Welcome to the University Library’s annual report for 2021–22.

2021–22 has been a year looking forward with the development of our five year strategic plan to support the University’s new vision, and welcoming back our students and researchers with all restrictions finally lifted.

Our spaces have been busier than ever, with exciting developments in the Information Commons in particular, to create a student exhibition space and a reimagining of the Digital Commons, providing space for book clubs and access to innovative digital creative technologies; my particular favourite being the digital sewing machines.

Throughout the year a major refurbishment of Western Bank Library (WBL) has been progressing with the installation of a new ventilation plant, and the redevelopment of both student and staff accommodation. We are grateful to our colleagues in EFM and across the campus who have been working with us on the project, as well as to those who have adapted to the reduced access to study space and our research collections during the work. We are all very much looking forward to a fully open WBL and are planning how we will celebrate this with all the communities we serve. It was wonderful also to be able to grab the window of opportunity in early 2021 to hold our first major exhibition in WBL since 2019 – Engineering Fun: The Story of Orton and Spooner, a major fairground ride designer and manufacturer. We even managed to hold the closing event with guest lectures to coincide with the end of term fun fair in the Arts Tower car park!
We continued to progress on embedding our Comprehensive Content Strategy launched last year with an emphasis on supporting 'ethical, sustainable open access [to content] for all.' In March, the UK secured a landmark deal with Elsevier, the largest publisher of scientific journals, reducing costs by 15 per cent and providing unlimited open access publishing in most journals. This success was a result of collaboration across the University and the wider UK University sector, and demonstrates what we can achieve if we stick together to demand fairer and more sustainable access to the research output that, after all, our researchers produce.

That collaboration will continue as we face UK-wide negotiations with Springer Nature and others. In tandem with these negotiations, we have been working on institutional policies to support researchers in making their outputs open access by retaining autonomy over their publications, something which has been eroded over the years by the behaviour of publishers. Again, this work is being carried out collaboratively, including with our partners across the N8.

Equally, on the education side, we have been working with faculties, departments and our colleagues across the White Rose Libraries Consortium, exploring Open Educational Resources and how these can play a bigger part in supporting teaching and learning.

There are many reasons to do this, including the high cost of some commercial resources, but it is very clear from our engagement with academic staff that there is a significant level of interest in both using and adapting high quality OER from elsewhere, and in creating and sharing our own OER.

The breadth of what we do in the Library continues to amaze me: welcoming and diverse study spaces; books and ebooks for learning, inspiration and relaxation; leadership, support and tools to help transform scholarly publishing and, more broadly, open and digital scholarship; as well as the fundamental role in securing access to, and preservation of collections and archives which will continue to enrich our lives and inspire researchers and teachers into the future.

Finally I have to mention the inspiration that we have gained from our connections with colleagues at the University Library in Kyiv Technical University (KPI) and their determination to keep their library open and services running throughout the war. I hope very much that we can welcome Oksana Bruy and her colleagues to Sheffield in the not-too-distant future.

I hope you enjoy reading our annual report.

Anna Clements
Director of Library Services & University Librarian
RECORD NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES RESOLVED ACROSS OUR LIBRARY SITES AND VIA OUR VIRTUAL CHANNELS

OCTOBER

LORD BLUNKETT GIVES A TALK TO LOCAL SCHOOL CHILDREN

NOVEMBER

ENGINEERING FUN: THE STORY OF ORTON AND SPOONER EXHIBITION OPENS

JANUARY

MEDIATED LITERATURE SEARCH SERVICE LAUNCHED

FEBRUARY

LANDMARK DEAL WITH ELSEVIER

MARCH

THESIS OPEN ACCESS PUBLISHING PRIZE LAUNCHED

APRIL

UNLEASH YOUR DATA AND SOFTWARE WINNERS ANNOUNCED

MAY

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF UKRAINE LIBRARY FORMED

JUNE

OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCES TOOLKIT LAUNCHED

JULY

LIBRARY INVESTS IN DIGITAL SEWING MACHINES FOR CREATIVE LEARNING

AUGUST

FESTIVAL OF THE MIND & OPENFEST

SEPTEMBER
THE LIBRARY IN NUMBERS

29,000
UNIQUE LIBRARY USERS

31,500
ENQUIRIES ANSWERED

8,150
HOURS OF INFORMATION & DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING RECEIVED

