



**Reading the Academic Library:  
an exploration of the conceived, perceived and lived  
spaces of the Brynmor Jones Library at the  
University of Hull**

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by

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## Dedication

For Michelle Anderson.

Thank you for your support, and for making this research a reality.

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## Abstract

Focusing on the perspectives of 'library users', this thesis argues for a reconsideration of dominant conceptions of academic libraries as dusty repositories of books and restrictive study spaces. Using the Brynmor Jones Library (BJL) at the University of Hull, a case study and drawing on Henri Lefebvre's concepts of space as conceived, perceived and lived, it asks: How do library users experience library space(s) in the neoliberal university?

To investigate how the BJL is experienced by library users, 11 focus groups were conducted with 40 participants. The focus groups utilised an approach based on LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® which allowed participants to physically represent their conceptualisations of the BJL and their relationship with it. Secondary data from BJL systems; an analysis of BJL spaces and plans; and a total of 57 half-hour observations were used to further explore the research question.

Analysis of the research data has led to the identification of five themes that represent the different facets of academic library space: physical spaces, imagined spaces, social spaces, engagement spaces and discovery spaces. These themes challenge traditional definitions of libraries and redefine them from the perspective of those who use and work within them.

Demonstrating that academic libraries are spaces valued for the creation of new knowledge; support of students and researchers; equality of access to technology and resources; and development of social opportunities for students, it emphasises the importance of academic libraries and is a rallying cry for their protection and continued development within the context of technological advancement, increased competition and reduced funding currently impacting many UK universities.

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to the research

If you run a Google Image search for 'Library' you will get photo after photo of rooms full of books and bookshelves. If you are lucky, some of them will have people in them. Those people will inevitably be doing one of three things. They will be looking at the bookshelves, taking books off the shelves or they will be sat reading books. The only possible exception is the occasional photograph of a library building from the outside. The many glossy books on libraries replicate this view with pages full of photographs that show huge bookshelves framed by stunning architecture (see examples: Campbell & Pryce, 2013; Murray, 2013). This all suggests the sole purpose of libraries is the curation, storage and use of books. However, when considered in the context of Higher Education (HE), this is all starting to look a little dated, especially in the context of technological developments and the changing nature of learning and study. Indeed, the 'brand' of academic libraries is 'often narrowly conceived' as 'libraries are about books' (Pinfield et al., 2017:49). This will leave some people wondering if academic libraries are even relevant anymore. Considering how expensive they are to run, closing the library building would make quite a nice saving.

As someone who works in a university library, this chain of logic suggests some kind of dystopian future without libraries. Of course, I would feel this way; I work in a library. I had to know what everyone else thinks. This is where this thesis was born.

The ultimate purpose and contribution of this thesis is to demonstrate the value of the academic library through how it is experienced and valued by the people that use it. It will argue that academic libraries are still relevant and provide far more than books and other information resources. It will demonstrate how academic libraries are physical spaces, imagined spaces, social spaces, engagement spaces and discovery spaces. Through their digital services, academic libraries even transcend place, effectively situating them within the environment the users are based at any given time. As such, academic libraries should not just be judged by the worth of the resources they make available, but by their full service offering. This is particularly important to acknowledge as the most significant areas of library budgets are often resources and staff, underplaying the significance of all the other spaces.

Conceptually, this research's approach is founded on the work of Lefebvre (1991) and his understanding of space as a trialectic of perceived, conceived and lived spaces. This trialectic is combined with Lefebvre's (2013) concept of rhythmanalysis to present a framework from which the multiple facets of library space can be explored. Alongside the primary findings overviewed briefly above, there are several other areas in which this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge. Firstly, it uses a distinctly interdisciplinary approach, utilising both educational studies and human geography to explore library space empirically. This thesis, therefore, contributes to both fields. Secondly, as the conceptual framework operationalised by this research is complex, and given that space is a nebulous and philosophical concept, this thesis uses a research method based upon LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® to engage participants meaningfully in this study. This approach is novel and contributes an innovative approach through which library space(s) can be explored. Finally, as there is a tendency for most academic library research to focus on students, this research also contributes an approach that includes students, student volunteers, library staff and academics. This inclusive approach, therefore, takes advantage of the experience of the staff that work in the building on a daily basis alongside those who use it.

## 1.2 Background for the research

The HE landscape is rapidly changing thanks to neoliberalisation, defined as:

a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005:2)

In HE neoliberalisation is characterised by increased competition for both students and funding. Alongside and because of neoliberalisation, there are rapid changes taking place across academic libraries. These changes are influenced by new technologies (Pinfield et al., 2017), developments in publishing (Rossiter, 2016), evolving pedagogies (Pinfield et al., 2017; ACRL, 2019), and new performance metrics (Baker, 2018). This is within the context of a highly competitive HE market focused on revenue generation, efficiency (Seale, 2013) and meeting market demands (Breeze et al., 2019a). In this

environment, Cox (2018:218) argues that the role, position and importance of academic libraries within HE institutions is uncertain:

Traditionally the library was viewed as the heart of campus and there was an almost unquestioning acknowledgement of the centrality of its contribution to the institutional mission. This situation has now changed fundamentally and the onus rests with libraries to prove their worth to stakeholders who are asking different questions and seeking new value as their priorities evolve.

No matter how established academic libraries may be as part of universities, their future cannot be taken for granted.

Alongside the challenges of neoliberalism, the most significant threat to the future of academic libraries comes from technical developments and changes to publishing. For academic libraries, the provision of new online resources means that users may not even need to visit the physical building to access the resources they need. Walton and Atkinson (2018:2) sum this issue up well in their editorial:

Access to online library resources is widely available, but for the user, it is unclear whether the library has had a role in making the resources available and paying for them. Indeed, the user may not care whether the library has been involved or not. Users can access these online resources from a multitude of devices, including desktops, laptops, smartphones and tablets. This calls into questioning the need to visit the library when so many resources can be accessed remotely.

The next logical step from this argument is to question if there needs to be an academic library at all. As neoliberalist free-market economics and increased competition across HE continues to dominate, the answer to this question may be frightening. Given the changing technological and information environment, there is a need for research that directly addresses this question. This question is timely as academic libraries are still performing very well. As Rossiter (2016:104) notes:

A few years ago, opinion pieces predicting that the digital revolution would bring about the slow but certain death of the university library were a regular occurrence. These analyses misunderstood the importance of the library as space – in fact, the library has retained its central importance as a hub for learning on campus.

Now, more than ever, it is crucial to understand why the library has retained its place on university campuses and to question if this will be sustained. Understanding the answer to this question is vital to the future survival of physical academic libraries.

Due to the pressures of neoliberalism, academic libraries need to make the case to maintain their status and funding. This applies to library staff too. As Oakfield (2010:11) argues:

university librarians can no longer rely on their stakeholders' belief in their importance. Rather they must demonstrate their value.

This may present a very different paradigm as it suggests libraries and librarians are no longer seen as useful by default. This debate is still highly relevant, with many authors questioning the sustainability of academic libraries (Rossiter, 2016; Cox, 2018) and how they can meet the future needs of universities, academics and students (Noh, 2015; Guthro, 2019). If the purpose of the library is to be questioned, it is essential to find out how it is used and experienced by people, and what it means to them. In this, it is vital to identify that the physical library space is not just used for the provision and storage of information. As Saunders (2015:289) argues:

Academic libraries take up a lot of real estate, and they must justify the use of that space or risk losing it

This thesis is not here to argue that libraries have changed; rather, given that these spaces have changed, it will explore how they are experienced by those who use them.

While this thesis focuses on academic libraries, it should be acknowledged that these challenges are impacting public libraries too. There is a constant drive to change how people think of libraries; this is perhaps no better reflected than in the comment from Kingston Upon Hull's Principle Librarian Christine Hill:

We want to dispel the myths that libraries are quiet, dull places. There's certainly no shushing here. We have an action-packed programme of activity and events for all ages. It's not just books on shelves that our libraries offer.

This was quoted in a local newspaper article promoting a Harry Potter-themed event to attract people into the library. The ethos of this statement, however, has



implications beyond just public libraries. Those 'myths' of libraries as 'quiet' and 'dull' propagate into academic libraries too. Indeed, for many users of academic libraries, their perception of such places will be founded on their experience of other public, school or specialist libraries. For some, this may even be the of libraries as presented in novels and on television (Marcus, 2015; Warner, 2015).

As this section has demonstrated, neoliberalised HE is more globalised, commercialised, marketized and competitive (Breeze et al., 2019b). Changes to technology, publishing and the way people access information have also dramatically changed over the last two decades. Where libraries may have had a monopoly on 'knowledge', this is no longer the case thanks to the internet and competition from other providers (Galloway, 2017). Furthermore, within this context, it is problematic if academic libraries are only seen as traditional spaces for working alone, reading paper books, and undertaking silent study. While all this is still offered, it does not reflect the purpose of most library spaces. Such views make libraries seem dated and irrelevant. A series of questions clearly began to emerge: If not books or knowledge, what defines the academic library of the neoliberal university? In an age where information can be accessed at any time in any place, what value is there in a physical library on university campuses? For this reason, this thesis explores the user experience of academic library spaces in the neoliberal university, answering both what 'academic library' means and how is it experienced.

### 1.3 The case study approach

To ground this thesis in a real-world context, this research is conducted through a single case study to address this highly philosophical issue. The case study chosen is the Brynmor Jones Library (BJL) at the University of Hull (see: Chapter 3). The University of Hull is a medium-sized university, and the BJL serves 16,000 students (RIBA, 2015) and 2,366 staff (University of Hull, 2019). This library size provided the opportunity to investigate a wide range of library spaces that may have been limited by conducting this study in a smaller setting. The BJL was also fully redeveloped between 2012 and 2015 (University of Hull, 2015; Sheppard Robson, 2016). The BJL is a particularly interesting and useful case study as it coincides with the start of a substantial programme of governmental changes to HE (Johnston, 2013). These

changes led to a more competitive and neoliberalised sector (Breeze et al., 2019b). While not the primary goal of the redevelopment, competitiveness was still an aspect of the design, with the University Librarian playing a core role in the brief and design:

The present librarian, Richard Heseltine – client for this £28m project, ... explains how important the 'new' library is for impressing prospective students and their parents. (RIBA, 2015)

Using the BJL as a case study allowed exploration of a library that was also built to respond to several of the challenges presented by neoliberalised HE. The redeveloped BJL was a space built for students as customers, offering them new spaces and services.

The redevelopment and refurbishment of this prestigious library had the design intent of creating modern, exemplary facilities. The team built upon the heritage and history of the Brynmor Jones Library, reaffirming its place at the heart of the student experience, and reinforcing the campus as a 'people place' - redefining the library as a dynamic focal point for university life. (RIBA, 2015)

Furthermore, as I work within the BJL, it ensured I could have informed conversations with research participants. While I have had to carefully consider my position, in the course of this research, it has been advantageous as I have been able to leverage my insider perspective to my advantage.

#### 1.4 The rationale for the research

As the background above suggests, the contemporary academic library is a remarkably different space to the academic library of just two decades ago. The transformative redevelopment of the BJL is a good representation of this. As such, even those with previous first-hand experience of library spaces may find them quite different in the present. For this reason, how individuals 'read', perceive, and understand space is of utmost importance. This is theorised in Lefebvre's (1991) trialectic, which shows the significance of the conceived, perceived and lived facets of space. Students, researchers, academics and any other groups visiting an academic library are required to 'read' both familiar and unfamiliar library spaces. From this, they need to interpret how to use, behave and interact within and with such spaces. While much research exists on observing this process, very little exists on genuinely understanding how

library space is read by others and how this is interpreted to define and form an understanding of the library as a whole. The research often focuses on a specific space or area within the library, and not the broader impact this has on the perceptions related to the library. The literature talks of 'new libraries' and 'new conceptualisations', but it has to be asked if this has reached students and other library users.

The empirical aspect of the research within, however, aims to access if such an understanding has permeated library users through understanding how the academic library is read by users in the first place. Understanding this is not just essential for library marketing and communications, but can have a real impact on the development of future library spaces and securing of funding.

#### 1.4.1 Using geography

This thesis also aims to make contributions at the intersection of geography and educational studies. Cloke et al. (2005:viii) expose the root of geography to be writing (graphien) about the earth (geo). While this may seem too broad to relate to libraries, Thrift's (2008) approach better exposes the meaning of geography in framing space as the root of the discipline. Space is the focus of all great geographers such as Massey (2005), Soja (1989; 1996) and Harvey (1990a; 2005). While this thesis is not equal to these works, it shares one thing in common. It aims to expose space. Academic library space. In utilising human geography alongside educational studies, it also helps consider how people, cultures and socialisation, impact and define space in an educational setting. When combined with the work of Lefebvre (1991; 2013), introduced very briefly above but more fully in Chapter 4, this thesis can consider how the academic library is socially produced.

