

---

# A typical morning for the information support desk in the University of Liverpool's Sydney Jones library

Sandra Brunnen  
Reference Librarian,  
Sydney Jones library  
Tel: 0151 794 2679  
E-mail: [sandra.brunnen@liv.ac.uk](mailto:sandra.brunnen@liv.ac.uk)



*8:30 – 9:00am*

The morning shift.

Arrive and take stock. Warm up by practising our smiles. Comment quickly and briefly about transport irritations, inclement weather and other topics because there is usually a student approaching or waiting for help. Some might have waited all night!

*9:00 – 10:30am*

The morning might start gently, but this is rare. Enquirers and their questions take precedence over anything else we might want to do, and this is the time to remind ourselves that we are feeling bright, helpful and welcoming. We work through the housekeeping. Organise our workload, check the state of the study rooms, the location of equipment. Is everything as it should be? We answer messages left on the phone or from the evening before. Our day is a web of teamwork, liaising and consulting with other members of library and computing staff and using their expertise, so we need to know who is available.

We plan our own commitments, days off/training/meetings. We check that the equipment, microfilm readers and photocopiers are all working and their supplies are adequate. We find out from, or report to, the building managers whether the lifts/toilets etc. are out of order or if extreme heat or cold is likely to have an impact on any of our users. Are the teaching centre computers fully functional? Check e-mails. And so it goes on.

*10:30 – 11:00 am Coffee break (for some of us)*

*11.00 – 1.00pm*

These two hours are usually busy and our attention is dedicated to helping library users. In addition to the desk, we provide a virtual information service. Library users can contact us using the 'chat' facility to talk to us live, or by e-mail if this is preferred or chat is unavailable. Provision of this service is shared between the two university libraries, the Harold Cohen library and the Sydney Jones library. As you would expect, questions come from near and far and are very varied. Some are predictable. There may be a problem accessing an online journal, renewing a book, enquiring whether a particular title is available. Others are less predictable. Could 'Sydney Jones' be a relative; what can we tell the enquirer about him? Who was the Chilean consul in Liverpool in 1942 during WW2? Do we have a statue of Christopher Bushell in the university? Some enquiries will need forwarding to other members of library staff or to other departments but none will remain unanswered.

*1:00 – 5:00pm, 5:00 – 9:30pm,  
afternoon and evening shifts*

Continuation with variations.

Automation is invaluable but we all hope that having someone to ask for help makes the library a more rewarding place to be. We welcome users' comments.