

## Lockdown Case Study:

Mary Anne Hockey BA(Hons) MSc Econ MCLIP, Librarian,  
Canford School, Wimborne, Dorset

### Providing library services during a pandemic

Canford School is an independent co-ed boarding and day school which caters for students aged 13 – 18 years old. The pandemic resulted in a re-evaluation of library services and how they could be provided in a safe way. Planning the re-opening of the school library in September 2020 involved reading CILIP guidance, liaising with senior leadership, reviewing risk assessments and putting measures in place for safety and cleaning procedures including quarantining library items. It also involved discussions within the library team consisting of the Librarian, Assistant Librarian and Library Assistant.

The library team felt it was useful to view this situation as an opportunity to see what the library could do to keep students and staff reading and accessing quality library resources to support their studies. The library management system used is Oliver which is provided by Softlink and, using this, Mary Anne developed a Click and Collect library service with safety procedures in place and step-by-step guides with screenshots to help users access the service. The library opened for physical use by Upper Sixth only and all other year groups could access resources using the Click and Collect service. Normally, Mary Anne delivers library inductions in the library to all year 9 sets during English lessons. Fortunately, she was able to develop a new practical 35 minute session, demonstrating how to use the catalogue to search for, browse and reserve books. These sessions were delivered in classrooms to sets with approximately twenty year 9 students in each set.

For year 10 student sets, Mary Anne also delivered a 35 minute practical session. During these classes, she taught students how to access the digital library of e-books and audiobooks provided by OverDrive through the Sora app. She demonstrated how to borrow and return an e-book or audiobook before asking students to try it on their own devices; it is always a fun moment when several different audiobooks are suddenly heard from students' devices in the classroom. She

also ran a quiz which gave students more experience of using the system as well as assessing how much they learned during the session; the competition received an excellent response and ended the session positively.

The Challenging Reads competition with year 9 students has continued during the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. For this, Mary Anne compiled a list of 100 books and divided them into four awards with 25 books in each: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum - the books becoming increasingly more challenging within each award. The competition runs all year long and prizes are allocated at the end of the year, depending on how many books students managed to read, either in one award or across all four. Titles were chosen to provide a balance and variety so cover many genres of fiction as well as non-fiction, in the hopes that there will be something there to interest as many students as possible. The books are also all on the Accelerated Reader scheme, meaning that year 9 students can take quizzes on each of the books they have read. Information about the Challenging Reads competition as well as the book lists were emailed to all year 9 parents in 2020.

The year 10 Library Committee has continued via Microsoft Teams and involves one year 10 student from each of the ten houses. It functions like a focus group where discussion takes place and feedback is invited from the students about library services, promotions and activities. Students are asked to contribute ideas for stock, book promotions and activities, for example, for Christmas or World Book Day. It is also a way for Mary Anne to get information back to the houses. The year 10 Library Committee make sure that library posters are on display and promotions are mentioned during house notices. The breakout room function within Microsoft Teams has been useful so that students can discuss issues amongst themselves before being brought back to the main room for each group to present their ideas and have a final discussion. Mary Anne also used the breakout room function with a Lower Sixth library focus group involving eight students

to find out their views about library services. This has all served to maintain links with students and ensure that the library remains relevant to them.

Mary Anne delivered 35 minute practical research sessions for ten sets of Lower Sixth students who were working towards their Extended Project Qualification. Each session involved between four and ten students with a teacher usually present. Normally, students are brought to the library for a practical session where they are expected to investigate searches on their own laptops and this has translated well to delivery via Microsoft Teams. Mary Anne could share her screen with the students and still ask them to run searches on their own screens, discussing their results. A session typically covered the use of phrase searches, the Boolean operators AND/OR/NOT, the use of ? and the use of \* amongst many other search tips. Students also experienced using the options for refining results, accessing articles and finding referencing details. Students applied these search strategies using the library's subscribed online resources such as JSTOR, European Newsstream and New Scientist Archive. The main benefits of using these online resources are that they save time for the students and help students to access authoritative, reliable, credible and accurate research. Open access online resources such as CORE and the Directory of Open Access Journals are also highlighted.