While this research is not the first study to look at libraries geographically, it has a unique focus compared to the other studies. There have been multiple studies that have applied Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to libraries to model library space (Yaqi, 2018), monitoring in-library use (Mandel, 2010; Godfrey & Stoddart, 2018) and exploring spatial distribution of public libraries (Page et al., 2019). The distribution of libraries has been considered on a variety of scales, from within a campus (Murphy, 2017) to across a country (Donnelly, 2014; Vodeb & Vodeb, 2015). Geographic studies

have also considered the impact of library closures (Koontz et al., 2009) and the geography of library use (Delrieu & Gibson, 2017). Romund (2019) focuses on the management of spatial sources, including maps, atlases, geographic information systems and the literacy of librarians in the management of these sources. This thesis turns the geographical view to a more intimate and detailed view of library space and how it is experienced in the neoliberal university. While an old paper, Closet-Crane (2011:4) suggested that research on the emotional and affective link between people and libraries as places is 'extremely rare' in library and information science research. While numerous studies have considered library as a place (see examples: Houston, 2015; Bruxvoort, 2016; Mandel, 2016; Baker et al., 2018; Ahearne & Cradden, 2019), none of these studies have looked at how space itself is socially constructed by those using library space(s).

### 1.5 Research questions

To address the issues highlighted above in both the background and the rationale, the following research questions will be addressed within this thesis:

#### **The main question:**

MQ: How do library users experience library space(s) in the neoliberal university?

#### **Research sub-questions:**

SQ1. How does the existing literature define 'library' and 'academic library'?

SQ2. What does 'academic library' mean to library users?

SQ3. How do academic library users experience, feel and live physical library spaces?

N.B. In both SQ2 and SQ3, 'academic library' can be read as Brynmor Jones Library

The relevance of these questions is centred in the context of the neoliberal academic library. As this thesis will demonstrate, academic libraries have become very different

spaces to the traditional book-focused perspectives portrayed in definitions, the media, and popular culture. It is no longer possible to frame the library as a book repository. While it is possible to suggest how the academic library should instead be framed, it is more important to understand how it is conceptualised and used by students and other users. Understanding this is essential for academic library development for if libraries are to change and evolve, the way library users understand and use libraries must also change and evolve. While this is essential for any space to remain relevant, useful and used, the pace of change makes this of particular relevancy for academic libraries. As Chapter 3 will demonstrate, the pace of change in the academic library sector is evident. What is not evident, however, is how this translates to library users.

Although these research questions refer to the 'academic library', this can also be read as 'university library'. Both terms are used interchangeably. The use of 'academic library' was to ensure a more apparent distinction between universities and university libraries.

## 1.6 Positionality

Given the potential for influence over the research, I firmly believe it is essential to briefly acknowledge my position at the start of the research journey. For this thesis, positionality can be seen as the acknowledgement of my position and the associated discourses of that in contrast to the position(s) of others (Harré & Davies, 1990), particularly those involved in the research. My most significant position concerning this research stems from my role working within the BJL.

I work as an Academic and Library Specialist, though for much of this research the role was titled Skills Adviser. The substantive element of these roles focuses on helping students with the development of academic and digital literacies through self-help, workshop and appointment delivery. Increasingly, these roles involved work outside the library, supporting academics in curriculum development and in-programme teaching. While my role is situationally based in the BJL, it does not involve day-to-day work with the library collections, spaces or front-facing services. This gives me a privileged position in relation to this research.

It can be argued that working within the BJL places me broadly within both the university community and the community of library users may define me as an insider researcher. Insider researchers are members of the same community as their participants, in contrast to outsider researchers who are not (Merriam et al., 2001; Mercer, 2007; Holmes, 2014). This is one of the strengths of my thesis, for it enables the research to take place with a deep understanding of the broader context the BJL is operating within. It also allows ready access to the data and resources required to undertake this kind of in-depth research. However, as my role does not directly involve work with the BJL's spaces, collections and frontline services, I also have enough distance from these aspects of the library to approach them with a modest level of criticality. This distance helped me to avoid assumptions around library space. While I may pass through library space frequently, I do not spend much time within it. Although I see this as an advantage, throughout the thesis I have maintained a level of reflection to 'check in' with my potential biases, allowing for myself to be surprised or proven wrong. If anything, my position may be that of a distanced insider researcher.

While I will more fully reflect on my position and how I manage it as part of the methodology (see Chapter 4), I wanted to make it clear to my readers at this point that this study is written by someone working in libraries, and in particular, working in the BJL, the case study that forms this thesis. My position as an insider is vital for this research as without working within the library building, this research simply would not exist. One day I was walking along a path outside the BJL, and overhead a student ambassador introduce the library to a group of prospective students. They introduced the BJL as a 'great place to meet friends, grab a coffee and chill'. That was it. No mention of library resources. No mention of learning spaces. No mention of the stuff I personally associated with the library. At the time, I genuinely had no idea what that means for the BJL, and academic libraries as a whole. This was a highly influential moment in directing this research forward as it identified the issue in need of investigation. It also highlighted how my own assumptions of library space were potentially very different to that of the students.

## 1.7 The problem of people

I have found it very problematic to refer to people in the context of the library. This introduction has already talked of both ‘users’ and ‘students’. There is also the use of ‘customer’ or ‘patron’ as referenced in both the literature and library systems, both of which are strongly associated with the neoliberalisation of HE (see: Chapter 3). All of these terms are problematic. As academic libraries can be spaces for broad ranges of people including undergraduate students, postgraduate students, academics and in some cases, members of the public, it is essential not to limit consideration to ‘students’ alone. While ‘users’ does broadly encompass all these groups, it also suggests these people passively use space. A ‘user’ cannot produce space. This does not align with the approach to space set out in Chapter 4. Finally, the use of ‘customers’ or ‘patrons’, while encompassing of all groups, also aligns too closely to consumerised and marketized frames of neoliberalised HE (Harvey, 2005). Although the BJL operationally uses ‘customer’ and students are even beginning to recognise themselves as customers (Pinfield et al., 2017), I wanted to avoid this frame. This is an important choice as using ‘customer’ would signify the acceptance of neoliberal principles, an inappropriate action for a thesis focused on the analysis of neoliberalised HE.

Given the issues associated with each term, one does nevertheless need to be used, and I have chosen ‘user’. As such, ‘user’ should not be read as someone passively ‘using’ an unchanging space, but should be considered as a shorthand for the groups considered in this thesis: students of all levels of study, volunteers, academics, other university staff, library staff and members of the public. User is also the term Jordan (2017) chooses for *The academic library and its users*, although without question. This is not to say that ‘customer’ will not appear later in the thesis, this is, however, associated with the literature, and should be read as such.

## 1.8 Thesis outline

### **Chapter 2 – Literature review: Defining the academic library**

This chapter focuses on addressing SQ1 by first considering how ‘library’ has been defined in the existing literature, before moving on to look at contemporary approaches to define the ‘academic library’ more specifically. By reviewing what has

already been written about libraries and academic libraries in particular, this chapter establishes the need for new empirical research in this area that focuses on how library space can be understood and experienced by those who use it.

### **Chapter 3 – Research context: UK Higher Education, neoliberalism and the Brynmor Jones Library**

This chapter introduces the context of this research: neoliberalism and the BJL. The first section considers neoliberalism and the neoliberal university. This demonstrates there are significant changes in publishing, learning, culture and technology, which have an inevitable impact on what an ‘academic’ or ‘university’ library is. This further establishes the need for this research and a new approach to understanding how library space (and time) is experienced in the neoliberal university and the broader purpose of HE.

As the focus of this research, the second half of this chapter demonstrates why the BJL serves as a useful case study. This serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it is there to introduce the BJL to anyone unfamiliar with the University of Hull or the library building itself. This focuses on how the BJL was conceived by architects and designed for specific uses. Secondly, this chapter argues that the BJL redevelopment was a product of neoliberalisation, designed to produce a library that is attractive to prospective students in the new competitive HE market.

### **Chapter 4 – Methodology: Reading and researching space(s)**

As this research focuses on the lived experience of library spaces, this chapter explains the concept of space and how it is used in this research. In doing so, this introduces the Lefebvrian trialectic of space, demonstrating how (library) space is designed by architects and planners, how it is actively ‘read’ and how it is practised by users on a daily basis. As space cannot be considered in isolation from time, Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis is also introduced to overview how time is also considered in this research. Collectively, this chapter establishes how space is ‘read’ in this research. From this foundation, the rest of this chapter outlines and justifies the use of both observations and focus groups in the context of a single case study to address the research questions outlined above. This chapter also provides an overview of the



rigorous approach taken to research ethics, positionality and data analysis in this thesis.

### **Chapter 5 – The meaning of the academic library**

This chapter addresses SQ2 to form a new user-focused approach to defining and understanding academic libraries. The discussion also highlights how dated views of academic libraries perpetuate. This shows how library services and spaces have dramatically changed through technological advancement and the influence of neoliberal forces. This chapter concludes that academic libraries are not one single thing but are a complicated and inter-related set of spaces used, interpreted and practised by a diverse range of users. Knowledge and books are only a part of this, not the whole.

### **Chapter 6 – Experiencing the Brynmor Jones Library**

This chapter addresses SQ3 of the thesis, focusing on how academic library users experience and live physical library spaces. As such, it focuses on exposing the perceived and lived spaces of the BJL, towards producing an understanding of how the academic library is both made, changed, felt and contested by its users. This demonstrates that the 'meaning' (SQ2) and 'experience' (SQ3) of the BJL have a remarkably different focus; reaffirming the importance of revisiting the etymological and book-focused definitions of library.

### **Chapter 7: The five spaces of the neoliberal academic library**

This chapter draws on the previous two chapters to address the MQ and explain how 'library users' experience library space(s) in the neoliberal university. This is presented through five themes that were constructed from the empirical data. Each of these themes characterises a different space of the neoliberal library: physical space, imagined space, social space, engagement space and discovery space. With reference to the BJL as a space both designed by the University Librarian and architects and as a space made, changed and contested by its users, this will demonstrate that the neoliberal academic library is a socially produced space.

### **Chapter 8 – Conclusion**

Despite the findings of this thesis, dated perceptions of academic libraries still prevail –

even amongst library users. This chapter concludes that this urgently needs addressing by academic libraries. Given the combination of financial pressures and a need to remain competitive in a neoliberalised HE market, the problem set out in the introduction is realised. If libraries do not demonstrate their relevancy, funding will be cut. This has implications beyond the BJL and shows the need to acknowledge a change in both the understanding of academic libraries and the knowledge associated with them. This thesis concludes on a rallying cry for continued investment and development of academic libraries. Academic libraries may be costly to run, and the resources they provide may be expensive. They are, however, essential spaces that support universities in remaining competitive while also helping students to navigate the neoliberalised world in which they live.

## Chapter 2 – Literature review: Defining the academic library

This chapter aims to address SQ1: How does the existing literature define ‘library’ and ‘academic library’? To achieve this, readers need to distance preconceived approaches to understanding libraries in the reading of this literature review. This is because while the meaning of the library may seem obvious and a superfluous, there is a great complexity associated with understanding both libraries and academic libraries. This review will first consider the definition of ‘library’ as it is essential to understand the origin and meaning of this word before it is considered in the context of HE. This will be addressed in the second section, which will focus on four contemporary approaches to define ‘academic library’. As established in the introduction, this thesis has used ‘academic library’, but this is interchangeable with ‘university library’.

Before embarking on the task of defining the library, there are two important things to note. Firstly, this review is grounded in a broad range of literature, particularly that from librarians and other library professionals, but also ethnographers, historians, literary critics, and a wide range of other scholars. While focused on the HE landscape and university libraries within the United Kingdom, this chapter will draw on broader geographic sources of literature. As there are similar issues and trends between library developments in the UK and the United States of America (USA), there is validity in the inclusion of literature from the USA. Similarities include the increased use of technology, the investment in physical library space, changes to the publishing landscape, changing student preferences and an increasingly competitive HE market (ACRL, 2013; Simon, 2013; Watson & Howden, 2013; Graham & Graham, 2014; ACRL, 2015; 2017; 2019). While there may be differences in how research outputs are disseminated and differences in the nature of the HE market, both are nevertheless neoliberalised and competitive (ACRL, 2019; Harvey, 2005). Furthermore, as the UK and the USA are both Anglophonic countries, the linguistic root of the word ‘library’ and the issues associated with this are equally applicable to both. This is not to say that other sources of literature will not be used. The literature on technology and publishing often has applicability beyond its immediate context, but this will only be used where appropriate and contextualised to UK HE.

