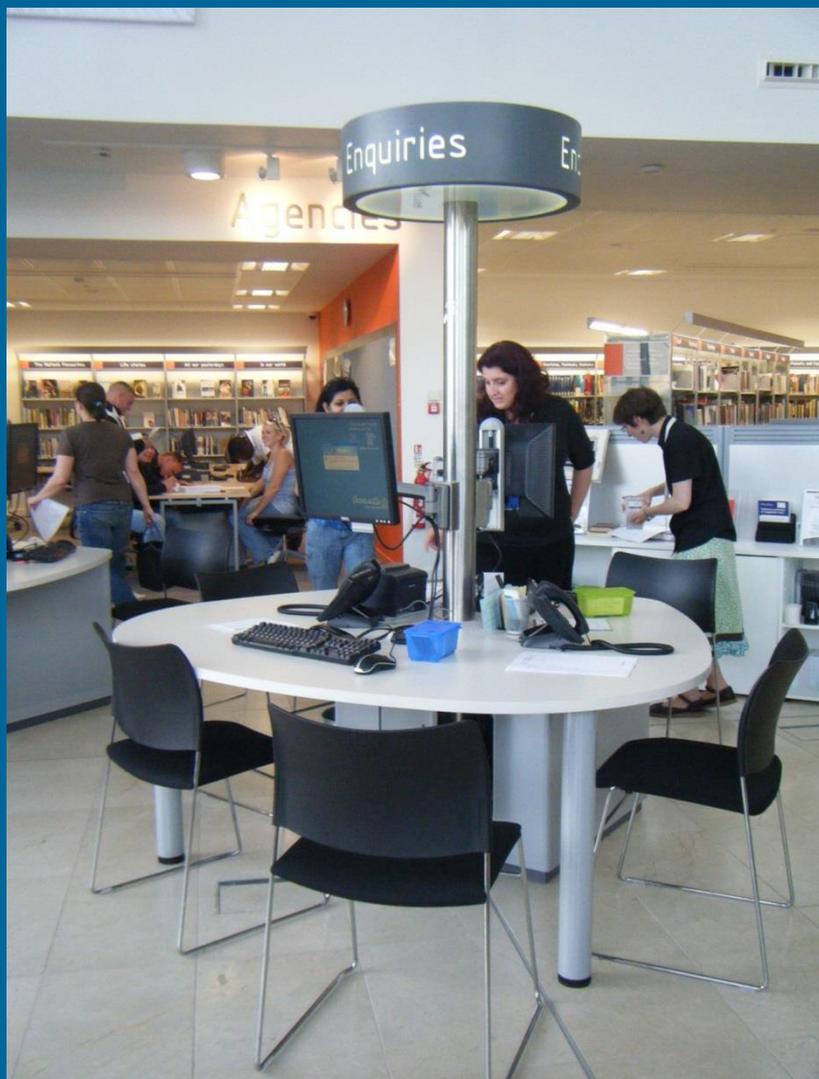




# The librarian is not based at the counter



# Open pod and walk-to staff pod



# Make customers your priority ...



... face-to-face ...



...and by using display as a conversation



# Change collection presentation

- Manage the collection into the space
- Prioritise the 75% of impulse choosers
- Plan for topping up in high turnover areas
- Dress the shelves – give books from the bottom shelf their turn in the sun at eye-level
- Treat stock as dynamic not static
- Less time organising and alphabetising, more time experimenting with merchandising and promotions

# Table-top display problems



# Can't see book covers



# Not friendly for choosing



# The solution

Pick an area near the front of the library

- Angle books so they jump into the eyeline as you come in to the space
- Create small manageable choices

Keep the display topped up

- Usage falls steeply when a display is less than 70% full











# books to go

- TURNING THIRTY
- Broken Cedar
- WAVEN KIMMEL the solace of leaving early
- DOMINIC HOLLAND THE RIPPLE EFFECT
- A Sign of Colour
- INTRAGU
- VERBIL TAYLOR
- SOPHIE KINSELLA Shopaholic Ties the Knot



