

29 October 2013

1. The SCONUL Library Design Awards

This year SCONUL received 16 applications for the Library Design Awards 2013 and visited each of the candidates. The number of submissions and the investment in those libraries highlights the continuing relevance of the physical library space to Higher Education and to the experience of students and academics in those institutions.

The awards committee were impressed by the detailed planning of space to fit the strategic objectives of the institution, and to meet the needs of students, academics and, where applicable, the wider community. The impact delivered by the projects was remarkable and the enthusiasm with which the users spoke of their experience evidenced the excellent work of the teams at the libraries.

2. The winners

SCONUL is pleased to announce that the winners of the 2013 awards are:

Development over 2000 sqm

Joint winners: The McClay Library, Queen's University Belfast and Augustine House Library and Student Services Centre, Canterbury Christ Church University

Highly Commended: The Forum, University of Exeter

Development under 2000sqm

Winner: The Library, Ayr Campus, University of the West of Scotland and Scotland's Rural College

Highly Commended: Dame Elizabeth Esteve-Coll Learning Resource Centre, Kingston University

3. Citation for The McClay Library, Queen's University Belfast

This award recognises a landmark building, which has enabled the transformation of the library service and more than doubled student usage. The building marries contemporary and classic design to create a modern yet timeless addition to the historic Queen's campus; forming a new axis and focal point.

The McClay brings together three former libraries into one integrated building, unifying library, computing and media services. Its conception reflects the University's strategy to make visible its commitment to the student experience and to realising research ambitions. It comprises high quality study and research space, alongside facilities for special collections, constructed and furnished with the highest quality materials. Flexible, open plan spaces can be reconfigured easily, and the design has supported further adaptations to meet the huge growth in student demand. Extensive use of glass and stepped back floors maximise light and views to the adjoining gardens and

distant hills. Unique and creative spaces include the C.S. Lewis Room reached through a carved “wardrobe” door.

Students have a new sense of ownership of their space, and they now visit more often and stay longer, and satisfaction ratings have increased. The design has facilitated a step change in service development, introducing pervasive self-services and 24 hour opening.

4. Citation for Augustine House Learning and Student Services Centre, Canterbury Christ Church University

This award is made for a new, modern building that remains sensitive to its historic location by the city walls. Augustine House brings together the physical resources of the Library with flexible and inspiring learning environments and a single point of enquiry for student-facing services, putting into practice the university’s ‘student-first’ ethos.

The extensive use of glass gives exciting views to the rest of the building and the city beyond from the internal bridges on each floor across the light-filled atrium. Accessibility and inclusion were integral to the design of this sustainable building; a flagship venue for the University and local community. Engagement of staff in service development alongside the thoughtful planning of the space has delivered substantial increases in student satisfaction and Library use.

5. Citation for The Forum, Exeter University

The award is made for a Library which, as an integral part of a larger development bringing together a range of student support and retail services, has had a transformative effect on the campus creating a ‘beating heart’ at its centre.

A flexible and technology-rich learning environment has been created with impressive sustainability and energy efficiency. The inclusion of artworks plus careful thought to colour and design provides a pleasing visual experience and a creative buzz.

Great care was taken throughout the development period and beyond to liaise with the student body which has voted with its feet by visiting in vastly increased numbers. There is a definite feeling of student engagement and ownership, as one student said; ‘it makes learning fun again’.

6. Citation for the The Library, Ayr Campus, University of the West of Scotland and Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC)

The award is made to a Library which physically, sits at the heart of a new campus that was jointly developed by the University of the West of Scotland and SRUC. From the outset, a key element of the vision was to foreground the Library and to create a strong

sense that it is both vital and integral to the learning experience. This has been successfully achieved as there are many visual connections both to and from the Library which includes impressive views of the campus atrium (thus linking the Library to the social learning space), the campus courtyard and teaching block (thus linking the Library to the pedagogical space), and the river and surrounding woodland area (thus linking the Library to the external environment).

Library staff and students from both institutions were fully involved in the design process from the beginning, and a very welcoming, vibrant and flexible space has been created which has both transformed and enhanced library and IT services. In addition, the Library and its services are fully accessible, and it also has award-winning “green” credentials for the effectiveness and efficiency of the Estate.

The impact of this development on the University community has been profound; it has encouraged Library staff to be more creative and innovative in their approach to service delivery, and it has encouraged Academic staff and students to make extensive use of the new space and to fundamentally change the way they work.

7. Citation for the Dame Elizabeth Esteve-Coll Learning Resource Centre, Kingston University

The award is made for a new build which sensitively and imaginatively incorporates an original 1930's building, retaining many of the original features and using them to enhance the space which works both aesthetically and functionally. This sustainable solution to a space problem places the Learning Resource Centre firmly at the centre of the campus and embedded into teaching practice.

Meticulous planning and attention to detail have gone into the project demonstrating the sense of ownership and dedication of the staff involved. The needs of students and staff on this campus have been amply met, as has the aim of blurring the boundaries between study and work in the creative industries and professions.