The second aspect to note relates to the literature used within this review. While this chapter considers the academic library, it is essential to acknowledge that different kinds of libraries exist to serve different audiences and purposes. This includes public libraries (National Institute of Building Sciences, 2017), national libraries (Vattulainen, 2005), educational (school, college and university) libraries (Larsen, 2010; Grigsby, 2015), private libraries (Benjamin, 1999) and specialist (hospital and industry) libraries (San José Montano et al., 2010). Each of these types of library serves vastly different audiences and work at vastly different scales. When considering the broader literature, however, the distinction between such libraries is not always present. This is because libraries, no matter their audience, generally serve broadly similar purposes (Wilkin, 2015). As such, while this thesis may focus on the academic, or university library, it is essential to draw in the broader library literature, especially in the first section of this review which focuses on the definition of 'library'.

As demonstrated in Crawford's (2015a) edited volume, *The Meaning of the Library*, 'the library' can be seen as an amorphous concept. It is a concept that is larger than any one library. It is, however, a concept that needs to be explored as it heavily influences how individual library spaces are read, interpreted and understood by students, staff and members of the public. Creating an approach to understand the academic library is not just important for this thesis, but also for the future of libraries. As Ross and Sennyey (2008) declare in their article '*The Library is Dead, Long Live the Library!*'. This suggests that all libraries are at risk of redundancy due to new content providers and digital competition. It is fair to say the academic library has no exemption from such competition. This sentiment is echoed in Carlson's (2001) article *Deserted Library*. While some may see this as dramatic, there is real concern over the purpose of libraries in the technology-rich 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is fair to argue that the predicted death of the library never occurred. At least, not yet. This is not by chance, but because of significant work to adapt and change. Indeed, the concerns for the future of libraries echoed Lefebvre's warning of vacancy for any space outliving its original purpose. Lefebvre (1991: 167) argues that a space may become 'vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one' should it outlive its '*raison d'etre*'. This, of course,

does not suggest demise, and instead suggests a redirection in form and function. Indeed, as the neoliberalisation of HE continues to develop, libraries have changed significantly not only in response to the market, but also to the changing publishing environment, the rise of technology and the needs of students and researchers (Buschman, 2017; Pinfield et al., 2017). However, as Gayton (2008:60) asserts, the 'plight' of academic libraries is still: 'rooted in the idea that academic libraries are little more than storage facilities for printed materials.'

The idea of the library as a repository for print materials is a serious problem. As this chapter will demonstrate, contemporary academic libraries are much more than this and there is a great deal of complexity in understanding them within the ever-changing context of HE. Little's (2013:251) question: 'When we think of the 'library', do we think of rows of book stacks or a series of services for users or a suite of technologies or all three?' is a useful starting point for this review. While an interesting question, it leads to only three possible answers as it is framed in a singular interpretation of the library. If anything, it is more appropriate to ask 'what is an academic library?', and it is this question that drives this literature review.

## 2.1 Defining 'library'

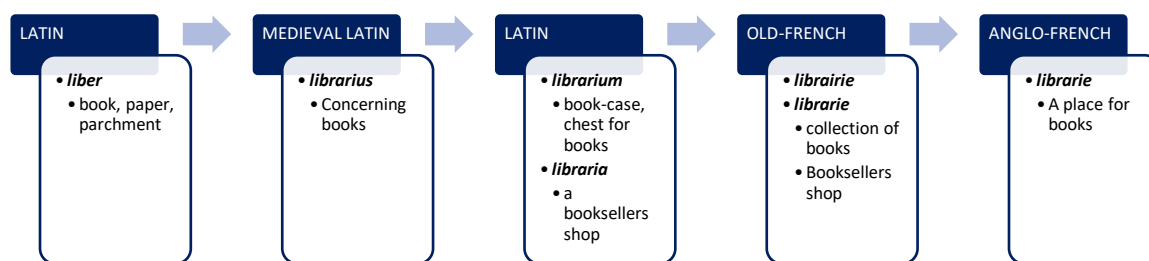
This section will introduce the origins of the word 'library' and will consider how the word is defined. There are three distinct definitions of 'library' which are often used interchangeably within the literature as well as in general use (Sennyey et al., 2009). This section will briefly introduce each of these definitions and outline the issues with each. The Oxford English Dictionary is used here for it represents the everyday use of the term library well, and in line with Sennyey et al. (2009) argument.

### 2.1.1 Library as building for books

The first and most common definition of the library is narrowly defined as a 'building, room or set of rooms, containing a collection of books' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d:206). It is this first meaning of library that this chapter aims to address, and this section will demonstrate that the library needs to be thought of as more of an institution or establishment, not just a building. This book-centred definition is highly problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it frames the library as only a physical entity, and secondly, it also suggests books are the only form of information or knowledge

possessed by the library. While both statements are misleading in the current library context, this was not always the case.

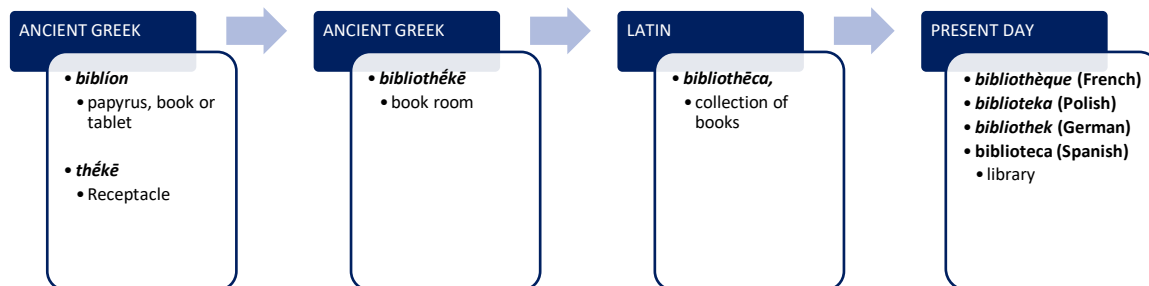
Looking at the history or etymology (Durkin, 2009) of the word ‘library’, it is possible to see that it has always been centred around books. Library originated from the Latin word *liber*, which referred to the bark of trees used as a writing material in Roman times (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d). In all Latin, French and Anglo-French roots (see Figure 2-1) of the word library, the book is central to the meaning of these words. Given the reduced role of the book in the contemporary library, this is problematic. While books may not be as essential to libraries from an etymological perspective they are still at the root of what the word library means.



(diagram based on: Harper, 2017; Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d; 2019e)

**Figure 2-1: Library etymology (Latin root)**

This association is further reinforced and reflected in many other European languages that used words based on the root ‘biblio’ to reference libraries in the present day. All these words originate from the Ancient Greek *biblion* for papyrus, small book or tablet and ‘thékē’ for box or chest (see Figure 2-2). Together, this formed *bibliothékē*, framing the book as the defining element of the library (in translation). This etymological root also led to the use of ‘bibliotheca’ for the library in old English but this is now obsolete.



(diagram based on: Collins English Dictionary, 2014; Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019b; 2019a; Lexico, 2020)

**Figure 2-2: Library etymology (Ancient Greek root)**

Considering the library as a book space is, however, highly inaccurate. Libraries have stored and curated many forms of knowledge. The great libraries of antiquity; Alexandria (in Egypt) and Ninive (in Mesopotamia/modern-day Iraq) did not have books (Borcoman, 2019), instead, relying on clay tablets and other forms of codices (König et al., 2013; Hall, 2015). While these were later replaced with papyrus, parchment scrolls and books (Murray, 2013; Borcoman, 2019), modern libraries now rely heavily on electronic material (Lamagna et al., 2015; Powers, 2015). Focusing on the medium, in this case, books, limit any definition and embeds it in time. With this example, it is possible to see how the frame of the library as a book space discounts other, equally valid forms of knowledge.

The 'library as a building of books' definition frames the library space solely in terms of book storage and preservation. Except for rare books and archives, it is only in history that this has significance. Libraries were the guardians of a vast wealth of knowledge, much of it either irreplaceable or at the very least expensive and laborious to produce (Murray, 2013). This is particularly important before the printing press as books were mostly handwritten volumes; each page painstakingly scribed and illuminated (Murray, 2013). This is no longer the case as mass-produced physical books are easily replaced, and electronic books are impossible to damage except in the event of technical failure. That knowledge of historical libraries also expressed power, especially with ancient libraries which were associated with the rich, the powerful and the imperialistic (Hall, 2015:3). Both public libraries and the internet have made knowledge more open than ever before, in contrast to the limited access in closed personal libraries (Towsey, 2013) or subscription libraries (Bowd, 2013; Allan, 2015) of the past. While framing the library as a building of books had significance when they were precious and powerful, this is no longer relevant to the contemporary library.

Considering the suggested physicality of the library further, there are some library services or even entire libraries that are entirely digital and therefore have no physical footprint (Ogunsola, 2011; Waddell et al., 2014; Andrews et al., 2016a). As such, it can be argued that 'digital libraries' immediately negate the concept of the library as a 'building, room or set of rooms' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d:206). Although it is fair to say that most libraries have some physical presence, the focus on

buildings and rooms is to the detriment of digital services. From online catalogues (Tarulli & Spiteri, 2012) and e-learning platforms (Yiye & Steven, 2016), to ebooks and other digital resources (Grosch, 2012; Lamagna et al., 2015), most libraries have a digital presence. It is, therefore, inappropriate to define the library solely in terms of physical space.

To consider this understanding of library in the context of the university, most academic libraries have become known more for their learning spaces and facilities than for their collections. This has led Spiro and Henry (2010) to suggest that the measure of an academic library is now the quality and range of its services, not the size and scope of its collection. Physical changes to contemporary academic libraries have created 'more collaborative learning zones, access to multimedia technology, group research, presentation rooms and social meeting venues such as coffee cafes and even bookstores' (Bruce, 2012). These developments to physical library space further distance the library from the earlier definitions above, which defines space as only there to store books.

Considering the second aspect of the definition, it is well documented in the literature (Schnapp & Battles, 2014; Andrews et al., 2016a; Fallin, 2016a; Weinberger, 2016; Nitecki, 2017) that libraries have moved beyond the book-centred institutions suggested by the dictionary definition above. Then there are the information resources. Library resources now often go far beyond books and include video (ACRL, 2015), audio and textual materials in a range of physical and/or digital formats (Lamagna et al., 2015). Where paper books are still important, off-site storage centres are often used to free up space within main libraries (Courant & Nielsen, 2010). This decentres the book from the library, physically moving underused parts of the collection out of the building (Courant & Nielsen, 2010; ACRL, 2015). It can, therefore, be inferred that any contemporary approach to the library must not label the library as just a space or place of books.

### 2.1.2 Library as collection

'Library' does not refer to just the institution, establishment or building as suggested in the first definition. The second, interchangeable use of 'library' is that of a collection (Sennyey et al., 2009). While this chapter is concerned with redefining the primary



definition above, it is important to consider this use of 'library' in doing so. As a collection, this use of library most often refers to 'collections of books' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d), once again firmly relating to the physical volumes associated with libraries. If anything, this is perhaps closer to the original conceptualisation of library, represented in the definition of library in Johnson's (1755) *A dictionary of the English language: In which the words are deduced from their originals and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best or writers, to which are prefixed, a history of the language, and an English grammar*. Here, the library is framed as 'A large collection of books, publick or private' (see Figure 2-3). While this suggests the historical significance in this framing of library, it further demonstrates there is now a need acknowledge academic libraries collect more than just books. While a later definition considers the collection as a 'a great mass of learning or knowledge' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019e), this is still overshadowed by books.