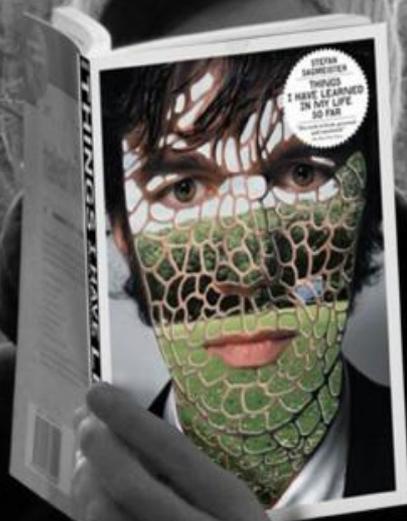
# ... and the homemade signage





# Don't be afraid to target specific audiences





**WHO**

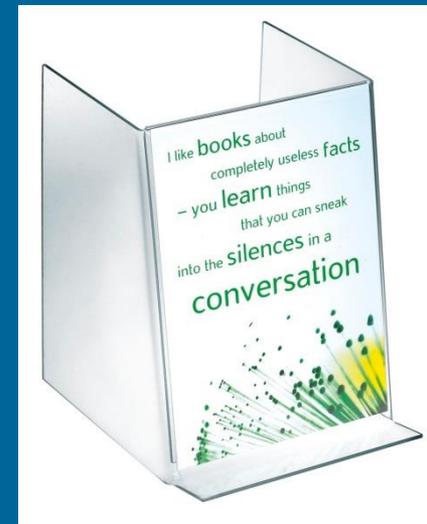
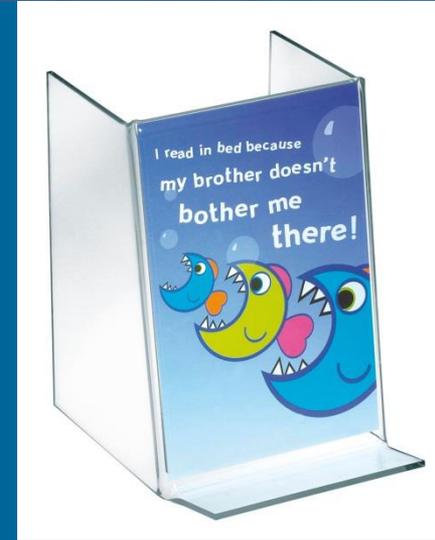
*do you want  
to be*