87 PER CENT
OF STUDENTS AGREED THAT 'THE LIBRARY RESOURCES HAVE SUPPORTED MY LEARNING WELL', PLACING US 3RD IN THE RUSSELL GROUP

250
OPEN DATA SETS DEPOSITED

908,000
UNIQUE TITLE REQUESTS FOR ELECTRONIC BOOKS
THE LIBRARY IN NUMBERS

1,545,000
SPENT ON OPEN ACCESS AND OPEN RESEARCH

1 MILLION
EBOOKS

1 MILLION
PHYSICAL ITEMS

5.9 MILLION
JOURNAL ARTICLE DOWNLOADS

5 MILLION
DOWNLOADS FROM WHITE ROSE RESEARCH ONLINE

11,700
ITEMS IN WHITE ROSE RESEARCH ONLINE

4,000
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES MANAGED
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
We are committed, as stated in our Content Strategy, to the transformation of academic publishing "to allow for ethical, sustainable, open access for all". Part of this commitment is our desire to financially support open research. Working with our sector partners, we are negotiating transitional ‘read-and-publish’ deals that allow us greater open access with commercial publishers. This year, the sector concluded its largest deal with Elsevier, securing unlimited (hybrid) open access publishing for our researchers and a 15 per cent cost saving for us.

We have created an institutional open access fund to support researchers to publish open access books and articles beyond the transitional deals. We are also supporting new and innovative models for scholarly publishing, by funding open infrastructure and community-owned publishing initiatives.

In the past year we funded 25 different publishers and partners across a variety of disciplines, including continuing our membership of the Open Library of Humanities and fully supporting the initiatives of PLoS (Public Library of Science). Supporting open access also involves helping our researchers to retain control of copyright in their publications, and we are working with the N8 Research Partnership to introduce a ‘Rights Retention’ policy that will enable more of our research to be made open access.

Finally, we are supporting our postgraduate research students to bring their work to wider audiences, by creating the Sheffield Thesis Publishing Prize. Launched in 2022, this award will encourage a number of recent PhD graduates to publish their theses with White Rose University Press, the University’s open access publisher.
In September we held OpenFest 2022. It provided an opportunity for University of Sheffield researchers and information and software professionals to explore issues around open research, including Open Access monograph publishing, Open Educational Resources (OER), FAIR data and software, open qualitative research, and software licensing.

Dr Jessica Butler (University of Aberdeen) and Dr Demmy Verbeke (KU Leuven) gave keynote talks.

Other highlights included a showcase of the Unleash Your Data and Software projects (funded by a University Library competition earlier in the year), a launch of the Open Educational Resources Toolkit, and panel discussions on open qualitative research and OER.

We also organised a Wikipedia edit-a-thon as a bonus event. OpenFest received highly positive feedback, and we plan to hold it again in future years.

"Fantastic event! It was great to see so many people keen on improving our collective research practices" - OpenFest 2022 attendee feedback
In March 2022 we launched the Unleash Your Data and Software competition for grants of up to £5,000 to make research data or software more visible and reusable. Twelve projects from across the University were funded and the positive impacts were showcased at OpenFest 2022.

We also used funds from Research England designated for culture change to develop resources to raise awareness of the FAIR data and software principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable), and supported researchers to apply these to their work.

The FAIR Disciplinary Guidance project (April–July 2022) was a pilot project to create discipline-specific guidance on how to make research data and software FAIR in seven departments across the University.

The resulting discipline-specific FAIR checklists have been archived to ORDA. We also worked with the company Sort Of... Films to create six video case studies, which highlighted those researchers whose work shows good practice in making data and software FAIR.
We have introduced several new initiatives in Open Research Training and Support, including a new open access policy for UKRI-funded publications, which applies to research articles submitted on or after 1 April 2022, and to monographs, book chapters, and edited collections published on or after 1 January 2024. To support researchers to comply with these changes, we held a number of information sessions and drop-ins, distributed communications via a range of channels, and created resources including a video and flowchart to help make sense of the changes. We also developed the Open Research Training Portal, which provides access to details of open research training available across the University on a range of topics, including Library training on research data management.