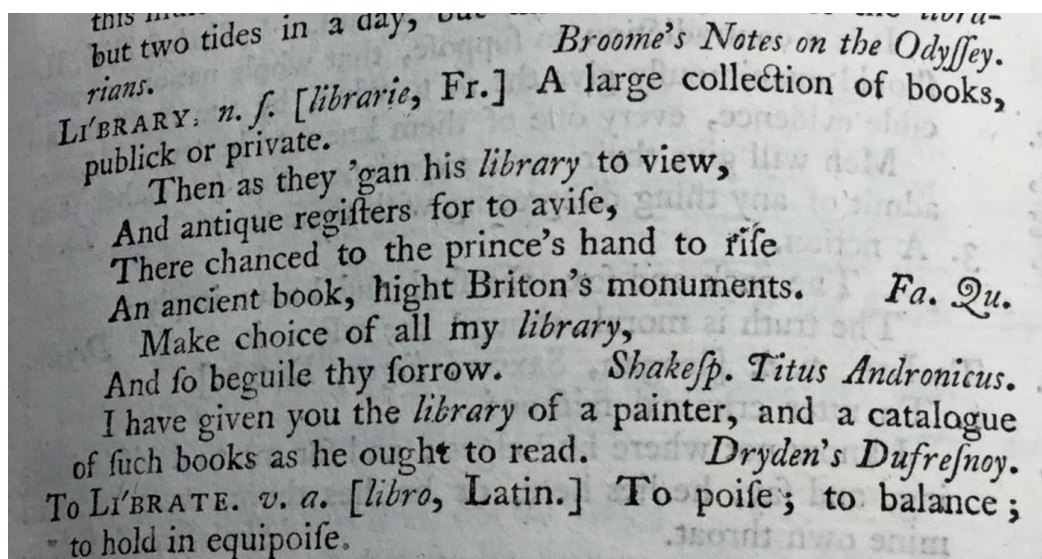


Figure 2-3: Definition of Library in Johnson's (1755) dictionary

This prominence of books in this approach is highly problematic as, while the argument above makes the case to distance the library from a collection of books, the second use of the term library brings the argument straight back to paper volumes. This is particularly interesting as reviewed above, in a more contemporary setting, the collection is often associated with a wider variety of both physical and digital formats. This includes not just books and ebooks, but collections of music, files and magazines, such as the digital music library most people have on their phones or computers

(Snaveley, 2012). When thinking of the library collection, it is, therefore, essential to build on the overarching theme of information and knowledge as opposed to any one particular medium, books included (Sennyey et al., 2009). Any contemporary approach to the library must bring this to the fore. This is an important distinction as it means later references to the library as a collection later in this thesis refer to the collection in the broadest sense.

Building on the library as a collection, it is also important to acknowledge personal libraries and personal collections. As above, this is not limited to books but includes physical and digital libraries of magazines, files and music (Snaveley, 2012). The dictionary also captures this approach to understanding 'library', though primarily refers to books once again (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d). There is a whole literature on book collection and private libraries, from Georgia Library Quarterly's series on 'library of a librarian' (examples: Hartle, 2015; Young, 2015; Freeman, 2016; McGee, 2016; Hudson, 2017), to the collections of well-known authors, celebrities or public figures (examples: Thompson, 1994; Young, 2000; Matthew, 2007; Cooke, 2012; Stone & Berryman, 2014; Szombara, 2014). The general perspective is that a personal library, and how it is organised reflects on the individual. It is fair to infer this also applies to any personal digital collections too.

Personal collections are, of course, significantly different from the collection of an academic library. This is well demonstrated by Walter Benjamin (1999:69) when writing of his personal library and the 'intimate' nature of ownership and curation of a personal book collection. People form deep relationships with books, in part because reading can stimulate the brain and activate imagination (Borcoman, 2019). This can make books precious to people, influencing their desire to collect them. This does not apply to everyone, however. The academic library is potentially eroding the need for personal libraries. Shapiro (1997:B9) suggests many new students see books as 'temporary and disposable', perhaps driven by the massification and ease of access to published material. Borcoman (2019) also argues that people are now presented with many alternatives, and often more accessible, sources of information to books which may influence this further. Personal electronic libraries only serve to solidify this. As many academic libraries purchase all course material to address 'hidden' course costs,

few universities recommend students buy a significant number of books (Melling & Weaver, 2017). One point is however clear. Even in the context of a personal collection, the concept of library needs redefining.

While the collection-focused definition is secondary to the one this chapter is concerned with, the points in this section are an important reflection on the changing relationship between the academic library and the collection it holds. Although out of the scope of this thesis, this no doubt also impacts the relationship between individuals and their personal collections, particularly when combining digital and physical. This also applies to the academic library. As suggested in the previous section, a combination of digital resources and the shrinking print stock within academic libraries are redefining 'collection' within the context of the library. A new definition for the library must, therefore, also consider a new approach to framing the collection.

### 2.1.3 Library as librarian

A third and final definition of 'library' is one associated with the staff that work within the library (Sennyey et al., 2009), referring to those entrusted with the curation of library materials. Interestingly, however, the people and the institution are not always differentiated. Radford and Radford (2001:312) argue 'the librarian is represented, not as a person, but as an extension of the library itself'. This is perhaps influenced by the tendency of literature and television or film to use the librarian as a device to represent qualities of the library. Peresie and Alexander (2005) and Cullen (2000) argue that most representations of libraries and librarians are negative across books, comics, films and television. A classic example of this, of course, is the image of a shushing librarian to represent the quiet nature of library spaces.

Too often, the essence of support that library staff represent can often be lost to the view of stereotypical librarians (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014). In their systematic review of the literature, Evgenia and Valentini (2015) note that the role of librarians and other information professionals has dramatically changed. Their themes frame the librarian as a teacher, technologist, information consultant and knowledge manager as well as specialist embedded/subject variants. Essentially a whole new range of library staff and related specialisms are emerging (Delaney & Bates, 2015), although the visibility of these staff to students and researchers is questionable (Borgman, 2001). This is

counter to the 'discourse of fear' that Radford and Radford (2001:300, 318) use to frame librarians as formidable 'policemen' that go as far as humiliating library users. To consider this understanding of library in the context of the university, it is fair to say this is not an image any academic library would like to represent, and many libraries have environments (such as social learning spaces) that are the exact opposite of this. The aforementioned definition of a library, however, has no room for such a space, and this reinforces the need for a new approach to defining the academic library.

## 2.2 Defining 'academic library'

This section will move towards the definition of 'academic library'. The dictionary definitions of 'library' above are a useful place to start, for it is impossible to define a specific type of library without first understanding what library itself means. It is essential to acknowledge that while it may be possible to capture the meaning of the academic library here, what it means in practice goes far beyond dictionary definitions (Manguel, 2008; Crawford, 2015a). The word library is ascribed with different meanings across different societies and cultures (Crawford, 2015a), and these inevitably have consequences for how academic library is defined. This is easily observed in the literature (Crawford, 2015b; Warner, 2015), television, film (Marcus, 2015) and video games, though leads to more complicated approaches when considering the social construction of such terms. The geographic focus of this review on the UK and USA does help to address this issue especially as both countries are operating within the context of neoliberalised HE (further explored in Chapter 3).

A lack of awareness regarding what libraries have to offer institutions has been observed among senior university staff (Melling & Weaver, 2017). While these understandings of the word library will be acknowledged in this thesis, it is important, as far as possible, to avoid confusing these ascribed meanings with the use of library here. This section will introduce the five most prominent alternative approaches to defining the academic library, highlighting issues with each. From this foundation, the chapter will make the case that new empirical research is required to explore this in detail and answer the MQ.

### 2.2.1 Library as a physical asset

Physical space is an essential aspect of the academic library. As Farmer (2016:87) suggests:

Libraries have as their mission to provide physical and intellectual access to enable the academic community to become effective users and producers of information and ideas.

As previewed in the introduction, Saunders (2015) argues that academic libraries are prime real estate. Academic libraries are often significant in geography, centrally located on campuses, serving as a 'knowledge centre' and more recently as 'learning centre' for universities (Jamieson, 2009:19). The role of the library is also symbolic in the context of the wider university, serving as the physical site in which knowledge is preserved (Shoham & Klain-Gabbay, 2019). Often staffed long hours, the physical space of libraries is under pressure as institutions consider how space is best used.

Even though physical space is well represented in the literature, it is often done so in an uncomplicated way. Temple (2014a) argues that the physical form of the university is the most significant and tangible asset of universities, yet it is the area most taken for granted in research. It is easy to see this in practice with academic libraries in the United Kingdom, receiving substantial investments over the last decade (Gove, 2016). Examples of this can be seen at the top of every new library investment press releases, such as the '£28 million' spent by the University of Hull (2015), the '£40 million' committed by The University of Reading (2016) or the '£35' million committed at The University of Manchester (2017a). In each case, the cost features in the very first sentence of each webpage on the development. The outward promotion of these significant economic investments in library space hints at the neoliberalisation of HE. This is because such investments are not just for the benefit of current students, but to increase the competitiveness of the institution in national and global marketplaces (see Chapter 3).

There is a significant focus on the development of physical library spaces. As the examples above indicate, universities are investing much money in the development of their library spaces. An excellent example of this includes the *ProtoLib Project* at the University of Cambridge (Priestner et al., 2016), explicitly designed to reimagine library

space by focusing on user experience and how it can be enhanced. This kind of research has been widely propagated across the sector and had led to significant changes to physical library space (Priestner, 2017; 2018; 2019).

### 2.2.2 Library as learner-centred

Bennett (2003; 2009) frames the academic library through three paradigms; reader-centred paradigm, book-centred paradigm and, learner-centred paradigm. The first two paradigms are framed as historical, representing the book-focused academic libraries of the past, highlighting the issues discussed above. The learner-centred paradigm, supported as still current by Montgomery (2014) reinforces the importance of learning and community to the academic library, both digital and physical (Bennett, 2009). This reflects similar developments across the library sector, where the move is towards a 'customer-centred' approach (Matthews, 2009), an idea which very much represents the neoliberal ideals of marketized higher education (Breeze et al., 2019a; Dandridge, 2019). Bennett (2009) concludes by suggesting there has been a change in role for libraries, from service provider to educator and from a repository to learning enterprise. This is echoed by Jamieson (2009:19), suggesting libraries have moved from 'knowledge centre' to 'learning centre' for universities. While this approach cannot be refuted, it lacks the aspects of collections and curation that are essential to defining the library.

The customer (Matthews, 2009) or learner (Bennett, 2009) focus represents a turn in the purpose of an academic library. As discussed above, for the most significant part of library history, the emphasis was on the preservation of materials – not their use (Murray, 2013). As books were hand-produced and scribed, it is easy to see how precious they were. However, as modern books are mass-market, mass-produced, they are inherently less economically valuable. What the learner-centred (Bennett, 2003; 2009) and customer-centred (Matthews, 2009) library begins to show is a different form of value being given to information resources. Rather than how financially valuable they are to the library, the emphasis is now on how useful and helpful they are to the library user (or customer). This is their true value to the academic library in neoliberal HE. This paradigm of the academic library also hints at

the importance of customer service in the academic library, especially when explicitly framing library users as 'customers'.

### 2.2.3 Library as a platform

In a similar way to Bennett's (2003; 2009) approach above, another triad can be drawn from the literature to define the library. Similarly, this approach suggests two historical paradigms of the library and one framed as current. The first paradigm suggests libraries were initially just seen as spaces, in that they were mere containers of books and other resources. This very much links to early libraries which focused on the storage, care and arrangement of knowledge (Murray, 2013). User comfort was secondary to this. The second paradigm suggests that libraries became places, serving as 'social and cultural venues in their communities' (Kim, 2016:510). In this, libraries became destinations that mean something to someone (Hanson & Abresch, 2016b), but more importantly reflected the development of library services and environments (Andrews et al., 2016a; Khoo et al., 2016). Space and place are arguably still relevant paradigms to frame the library and Watson (2010) asserts that the focus on libraries as places of learning is vital for their survival. There is arguably, however, a third paradigm that enables the library to incorporate, and transcend space and place.

The third paradigm suggests the library is now a platform (Bennett, 2003; Andrews et al., 2016a), this frames the library as a

central location for users to connect with and learn from one another, create and remix with its resources and *infrastructure*, display and discuss their work, and capture and preserve community knowledge. (Andrews et al., 2016a:146)

While this may not seem dissimilar to the library as place, it is. The library as a platform can also be termed as 'place as library' (Davenport, 2006:12). It suggests the library not as a destination, but something that you can engage with no matter where you are because of digital access. This very much reflects the placelessness often associated with neoliberal globalisation, particularly with the instant and global transfer of information in the internet age (Sheppard, 2002). While the library as a platform does not seek to destroy space, it does annex it. The library as a platform, therefore, focuses too much on information resources at the expense of everything

else a library can provide. This fails to capture the physical resources and technology the library can provide, and that this chapter will demonstrate are essential to conceptualising most academic libraries. This is especially important in the context of neoliberalised HE, for if libraries are not valued for their wider services, it can be argued that their costly physical environments would be deemed expendable.

#### 2.2.4 Library as commons

While more prevalent in the USA literature, the concept of 'library' as commons is gaining traction in the UK. This often started with *information commons*, which would often be the name given to computer suites installed within libraries (Britto, 2011). As this developed over time, information commons were used to refer to any technologically enabled space (Sinclair, 2007), and in some instances, came to blur boundaries with the library itself. This later developed into the 'commons approach' to library space, which led to the development of 'fully adaptable and more informal learning spaces' within libraries (Storey, 2015:570).