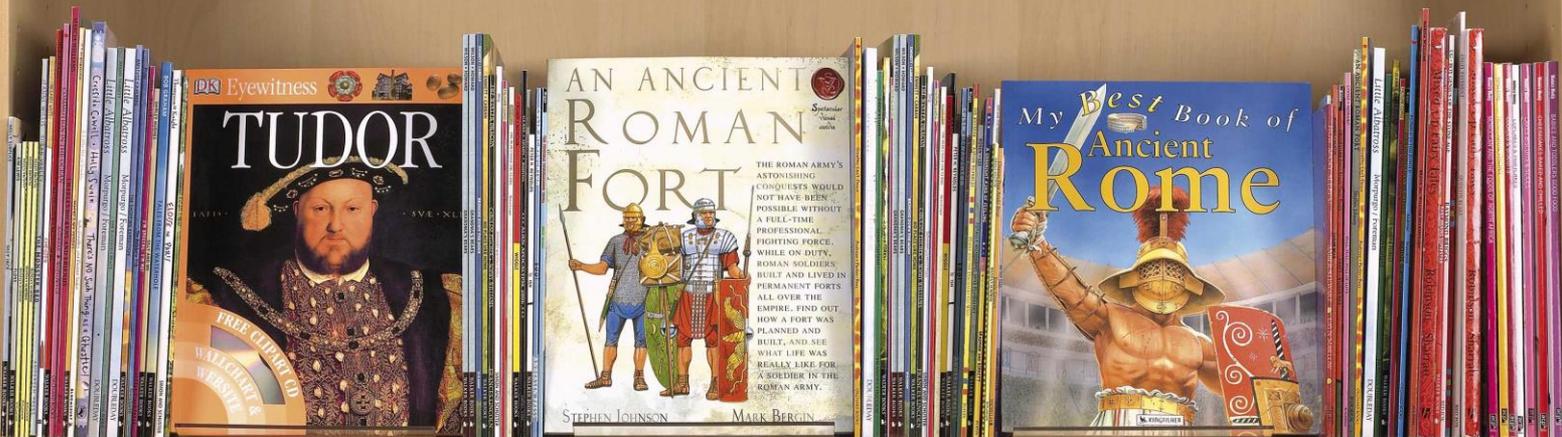
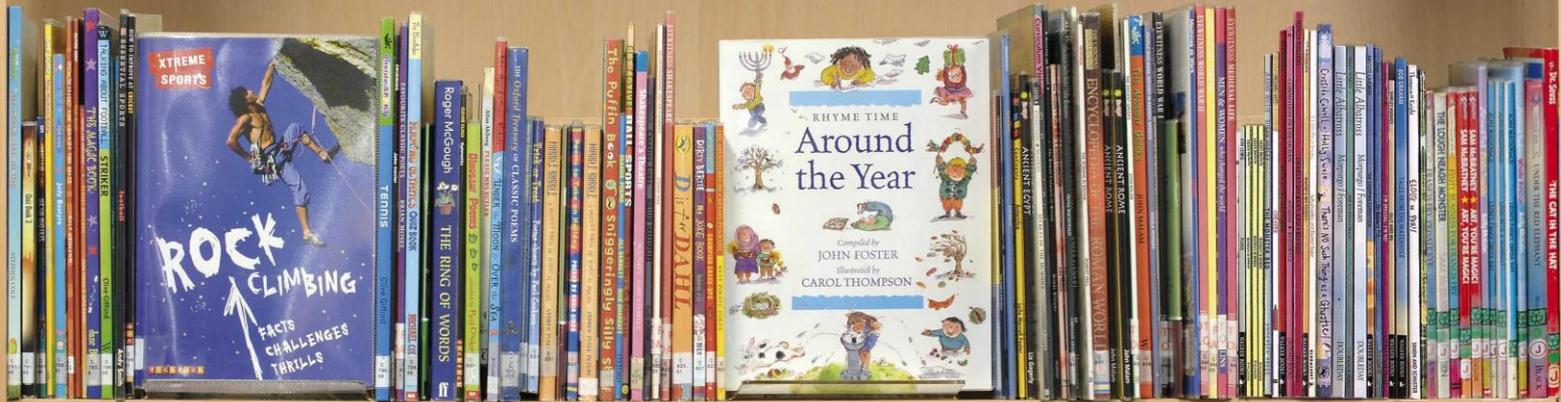
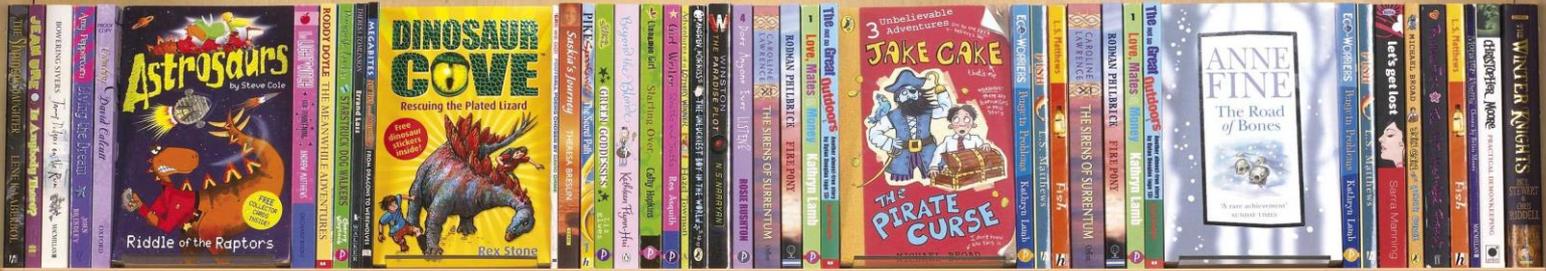
**TODAY?**

# Make on-shelf display dynamic



# On-shelf display with Feature Fillers





# Empty displays





# Full and inviting





# What skills do staff need?

- Easy to approach and talk to
- Collection awareness
- Collection display
- Web resource awareness
- Comfortable with children and adults
- Comfortable with IT and books
- Not behind counter all the time
- Active not passive, anticipating as well as responding

# How to get them

- Extend what you do already
- Practice
- Colleague support
- Online training

# Online training

[Buy library furniture](#)

[Library design service](#)

[Online library courses](#)

[School library furniture](#)

[Homepage](#) > [Library training](#) > [Training courses for library professionals and managers](#)

## See your job in a new light.

"That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way." – Doris Lessing

Pricing

### Introducing interActive



interActive offers a dynamic and flexible learning experience to stimulate your thinking and build evidence for change. It shows you effective ways to widen the appeal of libraries, to make the whole collection work harder and to enrich the experience for visitors.

