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# 'Do something different' days at Cardiff University library service

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The University Library Service (ULS) within Cardiff University's Information Services Directorate consists of 16 libraries across two main campuses. Staff tend to feel a strong ownership and commitment to their 'home' library but may know relatively little about other libraries/sections within ULS. 'Do something different day' (DSD) offers library staff the opportunity to visit a different library or section for up to one day. This initiative aims to broaden staff knowledge of the entire service and give insight into the 'bigger picture'.

Since 2006 Cardiff University Library Service has been experimenting with various workplace learning practices such as job rotation and job shadowing. These programmes are organised by our Workplace Learning Working Group.

Job rotation was first trialled in ULS in 2006<sup>1</sup>. It is now an annual programme involving staff rotating for six weeks into another role or section. Although it is a successful scheme, it has been found that a commitment of six weeks is daunting for some staff. We came up with the idea of DSD in order to provide staff with a 'taster' rotation of up to one day.

Our first DSD in June 2008 was coined 'Do something wicked Wednesday'. In total, five members of staff participated, each one visiting our Business, Law and Science/Biomedical libraries, and two joining our Acquisitions and Cataloguing section for the day. Feedback was very positive with all participants agreeing that they enjoyed the day very much and would recommend it to a colleague.

Since then we have run the day biannually in June and November/December. So far, 33 people have taken part (with four staff participating

twice!). The scheme is open to all staff of all grades. We have gradually increased the range of locations participating, in order to include other parts of Information Services, such as our Media Resources Centre, IT Service Desk, Courier Service, Advanced Research Computing@Cardiff (ARCCA), Student and Laptop Services Team and the Communications Team. We have also recently recruited the University Careers Library to participate. We are currently persuading others to do so.

The most popular locations have been Collection Management Services (Acquisitions and Cataloguing) (8 visits), the IT Service Desk, where users get advice and support on all aspects of IT (5 visits), as well as the Law (3 visits) and Science/Biomedical libraries (3 visits). Other visits have been split across the many locations.

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, and benefits include making contact, observing different systems such as RFID self-service in action and cross-pollination of ideas. Some feedback is given below:

Pat Charles (Collection Management Services) visited the courier service: 'I chose to try this for several reasons. Last year I stood in for one of the couriers doing store requests and driving the van. I thought it would be a good idea if I could gain some experience of knowing where to park at the many sites, so if there was ever a crisis and real shortage of couriers at any time I could help out. I also like variety in my work and love driving.'

Haley Arnold (Trevithick Library) visited the IT Service Desk: 'Here at Trevithick I work in IT support so I wanted to know what it was like on the other side. The Service Desk staff taught me loads and we had a few good laughs as well! I learned four or five new tricks for solving the everyday IT queries here at Trevithick that I didn't know about previously.'

Alison Palmer (Collection Management Services) who visited the subject librarians in the Arts and Social Studies Library: 'I am interested in the decision making process that leads to the ordering of an item. I knew that our subject librarians did other things as well as filling in pink and blue cards – but I never realised how many! This certainly helped me understand how we in acquisitions can help more.'

We continue to look for new areas to participate in DSDs as well as encouraging more senior staff to participate. We currently have two members of the Information Services Board lined up to participate in our next day. We are confident that they will find it enjoyable and informative and we hope it will encourage staff at all levels to take part in the future.



Figure 1  
Haley Arnold (Trevithick Library) with Dylan Miles (IT Service Desk)



Figure 2  
Alison Palmer (Collection Management Services) visiting Sonja Haerkoenen (Subject Librarian for European Studies & Psychology, Arts & Social Studies Library)

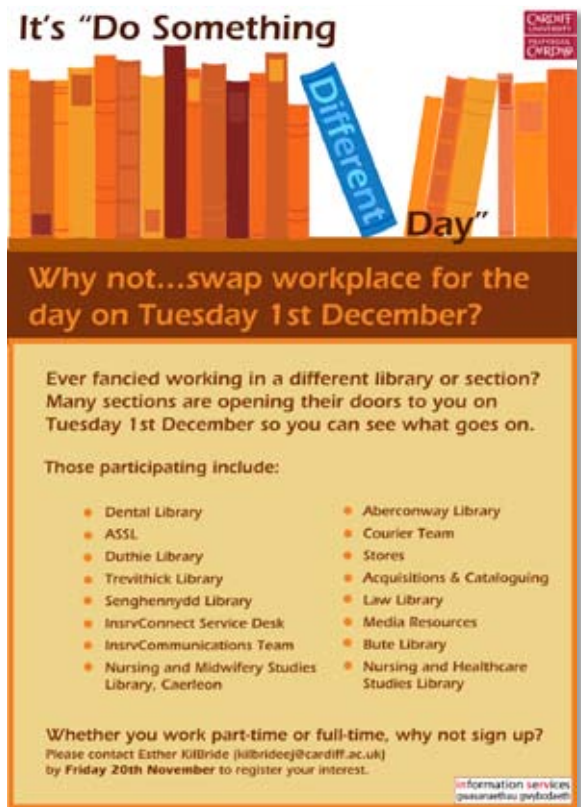


Figure 3  
 Posters advertising our DSD days, designed by Esther Kilbride, Senior Library Assistant, Nursing and Healthcare Studies Library

**NOTE**

- 1 See S. Earney and A. Martins, 'Job rotation at Cardiff University library service: a pilot study', *Journal of librarianship and information science*, 41 (4), 2009, pp 213–26.