

Love Libraries Competition: Top Ten New Librarians 2007

ENTRY FORM

Name: Sam Davies

Age: 20

Length of service (three years maximum): Three years

Library service: Manchester Library & Information Services

- **Why have you chosen to make a career in public libraries?**

When studying I made use of my local library, and the Central Library in Manchester. I had always been given good service by the staff. The idea of working for an organisation so valued by customers, that did not actually 'sell' something appealed to me.

The opportunity of a position with Manchester Libraries as a Library Assistant came along and I decided to apply. I was successful in gaining a part time post. Within my first year, I was given lots of opportunity to learn about the service and began to build on my IT, organisational and administrative skills. The breadth of the services libraries offered impressed me and this encouraged me to think about what else we could offer, how we could better promote what we did offer and get more customers through our doors.

As I learned more about the service and how it worked, I thought more about how to improve what we were doing. I like the fact that working for Manchester no matter what level a member of staff can put forward their ideas and be listened to. Earlier this year I applied for a Library Information Officers post and was successfully appointed in February 2007 to my current post.

- **What is it about library work that you enjoy?**

I was very involved with the opening of North City Library; Manchester's first joint service centre library, in partnership with Manchester College of Art and Technology Sixth Form. I found it really uplifting to be working to improve the opportunities to and for the community that I live in. I am proud to offer a fantastic service to people in the area.

I particularly enjoy the community engagement aspect of my role working with people I might not have met outside of libraries. I have found partnership working through ward co-ordination has been invaluable to help me learn from others just what can be achieved for our customers. I also enjoy being inventive with the promotion of our services and thinking of new ideas or revamping old ideas to spread the word about our customer offer.

- **Why do you think libraries are important?**

Although libraries used to be seen as just being about books, quiet and study, our service has had to evolve in order to keep up with changes in society. People require a faster, better quality, more

accessible service than ever before, and libraries should be at the heart of that. I particularly enjoy the fact that we are positively taking a more 'retail' approach to delivering services to meet the needs of our customers. Libraries offer people a place to relax, resources to learn from and as locations in which to be entertained. Libraries are places where everybody is welcome - it is difficult to find this environment for free anywhere else.

- **What has been your biggest achievement in the role?**

After only 2 years of service, I was lucky enough to achieve a Library Information Officers post. I am very proud of this as I feel my dedication to my work is appreciated and recognised. This has been a personal achievement that has given me the scope to become more deeply involved in partnership working between ourselves and Manchester College of Arts and Technology and MCC's North Manchester Regeneration Partnership in north Manchester.

Specifically I have become a pivotal part of a Cultural Activity Group, whose remit it is to engage with the community at North City Library and widen the cultural offer in our flagship library. I have worked on Break In The City project where we staged a gig putting five live bands on playing to an audience as part of Manchester's In The City Music Convention in October 2006.

I have used this learning experience as a springboard to organise other very successful events. I organised a very successful Open Mic night, using skills I have developed along the way to promote the library to a wider audience, particularly young creative people.

- **How have you helped to improve your service?**

Being part of North City library was my biggest catalyst for looking at ways to improve our services to customers. When you work in a modern environment with so much to offer, it's easier to implement positive change. I feel that I've played a large part in improving many aspects of the service locally, by making suggestions, which have been positively received, and seeing them through from start to finish wherever possible. These may have been coming up with easier ways to administrate processes in all of our libraries or actually going out to community engagement events to promote our service locally. I have taken statistics about the use of North City library for example then translated them into easy to understand visual publicity to promote the success of the new library to local people, and to raise the profile of our department with other colleagues.

- **Why do you deserve to be recognised as a Top Ten New Librarian?**

Over my short time with Manchester Libraries, I have become very passionate about ensuring that as many people as possible are taking up our service. I am dedicated to improving our service and put in as much energy, commitment and time into my work as possible.

I am very enthusiastic about marketing libraries to every audience I can reach and to try every avenue to reach not just existing but new customers too. I have developed my skills in marketing our services and events and I feel that through my ability, libraries in the area have seen marked improvement in their performance.

I like to challenge the perceptions of what a library services can offer and my role has given me the ability to do that. Working in a modern library service and flagship library has enabled me to pursue every idea I have had to improve and market our service and to make libraries more appealing to potential customers.

Internally, I quickly established myself as somebody who colleagues could turn to for advice and support. Both very experienced and newer members of staff and managers throughout the service find my opinion and skills useful, and often turn to me for help – I think this recognises my ability.

I enjoy working for, and am highly dedicated to, our service because we strive to respond positively to the needs of the local community it serves. I think I deserve to be recognised as a Top Ten New Librarian because I genuinely care about the service we provide for my community.