Commons are however a new kind of (potentially non-library) space. These are often referred to as *academic commons* (Blummer & Kenton, 2017), *learning commons* (Bruce, 2010; Hussong-Christian et al., 2010; Stark & Samson, 2010; EDUCAUSE, 2011) or *information commons* (Church, 2005; Halbert, 2010). These spaces may be areas within a library, of distinct, fully-fledged buildings. They can be defined as 'full-service learning, research, and project space[s]' (EDUCAUSE, 2011: 1). Carlson (2009: 16) suggests commons emerged as libraries now need to be 'all things to all people'. Examples of commons in the United Kingdom include the Commons at Bath Spa University (2015) and the Information Commons at University of Sheffield (2007). While the Information Commons is essentially a library by this name, the Commons at Bath Spa University is an altogether different space. While it has the study environments usually associated with a library, and even library staff, there are no physical information resources (books) in the building (Bath Spa University, 2015).

Perhaps the commons are libraries with a new name, a name designed to rid the library of previous definitions. Maybe they are different spaces entirely. For the UK at least, it is too early to tell. What is clear, however, is that the commons are an attempt at the reinvention of the academic library – at least in some way. This may represent



an attempt to 'sell' a new type of space to both prospective and current students, suggesting libraries to be outmoded or dated. As neoliberalism continues to generate more competitive modes of HE (Breeze et al., 2019a), the commons is likely to have some role as either an innovative new space or an aspect of future competition.

### 2.2.5 Wilkin's Four Pillars

The final approach this chapter will consider is Wilkin's (2015) four pillars of research library activity. These activities are labelled as curation; engagement with teaching and research; publishing, and finally, creating and managing spaces (Wilkin, 2015:237).

Curation is used to represent the active preservation and maintenance of a collection, not just the storage and access of materials. Engagement is used to signify the important work academic libraries do in helping students and academics in their research. Publishing includes everything from small-scale electronic publishing to significant outputs from university presses based within libraries. Finally, space represents the built library environment and the facilities and equipment offered to library users. These four pillars acknowledge a whole variety of activity streams that define not just the academic libraries of today, but those of the past. This is because Wilkin (2015) argues these pillars have remained present since libraries were first conceived, but through time, each has shifted significantly.

The activities that Wilkin uses echo some of the roles facilitated in the dictionary definitions above, reflecting both the collection and the support in using it. Space is one distinction between this model and the definitions of library in the previous section. However, while this model does include space, Wilkin's acknowledgement of it seems cursory. This is because of the focus on collections through the pillars of curation, publishing, and user support. Despite the focus on collections, it is perhaps fair to argue that library space serves as the most crucial pillar of the present time (Noh, 2015; Andrews et al., 2016a; Hanson & Abresch, 2016a). This is especially the case given the significant investment in library space driven by the competitive nature of neoliberal HE (see Chapter 3). In this regard, Wilkin's model perhaps draws short.

While there has been significant investment and attention drawn to physical library space (Priestner, 2017; 2018; 2019), such spaces are, however, under threat. The definition of the academic library as a platform, as discussed above, ultimately

suggests a future that renders the physical library redundant. Indeed, many of the warnings at the start of this literature review draw attention to this specific issue. If the academic library truly becomes a platform, physical space is relative to the user as opposed to a dedicated space they must travel to.

### 2.3 Summary

As this chapter has shown, existing definitions work to bound, label, and delineate the academic library. While this is the tendency of definitions, a new, broader approach is needed. This drives the MQ of this thesis. This is not to relegate the academic library to abstraction, but to recognise that it is much more than just a physical space, place or collection of books. The view of the library as a concept is spread across the literature (Fallin, 2016a); however, it is often mentioned in passing and is not defended (Bryant et al., 2009:12; Beard & Dale, 2010:490; Henry, 2010:4). As demonstrated above, the most established definitions associate the library with physical buildings, books and librarians. These are all problematic. A contemporary approach must look past these tangible aspects of the library, and instead, look to the broader principles behind them.

Considering the dictionary definitions presented above, alongside the modern approaches to conceptualising academic libraries, it is possible to write a new, literature-based definition. This brings together a wide range of definitions to present an approach inclusive of the full range of academic library activities.

#### **'Academic library', 'research library', or 'university library', *noun*.**

- a) The central unit of a higher education institution designed to curate and provide access to knowledge, technology, services and/or spaces that support the active engagement in learning and academic-related production for the university community.
- b) A collection of knowledge, art, media or information resources, organised, curated and maintained by either an individual, collection of individuals, business or library institution. Such resources can be physical, digital or a combination of both.
- c) Library staff, tasked with supporting students and researchers to access knowledge, use technology, produce academic works and develop their

learning.

- d) The physical space, room or building used for the facilitation of academic library activities.

(based on: Bennett, 2003; 2009; Storey, 2015; Wilkin, 2015; Andrews et al., 2016a)

The above definition captures the essence of how contemporary academic libraries may be defined. Not only does this present the answer to SQ1, but it also presents a foundation from which the data for SQ2 and SQ3 can be compared. As later chapters will show, the way in which library users talk of academic libraries is not necessarily reflective of their full role. The difference between this definition and the one presented in both the dictionary and early literature represent how the academic library has changed and responded to the influence of neoliberalism on HE. The academic library is no longer just a service for students and academics. The library is an aspect of an academic institution's competitiveness and a marketing tool to be used to attract prospective students. It is, however, also an asset and significant expense. This suggests that the robust performance of academic libraries is essential to their future existence. The significance of neoliberalism and the ways in which it has influenced both HE and academic libraries is more fully discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3 – Research context: UK Higher Education, Neoliberalism and the Brynmor Jones Library

This chapter establishes the context of this thesis. The first section introduces the current factors influencing UK HE. This focuses on globalisation, neoliberalisation and the substantial impact they have on HE and academic libraries. This is achieved by using the literature to characterise the context of the neoliberal academic library. The second section introduces the case study of this research, the BJL. As a recently redeveloped library, it will also overview how the BJL was conceived by architects, the librarian, the university and others in power. This will also establish how the BJL is a product of neoliberalisation.

### 3.1 Neoliberal trends and academic libraries

With a focus on globalisation and neoliberalisation, this section of the literature review briefly introduces the current issues in UK HE. Establishing the context of marketized competition and reduced funding that is impacting UK HE also demonstrates the pressure the sector is under. As universities work to streamline their cost base and develop their competitiveness, academic libraries, as with every other area of the university, need to demonstrate their worth and competitiveness. As Chapter 2 has suggested, one of the primary challenges for academic libraries is articulating their function within the contemporary university. This section, therefore, forms an essential component of the broader context within which libraries operate. This includes the BJL, which serves as the case study for this thesis. As with the previous chapter, this chapter will continue to use literature from both the UK and USA. Alongside the similarities discussed above, both countries embraced a turn to neoliberalism in the 1980s (Harvey, 2005). While the neoliberalisation of HE in the UK is slightly behind that of the USA, it does make the American literature a useful way to forecast the impact of neoliberalism.

Writing in *The Financial Times* in 2013, Wolf (2013) suggests that globalisation was the ‘great economic theme of the past three decades’. While perhaps best considered as a *Zeitgeist* as opposed to a concept, globalisation is problematic to define (Rosenberg, 2007:420). Driven by a combination of modernisation and capitalist expansion, globalisation characterises a series of social, economic, cultural and political changes

that resulted from the development of a 'global marketplace' (Guttal, 2007:524). These changes include different approaches to how companies globally organise themselves and their production (Woods, 1998). Massey (2005) also identifies globalisation as an imaginative geography that produces particular attitudes towards space. This has had a significant impact on people, and their identities, with some integrating more closely with the 'Western-defined' world, and others purposefully developing alternatives (Woods, 1998).

Globalisation is not new, with Guttal (2007) suggesting it has influenced world development over the previous 50 years (note the 2007 publication date). Geographically, globalisation has had a profound impact, especially when coupled with technological advancement. Marx (1973) argued that capital tends to 'annihilate... space with time', although it is perhaps more accurate to suggest it is time annihilated by space (Massey, 2005). This is because as technology continues to develop, the world is better physically and digitally connected. The result of this is that the time between space(s) is greatly minimised. While improved transportation forms a substantial aspect of this, global telecommunications (Harvey, 1990b; Sheppard, 2002) and the internet have possibly had a more significant influence. The development of the internet, the introduction of mobile 4G/5G technologies and the creation of VOIP and video-conferencing has allowed near-instantaneous connection between people, producing a 'shrinking networked world' (Sheppard, 2002:307). As such, it is technology, alongside politics that have driven globalisation. Technology quite literally reduces the space between people. Harvey (1990b:147) frames this as 'time-space compression' It is no wonder that the contemporary geographer Massey (2005) argues that time and space are inseparable.

The ideas associated with globalisation begin to set the scene for the present environment in which HE is operating. Globalisation is, however, always accompanied by neoliberal policies (Guttal, 2007), and it is neoliberalism that very much characterises issues of contemporary globalisation. Neoliberalism is an economic and political movement, leading towards economic liberalisation. This involves the liberalisation of both markets and capital (Goldstein & Musgrave, 2010), or in short, the freer movement of goods and money between countries. While Harvey (2005)

argues this has been mainly to the benefit of corporations, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and shareholders, neoliberalisation has also brought increased individual freedoms and choice. The same freedoms, however, extend to corporations, most of which act in the interest of profits and not the public (Harvey, 2005). It is here that competition emerges as a tenant of neoliberalism in that freedom also applies to corporations, allowing the freedom to profit and exploit.

Buschman (2018) argues that neoliberalism frames all 'public, collective and governmental initiatives' as ineffective, which would include universities. This has led to the extending of 'free market' and capitalistic ideologies into the HE sector (Breeze et al., 2019a). Ideologically, this leads to a focus on marketisation and competition; growth and profit; and, individualism (Breeze et al., 2019a). Alongside 'free trade', neoliberalism also results in increased privatisation, deregulation and reduced public spending (Goldstein & Musgrave, 2010). As largely public institutions, neoliberalisation has had a substantive impact on HE and is one of the dominant concepts used to define global economic trends. The result of integrating neoliberal economics into HE is a focus on revenue generation and efficiency (Seale, 2013). This frames HE as a commodity that student consumers are ultimately purchasing (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011).

In universities, Buschman (2017:597) argues that neoliberalism has taken five forms: commodification, vocationalization, fiscalization, virtualisation, de-democratization. For academic staff, the neoliberalisation of HE demands working in an environment of internationalisation (Dear, 2019), hyper-mobility, intensification of workload, precarious fixed-term contracts (Thwaites & Pressland, 2019), and responsiveness to student/market demands (Breeze et al., 2019a). Increasingly, students are framed as consumers, with The Office for Students serving as a new sector regulator to purposefully ensure 'student choice and student interest as central to shaping the sector' (Dandridge, 2019:158). This is within the context of political austerity which has reduced HE spending in the UK, with different funding narratives defined by geography, based on residence and/or study within England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland (Thwaites & Pressland, 2019). This, combined with raising fees (Dear, 2019) has entrenched class divides and made HE unattractive for many young people.

As such, universities must be more competitive, especially as the UK Government is purposefully driving the sector into a neoliberally driven market (Espinoza, 2015). In 2015, the UK Government removed the previous limitations on how many students they could recruit, an essential aspect of developing a free market HE. The problem of this is well summarised by Hillman (quoted in Shaw, 2015), Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute:

Removing student number controls is a logical conclusion of the liberalisation of higher education that has taken place in England under the coalition. In effect, undergraduates hold vouchers worth £9,000 and universities are expected to fight much harder to recruit them.

When establishing this new paradigm, the Universities Minister even said 'Let failing universities go to the wall' (quoted in Espinoza, 2015), making it clear there will be no rescue for underperforming institutions. This was confirmed in 2019 in a parliamentary debate (Education Journal, 2019). There is a real risk that a university or other HE provider will fail.

As this section is beginning to establish, the most significant issue facing UK universities is increased competitiveness in student recruitment. While this is to be expected as a part of free-market neoliberal economics driven by the government-led changes, the sector is also experiencing a shrinking market. The leading cause of this is the demographic downturn the UK is currently experiencing. As reported in *The Times Higher Education*, the UK student population will fall by 70,000 undergraduate students by the 2020 intake when compared to the decade before (Gill, 2008). There are less 18-year olds alive, presenting a shrinking pool of potential students which universities must compete to recruit. As Universities UK (2008) argued, this had led to a need for universities to develop new markets for part-time, work-based and international students. International recruitment, however, is under threat from the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union with future recruitment uncertain (Pinfield et al., 2017). While some success has been made in increasing home participation in HE with a 5.5% increase in undergraduate students between 2010 and 2016 (Busby, 2018), the competition on the market is fierce. In an

environment of increased competition, every area of the university – including academic libraries – must justify their costs.