In February 2022, we ran a hybrid workshop with academic staff and postgraduate researchers from Architecture and Landscape, to discuss open access (OA) publishing, and to share the participants’ personal experiences of publishing. The aim of the workshop was to move the conversation beyond open practices as merely a matter of compliance with funder mandates.

The session included a discussion on the benefits of open access publishing at all stages of the research cycle. It also covered locating open access materials, focusing on literature from the Global South. The group considered how open research can be used to support global knowledge equity, thinking about how different publishers and platforms can both help and hinder this depending on their models of operation.

“The session helped form the basis of further discussions related to open research and publication within the school, with themes of open publication in the humanities also discussed in an expert network about open qualitative research led by the School of Architecture”

(Dr Jim Uttley, Lecturer in Architectural Science, School of Architecture)
Following a successful pilot, we launched the Mediated Literature Search Service in February 2022. Members of academic and research staff can request a literature search from us.

A Liaison Librarian will meet with the staff member to discuss their research and develop a search strategy. They will then conduct searches across multiple academic databases and share the search results, along with details of the search methodology. Priority is given to multidisciplinary research or research relating to flagship institutes, searches supporting funded research projects, systematic reviews and publications, or scoping searches to inform research proposals and bids.

Since February 2022, our Faculty Engagement Team has conducted 34 searches to support a range of systematic reviews, scoping studies, and research proposals.

“As a lecturer, I have little time left to keep up with the literature. And your services not only allowed me to stay afloat, but they allowed me to broaden the reach of my work by exploring a new field.” (Chemistry)
The National Fairground and Circus Archive held an exhibition at Western Bank Library to celebrate the conservation of the Orton & Spooner Collection.

The project was funded by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust and the University Library, and its aim was to preserve and provide open access to over 700 engineering drawings and blueprints of fairground rides.

It was also an opportunity to expand community outreach work in innovative ways that engaged hard-to-reach audiences with the Archive.

We held arts and crafts workshops with the Confucius Institute to celebrate the Chinese New Year, created a banner as a response to the collection with ShipShape (a community group from Sharrow), and held academic lectures on architecture and physics.

This project has also enabled unprecedented access to this collection, with all the digital images published online on NFCA Digital, and JSTOR.

Image: Technical drawing of basket lifting ride by Orton and Spooner c1880s.
The University of Sheffield's Special Collections, Heritage, and Archives has an ongoing programme of digitising our collections to improve access for our student, academic, and public users. Over the past year, we have published more of these unique collections on the publicly accessible website NFCA Digital.

Newly available collections include over 700 images of artwork and design from the fairground ride manufacturer Orton & Spooner, showcasing a period of rapidly changing technological development in the travelling entertainment sector. We have also published over 300 images relating to the pioneering female clown Lulu Adams, highlighting the important and often unacknowledged role of women in the creative development and management of the performing arts and circus.

A highlight has been the publication of over 800 fly-on-the-wall images of the fairground community in the 1970s. Created by photography student Bob Chase, who immersed himself in the fairground community, these images capture the enterprise, endeavour and hardships endured in bringing this form of entertainment to communities around the country. Work is already under way to further improve access and discovery by linking these collections to our Discover our Archives portal and sharing them with the academic community via the Jstor Digital Library.
This year, Heritage Collections hosted an MA History placement student, who worked towards improving knowledge of and access to the University’s sculpture collection. For the main component of the project, the student created an online sculpture map for a section of sculptures across campus.

The map allows audiences to take a tour around campus and view works which are on display. The student undertook further research to identify ‘orphaned’ works, the sculptors of which were listed as ‘unknown’, and then updated the web platform Art UK, and the heritage catalogue records. The final piece of work involved researching two sculptures from the collection, and writing and installing information labels for works on display in campus buildings.

