



**Title: COWBRIDGE LIBRARY**

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## **COWBRIDGE LIBRARY DESIGNED FOR CHANGING TIMES**



The new Cowbridge Library in the Vale of Glamorgan was funded by a Welsh Assembly Grant and contributions from the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Demco worked with the library team to create a very different library interior that combined both style and practicalities to meet a

changing demand for, and delivery of, services.

The design brief outlined the need to have a separate children's library area and the implications that would bring; to create a high impact entrance area; to create flexible, multipurpose areas; and to incorporate 'self service' into the library. As this is the first library in the area to go self service the library team wanted to spend time on understanding the implications of how staff would operate in the new library space and also how visitors would use it.

Sian Jones, Head of Service, Vale of Glamorgan Library & Information Service said: "The design was key. Out of the responses to the tender we received Demco showed that they had really grasped the brief and what we were trying to achieve.

The quality of their proposal matched what we were trying to achieve in increasing footfall and meeting self service targets”.

The brief was built in part from visiting other libraries and talking to colleagues and suppliers such as Demco but Sian stressed the importance of keeping this in context. She adds: “It was important to learn from others but it was also important to keep this in context of our own vision for the library and our own working practices. It is important to feel confident enough to disagree. It is an exchange of ideas but it was important to stay focussed on what you know about your users, your staff and also working practices and guidelines. We were lucky to know Demco from other projects we had worked on and so we have built a relationship of trust.

### **A tempting layout**

Demco’s design created a perspective that flowed from the entrance through the library. Sightlines were important for staff and customers. The design creates a lens



through the library so that visitors can have a taster of what’s available. They may see a reading area in one direction, computers in another, a welcoming oasis of soft seating in another. Integrated, angled, between bay seating continues the theme by usefully bridging the gap between bays but without blocking the view.

The journey from the entrance into the counter area, which has been positioned at the back of the library, is filled with tempting book promotion furniture. This area of the library will be the hardest working with stock being constantly and refilled.

### **Mobile pod**

Designing to meet self service objectives, Demco placed a small one person counter back into the library and self service kiosks near the entrance, encouraging customers to use kiosks before the counter. An innovation is a mobile pod which



when docked to the smaller counter will make a two person, dual height counter but it can be wheeled out to other areas of the library to meet demand during busy periods or for promotions and events. A laptop is permanently fixed to the top of the pod and wireless working is easy for staff. For the moment the pod is often in the entrance area near to the self service units but is then moved when e.g. childrens' areas get busier.

### **Making it different**

The library team were open minded about moving away from their traditional library design template – “we were ready for a change” . The new design mixed and matched colours, styles and products which subtly transforms the interior into individual spaces within an overall style theme. Demco’s cladded Promo shelving in anthracite mixed flat, inclined, zigzag shelves contrasts with Cantilibra shelving in shades of pastel pea green in the darker end of the library phasing through lime in the brighter end of the library. Red furnishings contrasts with the green shelving and other chairs, with writing tablets, use two tone fabrics that hint a tint at the overall colour palette.

### **Graphics – welcoming and familiar**

High quality images, of local landmarks and attractions, were provided by the Tourism Department for Demco to produce the shelving graphic end panels. Local images are instantly recognisable to visitors who are greeted by familiar scenes of the heritage coastline and most importantly personalising the library space. Graphic panels are also used in the demco designed exhibition area. Using white, magnetic, removable panels means that the base boards and stands can be used for other displays. Again building in flexibility to each area of the library.

The success of this library rests in the hands of the local community. Sian explains “The library is very important to the community and word of mouth travels fast in this rural market town. Over the years we have had a steady build up of library users and feedback to the new library has been very positive; we have seen the return of lapsed members and an increase in new members. Everybody is happy with the final product”.

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