



Sir Alex Ferguson Library

Director's Report

Academic year 2020/21 was a challenging year for the library as it was for society as a whole. The ongoing pandemic meant we had to radically change our service model to keep our users and staff safe. It was quite a change from our normal welcoming and open to all ethos, to switch to controlled access for limited numbers of users. With the easing of government restrictions, we reopened the Sir Alex Ferguson Library in September to give access to physical library stock and archival material and provide study space for those who could not study at home.

We carried out detailed planning and risk assessment and made major adjustments to our service provision such as implementing a booking system and reconfiguring the library space to ensure social distancing. We kept the number of staff on campus to a minimum whilst delivering a high quality service to our users.

The team also introduced an online chat service to deal with library enquiries and this proved very popular. This had the additional benefit of allowing staff who were not able to come on to campus to participate in the work of the team from home.

Our Archives team developed a digitisation service and answered online enquiries. We safely reopened the archives to GCU researchers as government restrictions were eased.

We made improvements to our online collections, adding more than 16,000 new ebooks to our catalogue. Our investment in a new Resource List System proved very effective driving up engagement with the resources chosen by module leaders by almost 400%.

Our online classes, drop-ins and appointments were very popular with students who appreciated the ability to review a recording at a later date. Our Academic Librarians also created new online content to assist users in finding and using library resources.

We were pleased to retain our Customer Service Excellence accreditation alongside Student Life and the IT Service Management Team. The assessment was held online due to COVID restrictions and our CSE assessor reported that,

“Throughout the assessment, staff and customers spoke of how you have adapted to working in a primarily digital way and have done so in ways that best meet your customers’ needs... it was also clear that you have taken cognisance of the customer journey in planning layouts. ‘Quick print’ services and the Book Returns box inside the Library were clear examples of using customer insight to deliver customer-focused services.”

In the coming academic year, we hope to open up unrestricted access to the library once again as restrictions ease further and to welcome our users back to the library.



University for the Common Good

The Library

Annual Report 2020/21



University for the Common Good

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The Year in Statistics

In comparison to 2019/20



NSS score

79% satisfaction with Library resources and services (11% decrease)
In common with libraries across the sector we experienced a fall in our NSS score. This was unsurprising given the reduced access to library buildings due to the pandemic restrictions. We were pleased to retain our position above the sector average.



Ebooks available

271,564 (6% increase)



Number of reading list views

270,044 (new measure)



Resources available in edShare

6,422 (54% increase)



edShare downloads

275,934 (45% increase)



Total open access outputs in ResearchOnline

2,967 (new measure)



No. of full text theses in EThOS

649 (0.3% increase)



Interlibrary loans provided

1,537 (43% increase)

Achievements 2020/21

- Implementing Click and Collect** - This year the library implemented a Click and Collect service ahead of the library reopening for Trimester A to allow users to quickly and safely access physical copies of library stock during the pandemic. The implementation included allowing requesting of on-shelf items for the first time and introducing quarantine processes for returned items, alongside the introduction of recalls, aligning library loan policies for different material types and user groups, and introducing automatic renewals.
- REF submission** - The library played a key role in the University's successful submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, the system for assessing the quality of research in higher education institutions. As well as managing thousands of open access research outputs which were considered as part of the exercise, library staff also managed many elements of the final submission, including data collation and quality control, and advising research leads on complex areas of policy interpretation. The final results of the REF will be published in May 2022 and will inform the selective allocation of central research funding to GCU until 2027 or later.

- Resource lists @ GCU** - Following the introduction of new resource list policies and procedures in summer 2020, the library team significantly increased the number of resource lists available in the 2020/21 academic year. Making these lists available via GCU Learn resulted in huge increases in student engagement with the resources set and recommended by academics.
- Community Tools** - The Archive Centre team have introduced a community tools section to their webpages. The vision is to freely share their expertise with a wider audience and encourage grassroots archiving as a means of preserving stories in the community. Central to this ethos is stripping away the mystery around archives and encouraging groups to see the value of their story and the part it plays in national identity. The first resource, already mentioned in this report, is a toolkit for the social enterprise sector.

Archives and Special Collections

- Being back in the Archive Centre, working with the collections and opening to researchers has been an absolute highlight for this year. When restrictions allowed, we tailored the service to fit with pandemic guidelines while ensuring much needed access to the research community.
- We are now in the second year of our National Heritage Lottery Fund project **Common Good Comics** (with Magic Torch Comics and GCU's Yunus Centre) and are excited to see the collected stories come to life through the work of the artists involved.
- Our Scottish Government funded **Social Enterprise Archiving Toolkit** is now live for all to use as part of the new community tools section on our website. This tool helps people value and share their stories and keep them safe for present and future generations.
- The service is now benefiting from the creation of a new 0.6FTE Assistant Archivist post with a core remit around cataloguing.
- We contributed to the University's Times Higher Education Impact Rankings in the area of intangible cultural heritage.