We published a blog post about a large sculpture located at the Endcliffe Student Village which was created by the great-great grandson of Mark Firth, the founder of Firth College. Not only has this project provided wider access to the heritage collections, but it was also of great value to the student towards his degree, and provided some practical experience for when he graduates in 2022 with an MA in History.
EDUCATION
During 2021-22 use of our study spaces increased in all our library sites, and our data tells us that almost all students were using our physical libraries throughout the year. During May, the busiest month, the Information Commons alone accommodated almost 320,000 student hours - over 10 hours during the month for each student registered with the University in just one Library site! Usage is continuing to increase and we are now once again a vibrant and busy learning community, where students come together to work collaboratively.

We expect to see numbers back to pre-pandemic levels by the first semester of 2022–2023. As we returned to campus-based activities, we delivered a mix of online and face-to-face research skills workshops. The online webinars remained popular, and we also saw an increase in attendance at the face-to-face workshops over the year.
The University’s wider vision for induction is to facilitate greater collaboration and consistency of approach, to ensure students feel welcomed and included. This has been embraced by the Library, using the concept of ‘explain, engage and enhance’.

We developed our Library Essentials guide and welcome video to explain our offer to new and returning students.

Library staff together with our Library Spaces Assistants (acting as Library ambassadors) delivered face-to-face welcome sessions, meeting and greeting new students, welcoming them to our spaces, and showcasing our Library services. The sessions enabled us to engage with the Library users.

Our offer of online support via chat and screen sharing, along with digital content, workshops, webinars and online tutorials enhance the user experience. Following the success of last year, we delivered a programme of pre-sessional webinars, Reconnect with your Research Skills, to provide an opportunity for returning students to upskill before the start of semester.

The webinars were attended by students from all faculties, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This mix of synchronous and asynchronous support allows for greater inclusivity as we welcome new and returning students to the University.

Image:
Induction/Library Essentials categories
The Information Commons is our vibrant 24/7 student library. It has 1,300 study spaces, extensive technology support, a high-demand collection of 120,000 volumes, and support for the development of our students’ research and critical thinking skills. Keeping the space fresh, engaging and aligned with a transformational learning experience is at the heart of our service. This year has seen a number of initiatives to refresh the space:

Information Desk

During the pandemic, we relocated our Information Desk from the first floor of the Information Commons to the ground floor, so that we could check the students into their reserved work spaces, and be sure of who was in the building. We realised the advantages of moving the Information Desk permanently to the ground floor, not least because it creates a welcoming and reassuring environment for those entering the building, as well as a sense of belonging. Our redesigned desk area is in harmony with the design of the Garden Room, which is situated nearby.
Virtual Advisory and Help Service

The Virtual Advisory and Help service relocated to the Information Commons, enabling a collaborative and supportive environment for staff in response to the increasing complexity of enquiries. The hub facilitates staff knowledge sharing and ensures consistency of message to our users, whilst enabling and encouraging staff development.

The service engages with staff, researchers and students across the University via live chat, email and more recently via screen sharing to ensure inclusivity. We constantly review feedback and analytics to further develop and improve our service offer.
Exhibition Space

Together with the Students’ Union Liberation Officer, we co-designed an innovative new exhibition space in the Information Commons to allow students to disseminate their work and be inspired by the ideas of others.

We commissioned specialist suppliers to imagine a design that would enable students to work collaboratively while immersed among the displays. The colour scheme ties together the exhibition space with a reading group area in the Digital Commons. Technical support informed the choice of digital screens, enabling us to showcase student work 24 hours a day.

Two pilot displays were curated during the 2021–2022 session: The first represented work from students of the Undisciplined Victorian Literature module, run by the School of English, and the other was a Materials Science research project into commercial irons that gave a collection of intriguing artefacts to display.
Digital Commons

The final strand of our Information Commons refresh is work to reimagine the Digital Commons. This is another initiative collaboratively developed with the Students’ Union. We have invested in new equipment: two digital embroidery and sewing machines, and two Meta Quest 2 headsets.

The embroidery and sewing machines have functionalities to support creative learning. The Meta Quest 2 headsets are for activities exploring extended reality.