Mary Anne worked with the History department to deliver 35 minute sessions for six sets of year 9 students during History lessons. These practical sessions helped students to find library resources to support their research for their World War II projects. Students were shown how to search the online library catalogue for books on their topic, had the opportunity to run their own searches and think about the keywords needed to find relevant information. They were also introduced to some subscribed library online resources as well as search tips that could be used to find relevant articles. Student responses to these sessions were good and the sessions resulted in an increase in Click and Collect reservations via the library catalogue and emailed enquiries to library staff.

Learning how to use Sharepoint during the pandemic has also been an excellent opportunity. The existing library pages were set up in the new

Sharepoint system and the library team has learned how to manage the library pages, and how to create and edit content. Once the new pages were set up, Mary Anne used the opportunity to email every academic department with updated links to library resources to support their subject as well as reminding teachers of what the library could do for them; this has been an effective way of keeping links going between the library and every academic area.

Learning how to use Microsoft Teams has given Mary Anne the opportunity to continue providing library services and activities that are meaningful and relevant to students and staff. She learnt how to use the platform through how-to videos, and discussions with the IT department and other teachers who shared best practice and she has since used Teams to demonstrate online library resources as requested by individual teachers and at an academic department meeting.

## Other resources and activities provided by the library since March 2020:

- Audiobooks list for students and staff – Using OverDrive and the Sora app.
- Black History Month reading list – fiction and non-fiction.
- Books of the Month for students. Genres covered included classic adventure, modern adventure, Christmas reading and the Top Ten book series to start during lockdown as suggested by the year 10 Library Committee.
- Books of the Month for staff. Genres covered included thrillers, psychological thrillers, romantic escapism and Christmas reading.
- Summer Reads 2020 list – with staff and students invited to recommend books.
- Working jointly with the English department to run a Short Story Writing Competition for year 10s and a Christmas Short Story Competition for year 9s.
- Working with a teacher to run an Upper Sixth reading group via Teams.
- Working with a teacher to run Community Service activities with Lower Sixth students via Teams. Once school had re-opened, Mary Anne also ran a Community Service activity in person with Lower Sixth students.
- Continuing to deal with emailed enquiries about books and resources from students, staff and staff families.
- Lower Sixth Graphic novel reading group via Teams.
- Resources list for wellbeing for year 9+.
- LGBT+ reading and resources list for year 9+ in February 2021.
- Chinese New Year reading and resources list for year 9+ in February 2021.
- World Book Day 2021 – Shelfie Selfie quiz. All members of staff were invited to volunteer to email a photo of their bookshelf to the library. Students then had to work out which bookshelf belonged to which member of staff. This quiz generated a fantastic response and was a good way of engaging with students and staff about books and reading.
- March 2021 – hosted a virtual author talk for all year 9 and year 10 students with the award-winning author, Alex Wheatle.

Positive comments and thanks from students, teachers and parents via email have been encouraging.

Finally, Mary Anne highly recommends the Meet the Creator events, run by Bev Humphrey and free to members of the School Library Association. These monthly online events are an opportunity to hear authors and illustrators talk about their books. The events provide an excellent introduction to new writers and new ideas for stock for the school library.

## Advice

1. Explore the possibility for CPD training online. There are some excellent options available from the School Library Association and CILIP School Libraries Group. For professional reading, the School Library Association has a CPD library plus CILIP membership provides free access to academic journals.
2. Keep liaising with teachers, academic departments, support staff and the whole community. Keep on striving to make links between the library and the aims and needs of the school.
3. The library will be what you make of it. The job of a school librarian is hard work but with support, it can be hugely rewarding and enjoyable - believe in what you do!