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# Making more of your coffee time – just add hot water

Susan O'Sullivan  
*Subject Librarian, Birmingham Institute of  
Art and Design Libraries  
Library and Learning Resources UCE  
Birmingham*  
Tel: 0121 331 5756  
E-mail: [sue.osullivan@uce.ac.uk](mailto:sue.osullivan@uce.ac.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

In January 2004 we at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (BIAD) libraries began to develop 'Making more of your coffee time – just add hot water', combining the chance for academic colleagues to learn more about what the library has to offer with the chance to enjoy some library-supplied refreshments.

Several thoughts and projects had influenced this idea, including:

- John Ridgway – our faculty librarian – during BIAD site meetings had commented that if we promote library services to academic staff, academic staff are likely to promote our services to students.
- BBCi launched a new way of learning: BBC Online courses promoted on TV through 'Make the most of your lunchtime' – picturing an employee at her workstation, eating sandwiches, working through an online course etc., and this way of learning offered (according to the publicity): (a) an opportunity to develop skills and increase understanding from the privacy of your own PC, (b) a way of learning online at your own pace, and (c) a start in an area that interests you.
- The 2003 CILIP/Emerald public relations and publicity awards promotional campaign winner 'BLT' (Books @ Lunch Time) highlighted just how successful this approach could be.

**ESTABLISHING THE 'MAKING MORE OF YOUR COFFEE TIME' PROJECT**

We identified the following aims:

- to target UCE Birmingham's academic staff (Birmingham Institute of Art and Design is part of the University of Central England, Birmingham)
- to train them in a non-threatening environment – at their PC (if requested)
- to offer tailored information-skills and information-retrieval training, addressing specific requirements (e.g. information required / appropriate pace and pitch)
- to provide an opportunity to promote the library's services and create highlights, such as an update on what's available
- to improve communication, asking 'How are we doing? Is there anything you've been using that we don't???', taking comments on board and creating a rapport
- to identify basic things such as:
  - o Where is the kettle?
  - o What is to be discussed (tailored to specific needs)?
  - o Where to meet and when.

We created a 'Making more of your coffee time' flyer and coaster (see Figures 1 to 3 for the 2006 versions). We were able to win financial support from Swets and Sainsbury's agreed to provide the coffee and biscuits. Pacific Partnership (a local firm) designed the flyer and Boris Barker (IT technician demonstrator at BIAD) and Malcolm Read (our Digital Print Services Manager) helped design the coaster.



Figure 1. The flyer (front design)



Figure 2. The flyer (reverse)



Figure 3. Coaster design – using 3 colours on a clear acrylic disc

We decided to launch a pilot project based at the Bournville library. This library supports the Bournville Centre for Visual Arts and is housed in Ruskin Hall, a listed building (opened in 1903) located in the Bournville Village Trust conservation area. The library covers general aspects of art and design, supporting the Foundation Diploma programme, the BA (Hons) Art and Design by Negotiated Study and an MA Visual Arts course.

This pilot project lasted approximately 12 months. Flyers were used as invites but also to maintain our profile. They were periodically placed in staff pigeon holes and on tables in the staffroom and were given out at library events, such as the 'Bournville Library Fangtastic Halloween Givea-

way' where staff were recipients of a Hallowe'en trick or treat bag of goodies whose gifts included our 'Making more of your coffee time' coaster and flyer, some sweets and a pair of luminous fangs.

## **RESULTS**

The project was very well received. Comments included 'We'll have to arrange a coffee – soon'; 'I really like this idea'; 'What fun!'; 'I didn't know about this ...'; and 'Thank you.' Generally there was an increase in liaisons with staff, more questions were asked – and meetings tended to occur, very informally, in the library.

The project is best evaluated qualitatively. It's very difficult to measure its 'success' quantitatively – we feel it was successful. Relationships, rapport and communications have been strengthened.

This project will now be rolled out to all UCE Birmingham libraries, once again with financial support from Swets.