Virtual and/or augmented reality is known in entertainment, but it can also enable experiential, scenario-based social learning and training. Creating and disseminating information using innovative digital creative technologies forms part of our Information and Digital Framework which maps out how we can discover, evaluate, use, create, and communicate information in a critical, ethical, and engaged way.
We have been evaluating the integration of library content and support for students engaging with information within taught programmes. The work has two phases, the use of Leganto reading lists in modules, and the mapping of programmes and core modules, with a particular focus on assessments. This work ensures that we are consistently and seamlessly providing students with the resources they need from one place and the skills to use them effectively.

The Vice-Chancellor's statement on the University's support for students during the cost of living crisis included the aim of “making reading material accessible through our libraries free of charge wherever possible”, while a Times Higher Education article by two University of Sheffield academics provided tips on engaging students with academic reading, reinforcing the value of this work. We identified reading lists that provide enhanced support to students, for example by highlighting key readings, limiting the number of required texts, and making it clear to students how a particular text will aid their learning.

We are using this information to inform discussions with academic colleagues, and to shape the reading list sessions that we run with departments. The second phase of the project is focused on mapping assessments, to develop a better understanding of when and how we can support student learning. The findings will inform future workshops and tutorials, taking into account feedback from students, conversations with programme and module leads, and the wider education strategy.
We have continued to work on the five areas for action identified in the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER), in particular the area of capacity building. We completed a project with the White Rose University Libraries at Leeds and York and developed the White Rose OER Toolkit. This was launched locally at OpenFest 2022.

In line with the Content Strategy ambition to provide access to content that is available openly, we offered small grants to support staff who wish to use or develop OER in their teaching, and we expect to report on the outcomes and impact of those grants in the forthcoming year alongside the introduction of a University Policy on OER.

We raised awareness by organising a webinar on the theme of open learning and the potential of OER in March 2022, and exhibited a digital poster at the Education Celebration in June. During the year we have developed our capacity to support users of the Sheffield Pressbooks Network, and worked on the production of two books with Martin White, Visiting Professor at the Information School at the University of Sheffield.

Reflecting on his experience of using Pressbooks, Martin said: "I would encourage anyone to consider Pressbooks as an open access publishing platform. My only piece of advice would be to remember that the production process from final text to published book can take both time and commitment, but that is the case with any book project."
A new working group was set up to coordinate the University’s response to the UK’s new contract cheating legislation, and an increase in cases of contract cheating. This group included representation from the Library to give advice on areas where we could provide support and to ensure that we fed into and responded to the relevant agreed actions. Supporting this work, members of Library staff worked with colleagues from Student Services and other professional service departments to improve communications and resources around unfair means for staff and students. The aim was to bring messages together in one place, including a definition of what counts as unfair means, and how it can be prevented, as well as information about detection and consequences. All information had a renewed focus on positive messages around building academic integrity to prevent unfair means. Support materials include our video, ‘Why reference?’, tutorials on the essentials of referencing, and understanding plagiarism, along with our University referencing style guides and resources from 301 Academic Skills Centre and the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC). We also worked with colleagues from these departments to co-deliver a plagiarism and unfair means event in Orientation Week for new students, and to update a set of slides for academic staff to use and adapt when teaching students about unfair means and academic integrity.
On 26 November, 2021 we welcomed 50 students from Longley Park Sixth Form College and Hinde House School in the University’s widening participation network to attend a workshop linked to the recently catalogued Blunkett Archives.

The aim of the workshop was to engage new audiences with our collections and introduce the students to the use of archives to support their studies, particularly for independent research projects. The workshop began with a talk by Lord Blunkett, facilitated by Professor Matthew Flinders and illustrated with photographs and documents from the archive. Lord Blunkett spoke about growing up in Sheffield, his path into politics, and overcoming barriers to achieve his ambitions. Students then attended a workshop providing an introduction to using and accessing archives, followed by a tour of Western Bank Library. There was a chance to see a variety of material from the Blunkett Archives and other archive and rare book collections held by the Library’s Special Collections, Heritage, and Archives department.

The workshop was well received by the students who engaged with the talks and activities, asking lots of interesting questions of both Lord Blunkett and Library staff. It was an inspiring day for everyone involved.