The following sub-sections will overview the current (neoliberal) market trends and technological impacts that are shaping present-day academic libraries. These sections are built from close analysis of the UK's Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) *Mapping the Future of Academic Libraries report* (Pinfield et al., 2017) alongside the American Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL, 2013; 2015; 2017; 2019) *Environmental Scans*. In recognising concepts like value-added, competition, risk and the role of the library as a service provider (Pinfield et al., 2017), the SCONUL report embraces the neoliberal environment. While there is some resistance to the negative impact of neoliberalism on academic libraries (Quinn & Bates, 2017), given the domination of this paradigm, these sections will focus on an analysis of the consequences of this for academic libraries.

### 3.1.1 Performance metrics

UK HE is subject to a series of governmentally sponsored performance metrics that encourage and monitor research excellence, knowledge exchange and teaching excellence. For academic libraries, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) have the most influence and impact (Pinfield et al., 2017). The REF benchmarks research quality and provides accountability for public spending on research (UK Research & Innovation, 2020). The TEF aims to assess the educational standards of institutions and help inform student choice on where to study (Baker, 2018; Office for Students, 2020). Both metrics are used in league tables which are proven to be influential in helping students where to study (Baker, 2018). An important part of this is The National Students' Survey, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Office for Students (2019). This section will briefly overview how these metrics impact academic libraries.

The REF focuses on academic outputs and their impact outside of academia (UK Research & Innovation, 2020). While the REF may seem more of an academic endeavour than something to do with academic libraries, as scholarly communication is often the remit of academic libraries, this places REF also within their scope. Indeed, it was acknowledged as one of the top 10 impacting factors on academic libraries



(Pinfield et al., 2017). Arguably this also frames libraries as agents of this neoliberal agenda, potentially influencing perceptions of academic libraries within the academic community (Quinn & Bates, 2017). There is also serious concern that the REF propagates the ideology of 'power prestige and recognition' (Breeze et al., 2019a:5).

To push public engagement in research, Research England and its counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have indicated the next round of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) will have a strong emphasis on Open Access (UK Research & Innovation, 2019; 2020). DeGroff (2016) notes that this requires all articles submitted to the REF to be made openly available. As the REF is an essential way of measuring university success, this makes Open Access (OA) an institutional priority. OA was initially set out in the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002) which identifies self-archiving and publication in journals committed to open access as complementary strategies to achieve this. These strategies ensure research publications can be accessed freely, not just within HE, but by any member of the public (JISC, 2016). It is often academic libraries that support this process, and OA was identified as the number one impacting trend on academic libraries (Pinfield et al., 2017). While this is discussed further in the section on scholarly communication, for now, it is important to note the importance of the REF and the narrative of competition this reflects. As the REF engages in the act of validating some knowledge (generated by research) above that of others, it also creates and reinforces power structures within HE. This is arguably a very neoliberal practice, born from free-market driven competition (Seale, 2013).

Following a pilot year in 2016 (HEFCE, 2018), the TEF is a new governmental initiative to identify metrics that indicate effective teaching and use these as a way to benchmark university success in this area. Focused on undergraduate teaching, HE providers can choose to participate in the TEF which grants institutions a bronze, silver or gold award based on the assessment of institutional teaching quality, student outcomes and the learning environments (HEFCE, 2018). While the TEF is still developing (Melling & Weaver, 2017; HEFCE, 2018), it is clear that the library can have a significant role in supporting institutional applications for TEF awards. This demonstrates recognition of the importance of the library in supporting learning.

Melling and Weaver (2017) discuss the importance of libraries in their support of TEF submissions by providing analytics on library use, provision of information resources for learning and reading lists. They also suggest that libraries have the potential to contribute further to institutional learning support and teaching quality by developing staff skills and the use of learning analytics (Melling & Weaver, 2017). Melling and Weaver (2017) suggest there is, however, significant inconsistency across the sector on the extent to which university management are aware of their libraries' potential contribution to the TEF, and this has led to variability in the extent to which libraries have contributed to institutional submissions. Alongside the TEF, the National Students' Survey 'Question 19' focuses explicitly on library resources, asking all undergraduate finalists if:

The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well. (Office for Students, 2019:2)

In the same way that TEF metrics contribute to student decision making, responses to this question will be influential to prospective students when choosing the university they want to study at. Question 19 can also be used to build a 'league table' of academic libraries based on response to this question.

Alongside the HE sector-wide performance metrics, there is a growing trend for academic libraries to engage in the use of internal metrics to try and demonstrate value (Quinn & Bates, 2017). This is leading to the businessification of libraries alongside new forms of management (Buschman, 2017; Cox, 2018). SCONUL statistics also support a metric-driven approach to understanding academic library performance, benchmarking everything from spending and staffing numbers to square metres of library space and computer numbers (see example: SCONUL, 2014). Such benchmarking can be used to demonstrate how academic libraries are performing compared to their competitors. There is also a greater focus on accountability and quality, particularly on collections spending (Buschman, 2017). This is changing the paradigms of how libraries manage collections from the academic need to return on investment.

This section has shown how performance metrics within UK HE are beginning to impact upon academic libraries. In the case of the REF, this reflects workload around

supporting institutional REF returns. For the TEF and NSS, these metrics more directly reflect the academic libraries, as well as the institutions they belong to. The narratives behind these metrics is a full realisation of neoliberal ideologies, leading to a strong focus on 'customer service' in libraries (Buschman, 2017). These metrics focus on tangible, measurable outputs from HE, placing competition at the heart of HE (Seale, 2013). The ultimate outcome from any such metric is to establish which institutions are 'better', therefore generating them more power.

### 3.1.2 Library collections

It is fair to argue that collections are the largest and most significant area of academic library activity. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is through library collections that the library is traditionally conceptualised, often as a warehouse of books or a storehouse of information. This area of library activity is, however, rapidly changing in the context of neoliberalisation and technological development. This section will overview the core influences in this area.

The cost base of academic libraries is predominantly defined and driven by the publishing industry, with costs often rising well above inflation (Wilkin, 2015). Due to the nature of information resources, there may even be no competition in some areas, allowing publishers to charge exorbitant prices with little recourse. The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union is also having a profound impact as the pound weakens against the dollar (Plakandaras et al., 2017), the currency used by many multi-national publishers. This results in UK universities paying more. To meet rising costs, academic libraries are spending more of their budgets on collections acquisition and subscription (Rossiter, 2016). This is because while costs are increasing, library budgets have remained relatively flat, which has been to the deficit of staff employed by academic libraries with Rossiter (2016:106) arguing:

Staff numbers have now been cut to the very bone and there is nothing left to cut. Meanwhile, they are being asked to do more rather than less to support the learning and teaching and research missions of their institutions

Given this situation, the next logical step is for libraries to cut access to content, something which is particularly tricky as it can impact the student experience. There

has, however, been a rise in big-deal cancellations (ACRL, 2019), with recognition for the potential for greater procurement collaboration to leverage better value (Pinfield et al., 2017). As introduced above, this has led to a focus on return on investment for all collections (Buschman, 2017), a shift from previous collections policies that focused more on student and academic need.

While OA publishing was framed as an antidote to increasing costs, savings have yet to be realised. Initially, as the trend towards OA publishing grew there was real consideration over the value academic libraries added to the access freely available content (Delaney & Bates, 2015; ACRL Research Planning Review Committee, 2016). However, despite the growth of OA publishing, journal subscription costs have yet to reduce (Pinfield et al., 2017). Library practitioner framings of information literacy also place focus on 'reputable' sources of information, favouring paid commercial journals over OA repositories (Seale, 2013).

The academic library is not just a provider of knowledge, but also a curator and collector of it. In this role, academic libraries are acting as powerful validators of knowledge. As Seale (2013) suggests:

Librarianship's interest and investment in classifying and ordering knowledge, in ascribing order to the world, too, are an enactment of power that often reproduces contemporary social, economic, and political inequities

This shows that the library plays an important and powerful role. In deciding what collections are to be purchased, developed or divested, they are validating some forms of knowledge over others. There is also tension over the ownership of collections. While ideologically libraries may be preserving items for society as a whole (Wilkin, 2015), a neoliberal frame of library resources would see them as an economic resource for the benefit of customers (students) of an institution. While the role of the library as curator is typical, newer forms of collection procurement, particularly through reading lists (Knight et al., 2013) threaten to decentre this. While this produces a more teaching-focused collection strategy, it can bias certain groups and lead to inefficiencies.

The extent to which technology continues to shape how libraries manage content should not be underestimated (Lewis, 2019). This has been happening for some time, starting with the removal of bulky card indexes (Becker, 2015) and continues through to the present with the introduction of new high-density storage solutions (Webb et al., 2008) and off-site storage and retrieval (Little, 2013). Using these approaches to store materials used less frequently frees up much space (Seaman, 2003; ACRL, 2015). This, combined with the appeal of electronic services, especially archives such as JSTOR, can render entire back catalogues of material obsolete (Sennyey et al., 2009). This minimises the physical presence of knowledge and curation in libraries (Cook, 2018). For the casual visitor, this may decentre the definition of libraries as a collection, primarily as freed spaces are often used to develop new learning environments or develop entirely new spaces. This approach also removes the ability for users to browse stacks (Massis, 2011) and physically experience the collection. While the physical aspect of the collection may be less visible, the curation of library materials is still a vital aspect of the library with much of the work now focusing on electronic resources. The challenge of managing both paper and digital collections alongside a background of rising costs causes significant pressure on library budgets (Wilkin, 2015).

Thanks to these new technologies, it is digital, as well as physical items that now form core components of the academic library's collection (Harris, 2016). Digital items, however, are not geographically bound. As Clark & Jackson, (2019:256) posit, learners now have the 'ubiquitous technological availability of knowledge and information'. As discussed above, this has dramatically influenced how libraries provide resources. It also leads to the inevitable question that Walton and Atkinson (2018) ask: do people even need to visit a physical library space? Neoliberal economics is often characterised by a distortion of 'time, rhythm and temporality of life' (Clark & Jackson, 2019:249). Electronic resources in libraries are a perfect example of time-space compression as instant electronic access can negate the barrier of space – or more to the point eradicate time entirely. Previously, physical travel was often required to access any library and its collection. With the increase of digitisation as introduced above, this is no longer the case. For libraries, digitisation and the flows of data have had a

considerable impact. As such, because of the increasingly electronic nature of the resources they offer, contemporary libraries are very much a product of globalisation.

There is also competition from the services offered by Amazon, Google and Apple (Grosch, 2012; Noh, 2015). Unfortunately, libraries are not well placed to compete with these corporations, and have done a poor job of providing online services.

SCONUL research indicates 'libraries have yet to create a compelling digital presence, [...] that corresponds to their successful physical learning spaces' (Pinfield et al., 2017:5). As such, the user experience offered within the technology ecosystems of Amazon, Google, Microsoft and Apple is so compelling (Galloway, 2017) that users are even choosing to purchase resources from these companies that they could very well access from their academic library for free. This demonstrates that while knowledge may be one of the core principles of the academic library, it is no longer a service unique to them. Websites like Google Books, Google Scholar and Microsoft Academic are also having a profound impact on the way people search and are heavily used (Condit Fagan, 2017). Amazon, Google and Microsoft are also digitising thousands of books and other resources, and in doing so are highlighting the content that academic libraries are not providing (Willett, 2009). This is a form of competition for academic libraries, especially where Amazon, Google, Microsoft and similar companies can offer valuable services for free. While analysis shows the metadata for these sites to be of poor quality and presented in a format that is hard to scrutinise (Condit Fagan, 2017), they are still heavily used by students and academics, often to the deficit of academic library tools.

### 3.1.3 Library spaces and technology

As set out in the introduction of this chapter and the thesis as a whole, academic library spaces were predicted to decline in use as digital resources grew (Rossiter, 2016). However, this has not been the case, and significant successes have been made in the development of academic library spaces which are currently more popular than ever (Rossiter, 2016; Pinfield et al., 2017; Priestner, 2017; 2018; 2019). SCONUL statistics show no drop in UK academic library visits over the 2013-17 period (SCONUL, 2018). The success of libraries as spaces is not something new. From desks upon which students and researchers may handwrite to typewriters, computers and now the Wi-Fi

and power facilities for laptop use (Hunter & Cox, 2014; Priestner & Borg, 2016), libraries have supported the creation of written work for hundreds of years. This is because academic libraries facilitate most of the 'academic pursuits' required for academic writing, including not just access to materials, but spaces to read and write, and, access to IT and support (Lopatovska & Regalado, 2016:393). Libraries are built to be productive spaces.