The modules are packed with free resources for promotions, exercises for staff training and ideas for readers' advisory. Ideas and examples are applied in a series of practical tasks which will test the theory and build evidence from your own experience.

A personal online mentor from Opening the Book will support your learning and stretch your practice.

[Download course flyer with graduate feedback](#)

### Who is interActive for?



If you are keen to contribute to shaping an active library service that grows and changes, you will enjoy interActive and find it rewarding.

interActive is for library professionals and staff with management responsibilities. As well as offering quick win promotional ideas, the course provides tools to support managers in making lasting changes in library practice.

There are different versions of the course for Australia & New Zealand; USA & Canada; UK & Ireland - content is tailored to your context. Discussion with colleagues in an international online community is stimulating and will widen your network of professional contacts.

[Try the course for free](#)

### How does it work?



Once your personal account is created, you can start and stop whenever you like. The course is structured into six sequential modules. The practical projects can be applied in different settings and have the potential to develop outside the course.

Your personal online mentor will respond quickly to the work you send with their assessments and comments. The course facilitates easy online dialogue.

Your access to the course is not time-limited. You can use the materials and be part of the interActive community for as long as you wish. You can also choose to train as a mentor of other colleagues taking the course.

[Watch the course video walkthrough](#)

# See demo video and free trial

- Go to [www.openingthebooktraining.com](http://www.openingthebooktraining.com)
- 10,000 library staff have taken our online courses
- Online exercises then applied in a real library
- Go at your own pace with personal mentor feedback from Opening the Book



openin



Next

### Task: C

Books to C  
goes in it.  
a clear me

Aim to offe  
usually as  
feature a r  
40.

Your task  
Books to C

You can c

Click on th  
appropriat

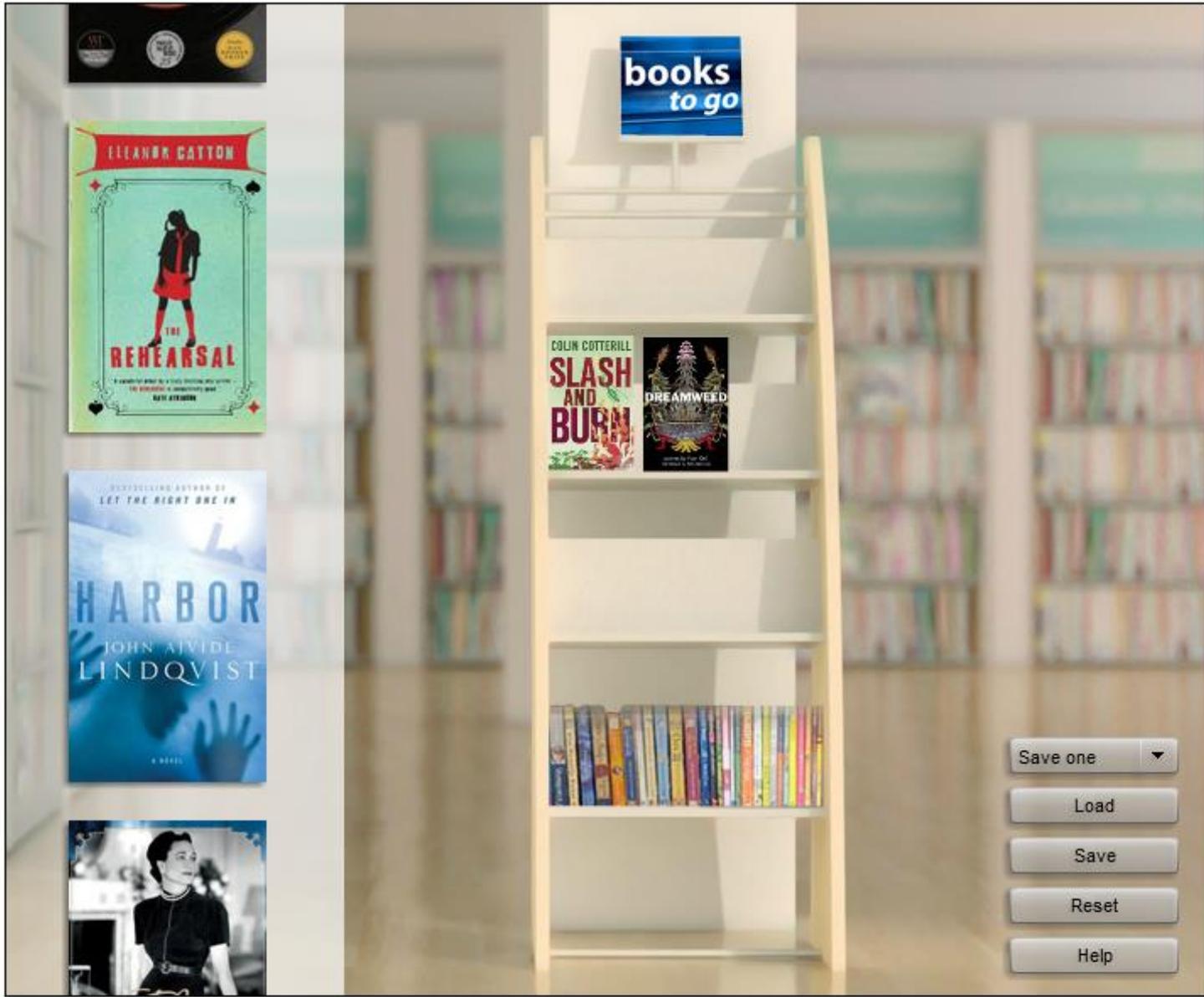
Try out lot  
displays.