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Preserving the past to inform the future

Support and Teaching

- The Academic Librarian team continued to provide an online service. Students and staff could access enquiry services, drop in with questions and make appointments for one-to-one help. The total number of enquiries is 1,592. This includes 311 appointments, 1,067 emails and 214 people came to our online drop in by clicking on a link to GCU Learn and straight into a chat with a librarian.
- We receive very good feedback from students for these sessions,

“Was really helpful, I was a bit hesitant in contacting as I felt a bit daft but this appointment made me more confident in my search and I feel really confident working with ProQuest now. Thank you!”
- We continued to teach online workshops and classes embedded in modules at the request of the Module Leaders, in total we taught 233 classes. From pre-induction sessions to PhD research support, we see all levels of students and staff. Dissertation and literature searching are the most popular classes and RefWorks is the best attended workshop.
- AL provided support and guidance to our Schools in Glasgow, worked very closely with the GCU London librarians and provided support for our partner institutions. Teaching classes and supporting academics in GCNYC, Oman and ALC.
- We attended online programme and school boards across GCU keeping the library up to date with what is happening in the schools and keeping in step with their teaching and learning priorities. The whole team concentrated on developing new skills to provide online learning objects at the request of academics and to support independent online learning.
- With the support of the Senior Library Assistant, we converted the Academic induction process to be delivered online and welcomed all new starts with an invitation to an online session with the relevant subject specialist.

Library Information Support Team

- Library chat service** - In response to moving online during lockdown we integrated a chat service onto our webpage. This way we were able to support students with front-line enquiries when they could not attend the library in person. It was so successful that we have kept it and remodeled our service provision around it, moving away from the previous roving model. We answered 1,021 chats and all chats were responded to within 60 seconds.
- Click and collect** - Shelf-browsing was not permitted during lockdown so we instigated a click and collect service where students could reserve their books online and come and collect them in the library. We continued this service even when browsing was allowed again to support students who still did not feel comfortable using the library.
- Bookable PCs** - In order to manage numbers in the library during lockdown we brought in a booking system. We have often had feedback from students that finding a PC can be difficult during busy periods, particularly from those travelling into the library from afar.
- Extended service hours** - When reopening after lockdown we felt it was important that students were able to get the same level of service no matter what time they were working until in the library. To achieve this, we have staff working in the library and on the chat service until the library closes.
- Student Library Assistants** - We brought on six GCU students into the LIST team this year. This has been a terrific opportunity for them to gain experience of working in an academic setting. In turn they have brought their invaluable experience as a student to the role and have made fantastic additions to the team.



The Common Good

- Covid research publications** - We partnered with Public Health Scotland to add GCU Covid related research to their COVID-19 Research Repository. The repository brings together and provides access to Scottish COVID-19 research on a single, shared platform in order to promote Scottish research to an international audience.
- Highlighting research related to UN SDGs** - ResearchOnline now displays research content in Pure associated with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are automatically populated based on the content of the output and staff can also add them manually when creating their output records in Pure. This will allow us to showcase GCU's continuing commitment to the SDGs.
- Publisher agreements** - Journal collection spend is shifting from subscription towards open access. This is reflected in the increase in the number of read and publish agreements this year with academic publishers, which gave GCU authors the opportunity to publish articles open access with no cost in over 5,000 eligible journal titles. The library developed a web resource to help authors easily check the eligible journal titles and training was given to researchers.
- Community tools** - As a means of sharing our professional practices with the community we have created a **community tools** section on our website.

Library Collections

- Print to ebook bulk purchases** - This year the library continued to improve ebook coverage of titles previously only held in print format through a bulk purchase exercise. We identified titles associated with current resource lists that the library didn't currently own as ebooks and engaged with vendors to identify which of these titles were available, before undertaking a bulk purchasing exercise resulting in improved ebook coverage for key titles.
- SPIRU's Scottish Poverty Bibliography** - SPIRU's Scottish Poverty Bibliography was a collaborative project between the Library and The Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU). SPIRU had previously identified that there was no one place where Scottish poverty grey literature was being preserved or curated. SPIRU and the Library developed a project plan with the aim of creating a collection, using the Library's Library Management System (LMS, Alma), that provided surfaceable content within the user facing Discover library search. SPIRU identified relevant content for inclusion in the collection and the Library provided technical services in the creation of the collection, whilst also training and supporting a SPIRU intern in cataloguing resources to international descriptive bibliographic standards. The project resulted in 74 previously uncatalogued items of grey literature being made available in SPIRU's Scottish Poverty Bibliography. In the coming years, the collection will be updated and expanded by SPIRU interns during the summer months with continued library support.
- New collections** - This year the library obtained the Bloomsbury Fairchild Library ebook collection; this includes 157 fashion and retail ebooks covering a spectrum of topics in fashion including construction, draping, fashion business management, history, illustration, journalism, marketing, promotion, theory, pattern making, styling, product development, sustainable fashion and textiles. We also added the Bloomsbury Fashion Business Cases which present real-world cases on challenges facing the business of fashion to help students develop the essential business skills required by fashion industry professionals, covering issues such as sustainability, technology, ethics, and leadership. Another new addition was the SAGE Counselling and Psychotherapy video collection, with over 450 tutorials to help develop core counselling and therapeutic skills.