Library design is an essential determining factor of success. Library furniture and equipment (desks, chairs and computer resources) support certain forms of working and their associated forms of production (Hunter & Cox, 2014; Priestner & Borg, 2016; Priestner et al., 2016). Most spaces in the library are designed for accessing paper or electronic information resources, and the production of written and typed work. Although students and researchers can conduct such work outside the library, particularly where electronic resources are abundant, the library continues to attract large numbers of students for this purpose. Research suggests this is for several reasons (Lopatovska & Regalado, 2016). Firstly, the physical library environment provides freedom from unwanted noise or distractions to those who work best in such environments (Hall & Kapa, 2015; McCaffrey & Breen, 2016). Through zoning, or with the use of multiple types of space (Young & Finlay, 2006), libraries also provide the background noise and bustle for those who prefer it (Hunter & Cox, 2014). In contemporary academic libraries, the physical space often provides comfortable furniture and plenty of desk space (Andrews et al., 2016b), beyond what may be accessible in shared houses or student halls. Libraries are increasingly becoming third spaces that are accessible, comfortable for more extended stays and allow food/drink for sustenance (Montgomery & Miller, 2011). Indeed, cafés are now a common library feature (Appleton et al., 2011). It is not just the features of the physical library but the setting itself. The library can foster certain learning behaviours (Bennett, 2005) aided by formal library settings that encourage specific forms of academic work (Jackson & Hahn, 2011; Treadwell et al., 2012). In summary, the library is built to support the production of academic work.

It is also interesting to consider Biesta's (2009:38) 'learnification' in the context of academic libraries. Learnification is 'the translation of everything there is to say about

education in terms of learning and learners' (Biesta, 2009:38). As libraries are predominantly reconfiguring space to focus on supporting learning (more spaces to sit and study) as opposed to storing and preserving books (fewer shelves), this idea is perhaps a useful way to frame the process.

Library buildings and spaces are becoming another area of competition for institutions. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, academic libraries are valuable physical assets to universities. Library refurbishments bring multi-million-pound investments that are heavily publicised on university websites and within prospectuses (see examples: University of Hull, 2015; University of Reading, 2016; University of Manchester, 2017a; Teeside University, 2020). In each case, the headline expenditure is heavily publicised, demonstrating how the student experience is being invested in. Despite the investment across the sector, there is no statistical evidence that demonstrates investment in new or refurbished library spaces leads to improved NSS scores (SCONUL, 2016). Nevertheless, SCONUL research suggests that dedicated library spaces will still dominate the UK HE sector for the next ten years. However, there is an increase in the co-location of libraries with other services (Pinfield et al., 2017). As such, library buildings and investment within them is likely to continue for some time. The BJL redevelopment introduced later in this chapter is an excellent example of a response to the increased competitiveness of the sector, with the library signposted within all recruitment literature.

Alongside major redevelopments, there is a growing community interested in the enhancement of library spaces, and there is a growing scholarship in this area. This is well represented by the User Experience (UX) in Libraries (UXLibs, 2019) group. While UK centric in their events, UXLibs is an international community of anthropologists, library practitioners and designers (UXLibs, 2019). Each year the group produces handbooks full of case studies which share their practitioner-generated research (see: Priestner, 2017; 2018; 2019). Outside this group, there is also *Weave* (Weave, 2020) the *Journal of Library User Experience*, founded in 2014 to share learning across UX professionals. These developments represent a growing area of scholarship designed to build better libraries. An essential aspect of this is inclusion, especially as how spaces are created and maintained can be exclusionary (Dear, 2019). A range of special



interest groups continue to develop this area of library space and was the focus of the 2018 UX yearbook (Priestner, 2018).

Technology is now seen as an essential part of any modern library, with Farmer (2009:5) and Cunningham and Tabur (2012:1) arguing technology is 'ubiquitous' in libraries. This ubiquity can also be a problem in that it is rarely acknowledged, although often used (Pinfield et al., 2017). Technology has infiltrated academic libraries over time, starting with electronic catalogues, open-access computers and printing, then continuing to include Wi-Fi and power socket availability as mobile devices grew prevalent. What was once a pull factor to libraries is now a minimum expectation. Thomas (2000) suggests that no library could now succeed without technology (ACRL, 2015). Technology is now central to library services and spaces (Seal, 2015), and this will only grow in importance (Noh, 2015). For this reason, technology is undoubtedly one of the core principles of the contemporary library, especially as significant pressure remains to adopt technology to keep up-to-date and keep users coming (Chan & Spodick, 2014). In the neoliberal university, technological innovation is an essential aspect of the academic library (Buschman, 2017). To stay competitive, libraries must continue to invest in technology. For universities, placing any technology within libraries also ensures access for the whole university community, which realises better value from any investment.

The need for technology continues to drive the retrofitting of existing academic libraries (Thomas, 2000), and play a significant role in any new build or redevelopment (Robinson, 2009; Storey, 2015). The investment in technology is not just limited to building projects. Many libraries are developing their equipment and services with the provision of specialised equipment that students and researchers may not otherwise have access to. Makerspaces (Curry, 2017; Lee, 2017; Letnikova & Xu, 2017; Lotts, 2017), 3D printers (Moorefield-Lang, 2014; Letnikova & Xu, 2017) and new creative resources or spaces (Crollie & Lee, 2016; Johnson, 2016) are helping students move beyond just textual work. It is here that the contemporary academic library adds value, for it is providing equipment and the support to use it (Curry, 2017; Schuck et al., 2017) in an accessible environment. While it may be possible to write from home, very few would have access to a 3D printer or recording studio at home. While these may

represent a niche, the ground number of Makerspaces suggests the demand for these kinds of resources is growing. One result of this, however, is the continued blurring of academic library identity and what it is they offer (Pinfield et al., 2017). Makerspaces represent a significant divergence from the traditional identity of a library as book space.

While library spaces may seem important, it is a mistake to think of them as unique (Pinfield et al., 2017). Jochumsen et al. (2012) argue that the gap between public libraries and bookshops with cafes has narrowed. It is all about the experience offered. As such, it is not only other sources of information that compete with the neoliberal academic library but the other sources of study space. Some of these are even 'bookless' spaces managed by academic libraries (Pinfield et al., 2017). Outside the scope of libraries, the competition also comes from cafes, bookshops, other spaces on campus and even halls of residence. To remain competitive, libraries need to be careful to maintain investment in both their spaces and technology. As education is a product (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011), so too is the library a part of this. Worn-out library spaces and outdated or slow technology will negatively impact the user experience. Technologies such as 3D printing and mixed reality are also one way in which library spaces can get a competitive advantage over others.

#### **3.1.4 Research support and scholarly communication**

Libraries are often involved in research support (Pinfield et al., 2017). This includes scholarly communication, research data management, bibliometrics, research information management systems, publishing, repositories for research and more (Pinfield et al., 2017; SCONUL, 2019). As competition for research funding intensifies, the importance of scholarly communication activities brings new pressures to many academic libraries. In some institutions, other departments may be involved in information management leading to tensions and internal competition (Cox, 2018).

As introduced earlier, OA is an increasingly important route of publishing, and academic libraries often have a significant role in this process (Pinfield et al., 2017; Jones-Edman et al., 2019; SCONUL, 2019). There are two complementary routes to OA publishing. The first works by publishing in an OA journal (Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2002). Open access journals may be free to publish with, or they may require

authors to pay an article processing fee to cover the publication cost upfront. Whether there is a fee for the author or not, this is called gold OA – so long as the article is publicly available (JISC, 2016). Despite the use of article processing fees, many publishers have yet to reduce their journal subscription charges, particularly for hybrid journals that publish a mix of OA and subscription-only articles. This means that universities are being charged twice for the same content (Rossiter, 2016). The second route for OA is based on self-archiving or publication through repositories (Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2002). This is called green OA. Green OA is often combined with existing models of publishing where a journal will publish without cost but will charge access fees to those who want to read it. After an embargo period, authors can make their final version of the article freely available via an OA repository (JISC, 2016). Both routes ultimately allow people to freely access research.

OA is a significant area of activity for academic libraries in Europe, including the UK due to governmental incentives (ACRL, 2019). Europe leads on the use of gold OA in comparison to the USA, where the publisher-friendly green OA dominates (ACRL, 2019). As introduced above, the next round of the REF will have a strong emphasis on OA, and this is creating extra pressure on academic libraries (Pinfield et al., 2017). This is because, in most institutions, academic libraries have been important stakeholders in the OA movement. Examples include disseminating information about the new REF requirements (Bower et al., 2017), hosting OA journals (Dishman, 2017), managing institutional repositories (DeGroff, 2016), allocating funding for gold OA (DeGroff, 2016), and dealing with payment and copyright (Ashworth et al., 2014).

Though more widespread in the United States of America (Bonn & Furlough, 2015), the role of the library in publishing is not insignificant in the United Kingdom (JISC, 2017), particularly in support of OA and academic publishing. This has led to a new model of publishing in new university presses. This often focuses on new collaborations, niche or specialist publications and often digital-only publication (JISC, 2017). An excellent example of such collaboration is the new White Rose University Press (2017), a collaboration between the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York, which focuses on quality, innovation and OA. Such collaboration can also be seen on a publication level, with the Open Library of Humanities (2017) standing as an example of a journal funded

by an international library consortium. These examples demonstrate a move towards library-led and university-led publishing, showing a direct role for libraries in the production of academic publications. Even where the library is not directly publishing, libraries often have a role in the support of OA publication, and certainly have a role in supporting users to access such materials.

It is fair to argue that scholarly communication is more to do with the success of institutions than it is to do with their libraries. Support for scholarly communication, however, is one way in which academic libraries can support broader institutional goals and be part of their success. The support for REF, in particular, can lead to significant institutional gains should the university perform well. It is undoubtedly in the interest of academic libraries to be part of such successes.

### 3.1.5 Community and commons

The role of the academic library in communality is twofold. Firstly, libraries are a community centre for the university; in this regard, serving the academic community comprising of both staff and students (Storey, 2015). Secondly, there is a growing public engagement remit, part of ensuring full access to publicly-funded research. This encompasses a whole range of engagement activities for members of the public, especially local schools and colleges (Ray & Chris, 2006). Increasingly, connected learning is an integral part of academic library communities, integrating technology-enabled teaching, social media, and new pedagogies (Pinfield et al., 2017). Both makerspaces and learning commons serve as facilitators of connected learning. It is also important to acknowledge that library spaces are also used for non-academic social activities and events (Trembach et al., 2019).

Academic libraries have an important role in developing the campus community (Waxman et al., 2007). Many students and researchers, the library forms an integral part of their work and is therefore somewhere they spend considerable time. The central location of most libraries (Cunningham & Tabur, 2012) and their long opening hours helps to facilitate this further (Ravenwood et al., 2015). One commonality between public and academic libraries is the branching of both into new services. For public libraries, the co-location of other services into libraries helps provide budget efficiencies, but also increases the role of the library as a destination (see examples:

Moseley et al., 2004; CILIP, 2009; 2014; Public Libraries News, n.d.). To some extent, this is seen in academic libraries, where co-locating other services within academic library buildings has led to increased accessibility and budget savings (Holmgren & Spencer, 2014). These can be seen as efficiencies in the context of neoliberalised HE. Bruce (2010: 161) introduces this as the 'one-stop' library experience with services including tutoring, disabilities support, counselling and administration. This continues to draw people to the library and build on the multifunctionality of library spaces.

Multifunctionality is an important aspect of most academic libraries, and this is well represented in Gove's (2016) article, *How campus libraries became the place to read, pray, learn*. It demonstrates that libraries are much more than just study spaces; they are important social spaces that play an important part in the university community. For universities, this also brings efficiencies in running costs and staff. With the introduction of new NSS questions on learning community (HEFCE, 2017), the community is a new area on which universities in the UK can be benchmarked. While the library is only a small part of this, it nevertheless has a vital role in developing community beyond academic disciplines.

Public access to academic libraries is a source of contention for many universities. The provision of collections access to the public undoubtedly widens access to library materials, most of which were ultimately paid with public funds (see numerous examples: Open University, 2017; University of Cambridge, 2017; University of Hull, 2017b; University of Sheffield, 2017; University of York, 2017). Allowing public access, however, brings tension. As argued above, collections are a valuable resource with economic value and something that students and researchers as paying customers should have priority access to in the neoliberal academic library (Seale, 2013). For this reason, access arrangements are often involved. In studying the agreements in a sample of academic libraries across ten countries Wilson et al. (2019) found that the while the majority provided public access in some way, it was through complicated 'granular membership categories', particularly in Australia, South Africa, the USA and the UK (Wilson et al., 2019:9). To preserve services for students, academic libraries restrict public access to certain times of the year, or to limited numbers (for example: University of Edinburgh, 2017). In addition, while occasional public access to

collections is a common feature of academic libraries, annual access is often chargeable (for example: University of Sheffield, 2017). All of these factors influence to what extent academic libraries may be considered 'open' to the public.