If you click

Click the S

If you wan

Save a ve

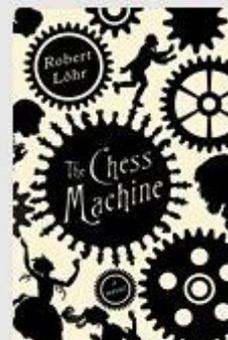
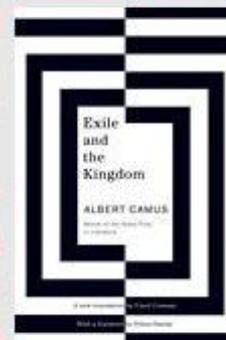
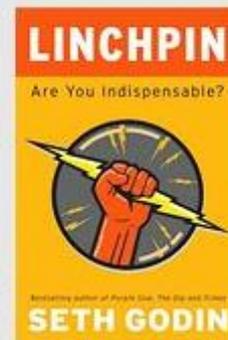
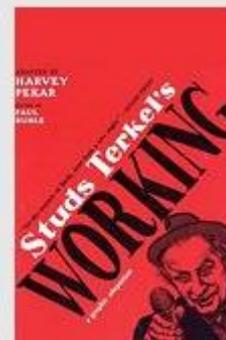
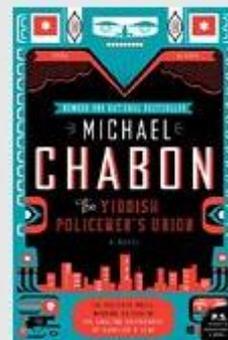




## Using graphic style

Book jackets with similar fonts or cover styles can work well together. There are plenty of 'copy cat' covers and visual clichés that come and go. If you can find copy cat covers from across a range of categories or subjects, bring them together. Similar visual images intend to signal similar kinds of read and will attract the eye of the same reader.

Take care not to choose too narrow a style – a display of covers with spaceships on them probably won't attract any reader who isn't interested in science fiction.



