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Effective communication in large libraries : case study of libraries in London

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This case study highlights the communication challenges faced by large library organisations, using an art institution in London with six campus libraries as an example. The focus is on understanding the communication structure across these libraries and addressing the issue in the age of the "great disconnection," where effective communication and connection in disconnected workplaces are crucial for maintaining a healthy and productive environment. Based on observations during a two-week work placement at the institution's libraries in May 2022, the study delves into the distinct operational methodologies adopted by each library, catering to their unique environments. Despite this diversity, a shared digital platform facilitated communication and coordination through online meetings and emails, necessitated by the geographical spread of the campuses across London. During the placement, four out of the six college libraries were visited, and quality time was spent with library staff members across various sectors, including customer service, academic liaison, information skills/information literacy, and digital skills. The author was tasked with developing a library guide to enhance student digital skills and curating the African-Caribbean, Asian & African Art in Britain Archive from 1994 to 2007. Interactions included meetings with senior managers at the main campus library, focusing on resource and systems management, cataloguing, and acquisition, as well as discussions with the learning zone department at a satellite site. Despite the digital platform's facilitation, a notable challenge was the isolation of efforts and resources among the individual campuses, often leading to duplication of work and inefficiencies. To address this fragmentation, the study recommends that the institution develop a centralised digital resource management system. This system would enable seamless sharing and updating of resources and information across all campuses, facilitating easier collaboration and communication among the various libraries and ultimately optimising the utilisation of assets and expertise institution-wide.

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