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Title: Setting the social scene: how libraries can provide opportunities for intercultural mixing

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Example citation: Farmer, J. and Sweeney, R. (2013) Setting the social scene: how libraries can provide opportunities for intercultural mixing. Workshop presented to: *Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) Winter Conference 2013: International Students: Strategies for Supporting Success, Royal College of Physicians, London, 10 December 2013.*

Version: Presented version

<http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/6579/>



Setting the social scene: how libraries can provide opportunities for intercultural mixing?

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Session contents

- Strategic overview
- Why integration is important
- Challenges of integration
- Use of Social ‘library’ spaces
- Use of Social media
- Collaborative opportunities



Strategic overview

- **Raising the Bar**

Valuing: opportunity, diversity, a global perspective, inclusion and equality for all

Enabling: a culture of empowerment, responsibility and excellence

- **Ashoka – Changemaker Campus**

‘practice empathy: by entering, by a willed use of the imagination, another person’s world without judgement’

Library and Learning Services (LLS)

- **Vision**

‘a personalised learning experience delivered at point of need and underpinned by strong relationships with all key stakeholders’

- **Characteristics**

‘well trained, appropriately qualified and highly motivated staff that are empowered to make positive contributions to the student experience’

‘a belief that transparency, tolerance, inclusion and equality of access to resources and services should underpin all that we do’

Why is integration important?

- Diverse student base
 - Investment in expertise/support
 - ‘Uncapped’ income
 - Retention/Recruitment
 - “British experience” for international students
 - Employability
 - Globalised marketplace
 - Intercultural competences
- ‘Being able to communicate effectively across difference’

(Lee *et al.*, 2012, p.23)

Challenges of integration

- You can't force integration
 - A perceived lack of English proficiency prevents mixing
(Harryba *et al.*, 2013)
- Student behaviour
 - Segregation, gravitational pull and comfort zones
'the herding instinct is probably normal behaviour when someone is in an alien environment'
(Brown and Richards, 2012, p70)
- Perspectives/experiences of home students
- Programmes of study e.g. BAM top-up (low) and BA Drama (high)

Social 'library' spaces

- Library as a place
 - Libraries dominate in terms of social learning spaces on campus (Powis, 2010)
- Social learning vs. socialising
- Natural opportunities
 - Inductions/queues/common purpose
- Social events and activities
 - Promotion of resources/services e.g. World Book Day
 - International themes e.g. Libraries around the World, Harry Potter?



Social media

- Students use of social media
 - Chinese students used Renren to interact with other Chinese students but Facebook to interact with other students for education purposes (Saw *et al.*, 2012)
 - Social Media Survey at Northampton
- Staff (and library) use of social media
- European Day of Languages/Welcome Week 2011
 - Twitter/Visible Tweets to welcome and engage all students
 - Encouraging messages in own language

Summary: How can libraries provide opportunities for intercultural mixing?

Events and activities that engage *all* learners:

- Appropriate timing of events e.g. Inductions/Welcome Week
- Topics of global interest but not labelled ‘international/multicultural’
- Draw on resources available e.g. space/technology
- Collaborate with others across the institution

References

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for listening*

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