Image: Students from the Brigantia Learning Trust looking at Special Collections material
ONE UNIVERSITY
The Library Wellbeing Group organised a programme of activities in 2021–2022 to provide staff with the opportunity to connect with others, learn new skills, and take time away from work to focus on their own wellbeing.

This initiative started during lockdown, with activities taking place online including a craft group and a gardening group. Colleagues showcased their skills and chatted about their hobbies and plans. Once restrictions were relaxed and colleagues returned to campus, there were more opportunities.

A survey revealed which activities staff would prefer and a calendar of events was organised in response. Popular events have included a book group and ‘Create a desk garden’ sessions, as well as lunchtime walks, yoga, and crafting. Staff are given time to attend these sessions and are also encouraged to meet with our Staff Mental Health Peer Supporter and Wellbeing Champion as needed.
Organised for colleagues across the University, by the University’s Campaigns and Alumni Relations Team, the walk took in stunning scenery from the Peak District. It raised funds for a fantastic cause—Genetic Disease Research. The Library team raised £882 to support families living with the ongoing challenges of a genetic disease.

Right image: Aarti Sehgal, our Liaison Librarian for Social Sciences, featured on the cover of the University Alumni magazine.
This year, the University of Sheffield twinned with the National Technical University of Ukraine and the two University Libraries have formed a strong partnership. We are part of an international consortium providing access to online resources through inter library loans to the University Library and other Ukrainian academic libraries. Knowledge of and expertise in library collections, open science, research data, open educational resources and information literacy have been shared through online meetings and ongoing correspondence, along with discussions about roles, qualifications and career pathways.

Our Ukrainian colleagues face tremendous challenges and persevere through extreme adversity. Some of our online meetings took place while Ukrainian librarians sat in air raid shelters. Despite this, they continue to make real progress in providing a library service to support their community. We anticipate that the relationship will continue throughout the war and after, as Ukraine seeks to recover and rebuild.
Kunststoff: Plastic – The Material of Art was a project initiated by Professor Tony Ryan from the Department of Chemistry in collaboration with the Library’s Heritage Collections Manager. It responded to issues surrounding the repurposing of redundant plastic materials by creating a sculpture out of the old PVC plastic that had protected the Library’s ‘Graduation’ textile, after the artwork had been removed for restoration. The plastic had discoloured and was unsuitable for reuse. PVC (Poly Vinyl Chloride) is an orphan plastic and is not currently recyclable. The new artwork was created by local sculptor Anthony Bennett who moulded a 3D chrysalis sculpture, demonstrating not only the transformative concept of reusing waste PVC, but also the circularity of art.

For the project, we engaged a 4th year Chemistry student to make a special glue for Anthony to use, and an Engineering student to cut the shapes using a waterjet cutter. The chrysalis was displayed in the Futurecade exhibition at the Millennium Galleries as part of the Festival of the Mind 2022. This was accompanied by a public talk in the city, in the iconic Spiegeltent. The chrysalis will come into the Heritage Collection in 2023 to be displayed in Western Bank Library, alongside the restored Graduation tapestry. More information about the project can be found on the Festival of the Mind webpages.

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USERS' FAVOURITE LIBRARY SITES AND SPACES
We asked the Library users on our social media and website to let us know which Library spaces they like the most. Here are some of the answers.

"My favourite library space is the quiet study spaces in Information Commons, on floor 3 with the computers. Definitely need more quiet spaces with computers as it’s hard to get a spot often!"

"My favourite workspace is the 4th floor of the Information Commons, in the open room with many desks. This is my favourite place to work mostly due to the abundance of natural light, created by the vast amount of windows."

“My favourite space is on the 4th floor by the window.”

“Hi, my favourite place to study is on first floors on the big tables specifically with a coffee :) or any window seat”

"I don't have a picture but I will forever love room 1.25 in the Information Commons. Lots of great assistive tech (including what I am convinced is the fastest scanner ever!) and a comfy sofa makes working through lecture notes a breeze.”

Accessibility

All images in this report are used purely for illustrative purposes. Unfortunately the software we use to create this report does not allow us to add alt text. We aim to do better in the future. If you require this document in another format or have any feedback, please e-mail library@sheffield.ac.uk or call 114 222 7200.