Current course:  
interActive

Modules:  
1 2 3 4 5 6

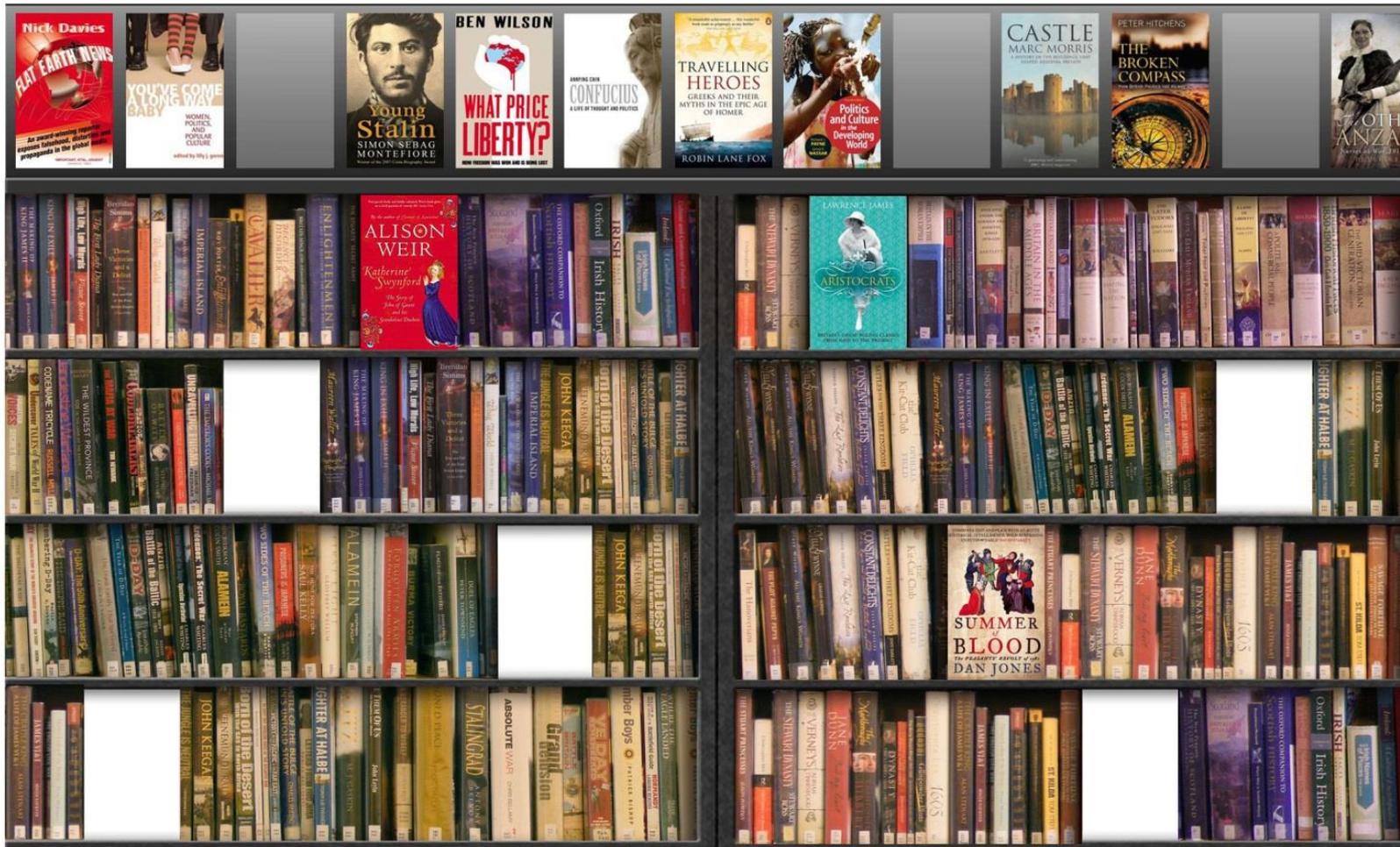
Contents

Module

Workbook

Bookmarks

## Dressing the shelves - mixing the height



# Staff rota at one UK library

- On-counter - always available, no other work to be done at counter, if quiet use pcs to familiarise yourself with digital resources such as Know UK, X-refer etc
- Back-office – work tasks
- On-floor – on-shelf-displays, aware of customers, anticipating customer need

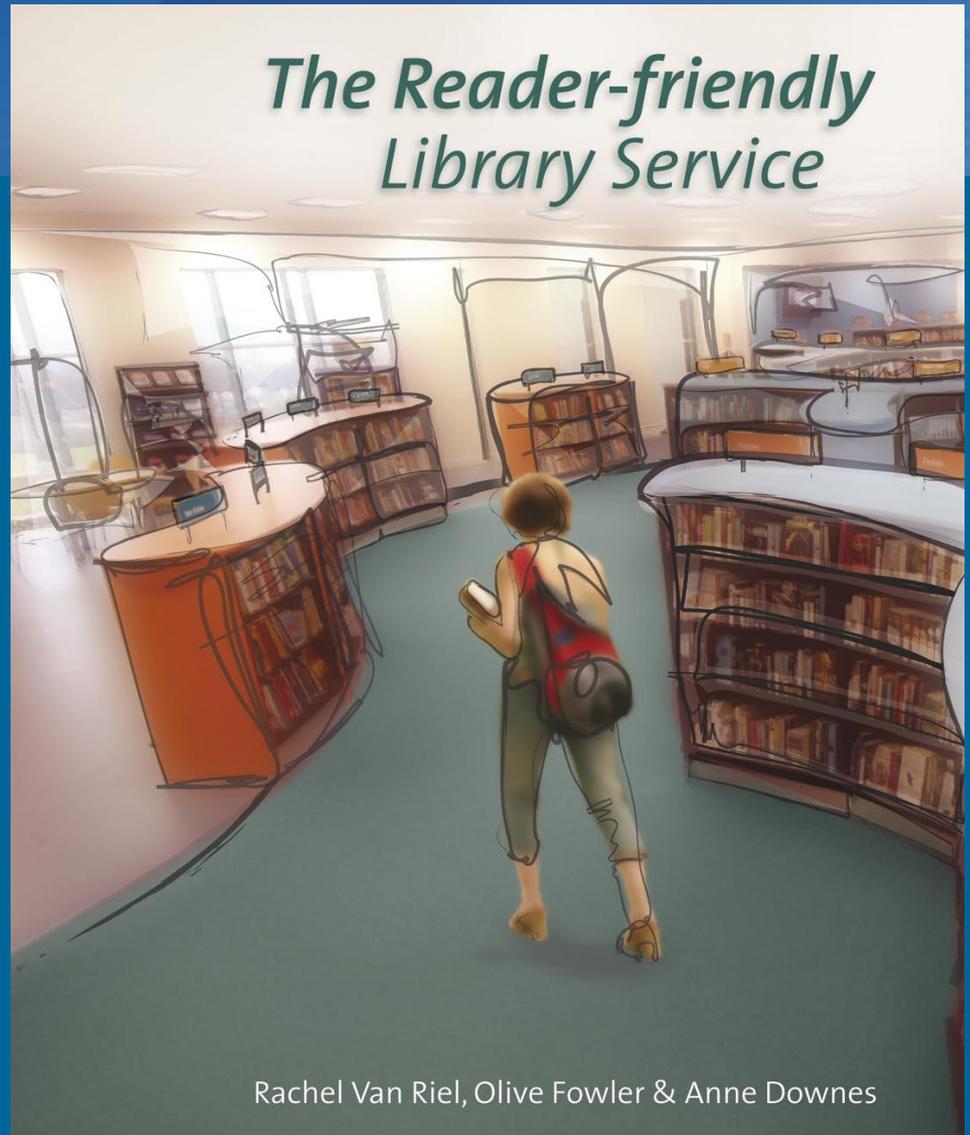
# Opportunities

- Take the opportunity for change
- Counter can be smaller and less dominant
- Frees space for mini quick choice
- Make books the first thing the customer sees

# New routines offer

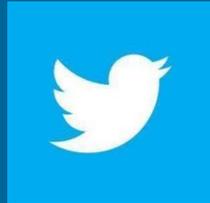
- Equality between staff and readers – you are more approachable away from the counter
- Opportunities to talk to a wider range of readers and improve their experience of the library
- A chance to use display differently to make more stock work harder and increase circulation
- Time to work creatively with books and extend your collection knowledge

Read our  
book –  
hundreds of  
ideas from  
UK libraries



# Contact Rachel:

[rachel@openingthebook.com](mailto:rachel@openingthebook.com)



follow [@RachelVanRiel](https://twitter.com/RachelVanRiel)

[www.openingthebook.com](http://www.openingthebook.com)

and at TLA Brodart Booth #1433