Another significant aspect of the academic library community is that of volunteers, mirroring public libraries. As the governmentally imposed budget constraints on local authorities began to impact libraries, opening hours, book funds and staff were all cut (Goulding, 2013). To help fill service gaps and to maintain services, library volunteers have been incredibly crucial across many UK libraries, with many intending to increase their volunteer uptake (Goulding, 2013; Casselden et al., 2017). Similarly, there have been a growing number of volunteers in academic libraries, although the aim is primarily to provide opportunities for students, it has also helped develop services which were under pressure (Tikam, 2011; Broady-Preston, 2014; Skulan, 2018). Given the mirroring of cuts in HE, it remains to be seen if volunteers become an essential aspect of the academic library.

### 3.1.6 Information and digital literacy

The provision of support with information and digital literacy is a significant and growing area of development for academic libraries (Pinfield et al., 2017; Skoyles, 2017; CILIP Information Literacy Group, 2018; ACRL, 2019). The CILIP Information Literacy Group (2018:3) launched a new definition of information literacy:

Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to develop informed views and to engage fully with society.

While a positive way to support the development of student skills, there are potential issues with some approaches to digital literacy. Seale (2013:40) argues that institutional approaches and organisational models risk reproducing neoliberal ideologies by 'consolidating wealth and power within the upper class through the dispossession and oppression of non-elites'. This is because information literacy tries to balance the contradictory ideas of citizen empowerment versus the need to control the quality of information (Pawley, 2003). While this critique pre-dates CILIP's definition, this too tries to balance democracy and inclusivity with the need to make

'judgements' on the value of information used (CILIP Information Literacy Group, 2018:3-4). It does, however, broadly acknowledge some of the challenges, and it is easy for librarians to reproduce these issues in their practices if they are not approached critically (Seale, 2013). This is an area that academic libraries need to navigate carefully.

Beyond a focus on information and digital literacy, often academic libraries are home to other forms of academic support. While not centred in the library for every institution, most learning development centres are based within academic libraries. Examples of this include Skills@Library (University of Leeds, 2017), The Skills Team (University of Hull, 2017a), Academic Skills Team (Staffordshire University, 2017), My Learning Essentials (University of Manchester, 2017b) and the Academic Skills Centre (University of Birmingham, 2017). These centres offer a range of services that can include things like academic writing support, digital skills, information literacy and maths support. While not every institution places such services in the library, the decision to do so by many institutions further cements the relationship between the library and learning. It also further supports the ideals outlined above indirectly supporting the individual production of library users. These services have a variety of goals, but broadly help with the retention of students and/or the added value to their degree classification (Hartley et al., 2011). Interestingly the learning development professional recognition scheme now recognises emancipatory practices as a core value (Briggs, 2018), perhaps reflecting resistance to some of the neoliberal ideals.

There are also new avenues of support that neoliberal academic libraries need to engage with. Due to the introduction of new technologies and makerspaces, libraries also have needed to develop their support mechanisms, training staff to be able to support students and researchers (ACRL, 2015; Bunnett et al., 2016). This forms an integral part of the support libraries offer. Academic libraries are also not working in isolation from their institutions, and the growing importance of library support in the curriculum is also evident (ACRL, 2019). The nature of this teaching is rapidly changing too, with greater blended delivery and the use of technology in teaching (Pinfield et al., 2017; ACRL, 2019). This is something that the neoliberal academic library needs to adjust to.

### 3.1.7 Equality, diversity and inclusion

It is challenging to support library users as they are not a homogeneous group (Bligh, 2014) and are now more diverse than ever before (Farmer, 2009). As Carlson (2009:16) suggests, the library now needs to be 'all things to all people', for this reason, libraries have increased the learning support they offer as the focus on learning spaces increases (Beard & Dale, 2010; Holmgren & Spencer, 2014). For many libraries, this has involved developing new areas of support or new support services to support students and researchers in their work. In supporting diverse users, Pionke (2016) argues the importance of a sustainable approach to developing accessibility within libraries, based on the report from the World Health Organisation that suggests 15% of the world's population has a disability. Sanchez-Rodriguez and LoGiudice (2018) argue that close relationships should be developed with student disability services to help ensure all users are fully supported.

There is also an uncomfortable link between internationalisation and imperialism. Indeed, universities have found themselves in the strange position of admitting diverse students and academics while simultaneously destroying alternative ways of thinking (Dear, 2019). While universities are starting to acknowledge the 'whiteness' and eurocentrism of curriculum, as well as the colonial roots of their history (Dear, 2019), there has been little impact on making significant progress at addressing these issues sector-wide. If anything, it is getting worse as 'power hierarchies ensure that certain knowledges are more accepted than others, certain voices more acceptable, and indeed certain bodies' (Thwaites & Pressland, 2019:ix). There is now significant pressure on academic libraries to diversify their collections, particularly with the inclusion of content from BAME authors (Parker, 2019). There is also a need to broaden the profession of librarianship and ensure it is more inclusive for existing BAME staff (Ishaq & Hussain, 2019).

### 3.1.8 Summary

As (Buschman, 2017:598) 'the neoliberal takeover of the university' has had a significant impact on academic libraries. This section has overviewed how neoliberalism has impacted library performance, collections, spaces and support. This had led to changes in how libraries are monitored and managed, including the



development of new services and initiatives. This thesis will revisit the research presented in this section in answer to the SQs and MQ of this thesis.

### 3.2 The right to the neoliberal academic library

This chapter has so far shown the implications of neoliberalism on the academic library, eluding to some of the ways in which this impacts the experience of library users. While library users, as defined in the introduction, is encompassing of students, academics, members of the public and other audiences, it is students (as paying customers) that are the predominant focus of the library in the context of neoliberalism. Given the neoliberalisation of the academic library, it is fair to ask – where are the students?

While this chapter has so far focused on the impacts of neoliberalism, students are often the centre of much of the change. However, as suggested above, the role of the student is often that of customer, and this is implied throughout all the above sections on neoliberalism. For example, performance metrics are there to help inform customer choice (Baker, 2018; Office for Students, 2020); collections and spaces are developing to better support the customer experience (Priestner, 2017; 2018; 2019), and innovative technologies are there to boost customer productivity (Seal, 2015; Pinfield et al., 2017). While these may be positive developments for students, they develop under the guise of neoliberal ideals – consumer choice, marketisation and competitive service provision. This leads to the issue of who the academic library is for, either the users or to further the business goals of the university. It also signifies a change in power dynamics and the student-library relationship.

As indicated in the introduction to this thesis (Chapter 1), Lefebvre's framework is an essential component of this thesis' approach. While this will be further introduced in the next chapter, here, it is useful to consider one of Lefebvre's concepts as a metaphor for the student in the context of the neoliberal academic library. In *Writings on Cities*, Lefebvre (1996) conceptualises people's 'right to the city', framing the city was an important site of social interaction and social change (Lefebvre, 1996). In the context of HE, this idea can be extended to the library, questioning if students have a 'right to the library'. This is particularly poignant in the context of neoliberal HE, especially given the above question of whom the library serves. There are also several

parallels between the city and the campus. While the city is an important site of interaction (Levebvre,1996; 1991), for a university campus, so is the library (Farmer, 2016; Jamieson, 2009). In the same way that Lefebvre acknowledged the influence of capitalism on the city, so too can the influence of neoliberalism on the academic library be considered. For Lefebvre (1991), the city is an important site of production. For the university – and especially students so is the library (Farmer, 2016).

On first consideration, the issue of the ‘right to the library’ is a simple one. It can be argued that, as paying customers, students have a right to the library. This is because the library is one of the many services ‘sold’ to students as part of their university tuition fees (UCAS, 2020). The increasing customer-focus of the academic library has led to significant power changes in the student-library relationship. As discussed in the literature review, for much of their history libraries were not the most hospitable places. They focused on the preservation of library materials over the comfort of users (Murray, 2013). In contrast, the customer-focused library (Matthews, 2009) puts library users first. Therefore, where librarians may have ruled the libraries of the past, it can be argued that students, as customers, have a more powerful voice. While this may inherently lead to more power in their use of the library, this is not absolute.

The consumer-focused frame of students and other library users can often lead to conflict. It is common for library staff to have to deal with inappropriate student behaviour in libraries (Ellis & Phillips, 2013; Simmonds & Ingold, 2002; Moorcroft, 2009). In the context of neoliberalism, there is a real fear that students will challenge library rules because they feel their consumer rights support their actions (Nixon et al., 2018). There have been cases of students refusing to be courteous to others in silent spaces because they are paying fees to be a student, suggesting this gives them a right to use the space no matter how they behave. In one rare example from the BJL, students consuming alcohol refused to leave because they were ‘paying to be here’ claiming ‘you can’t kick us out’. While far from an everyday occurrence, it presents a challenge for the neoliberal academic library. While being a customer does not exempt people from manners, it does place further importance on questioning what the library is. If the library is just there to provide a service, this kind of behaviour may become more commonplace.

Given the high tuition fees in England (Johnston, 2013), students are acutely aware that they are paying for their university experience. In their research, Nixon et al. (2018) found that paying for the degree often devalued the HE experience and absolved students of taking responsibility for their learning. This is because the commodification of HE frames the degree as a right, not something that must be earned. This has interesting implications for the library. While the library may be a product, it is not sold in the conventional sense, being one of the primary services funded by their tuition fees (UCAS, 2020). As with a degree, however, the 'right to the library' is not without condition. Many university libraries have extensive rules and regulations governing the use of library space (Ahmadianyazdi et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2019) and the BJL is no exception (University of Hull, 2018a). Such regulations do not just cover membership and borrowing rights, but also establish the expectations around behaviour and the treatment of library staff. While students undoubtedly have a 'right to the library' it is not unconditional.

The 'right to the library' and library membership policies also highlights the tension between the civic and social roles of the library versus their duty to students as paying customers. The historical focus on the preservation of materials (Murray, 2013) suggested a greater purpose, preserving knowledge for the benefit of all. However, in consumerised and neoliberalised higher education, the focus has to be on paying students (customers). This runs counter to the ideals of the REF and the broadening of access to information (Wilson et al., 2019). While research may increasingly be shared openly, library access must increasingly prioritise (paying) students. As such, the 'right to the library' is not universal within neoliberalised higher education as the rights of students are prioritised above other groups.

Despite the 'right to the library' being a simple issue for students as customers, philosophically and ethically it is much more. Libraries are established and symbolic aspects of the University (Farmer, 2016; Jamieson, 2009; Wilkin; 2015). As the literature review (see Chapter 2) has shown, they are places of learning, community, and support, not just collections. As such, the right to the library is also a social and moral right, especially as the library may be a source of resources that some users may otherwise not have access to (Galanek et al., 2018). Libraries are also symbolic of

knowledge, and in the context of open scholarly communication, restricting rights to the library run counter to the very purpose of open scholarship (Wilson et al., 2019).

Returning to the idea of the 'right to the city', Lefebvre (1996) acknowledges a need to reclaim the city, primarily as the influence of capitalism has led to spatial inequalities, in which 'citizens are seen as a means' as opposed to 'free and authentic political actors' (Shields, 2011:280). Through the neoliberalisation of HE, there may be parallels to this in the university. As economics becomes a key driver in the sector, the student can be framed as a means for universities to accrue capital. There is a risk that students are seen as no more than paying customers, an economic benefit that ensures future financial stability. At this point, students may be merely a means to ensure the future existence of a university. There is, however, another parallel in that students can reclaim their education. While students may be paying for their education, they also have a choice not to frame this relationship as transactional.

This section has shown that students most certainly have a right to the library; the real question asks why this is the case. The student, as a customer frames the library-student relationship as transactional. However, as ideas in both this chapter and the literature review have begun to elude, the library is a place of community, inclusion and learning. This is one of the reasons why this research is important, as the purpose of the library needs to be questioned.

### 3.3 The Brynmor Jones Library

This section grounds this thesis in the context of its case study, the BJL. It will introduce this library to those unfamiliar with it and its spaces, as well as providing critical analysis for those who are familiar. Alongside my own reflections, I have used architectural plans to reflect better some of the purpose and intention of the broad spatial design. This section will also establish why the BJL is a useful case study in exploring the neoliberal academic library.

The BJL serves as the University of Hull's main (and only) campus library, except for a couple of very small, specialised departmental libraries. The BJL sits at the centre of the University of Hull's main campus and serves a mixture of the 16,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Hull (including the Hull-

York Medical School, HYMS). The BJL also serves the 2,366 staff of the University of Hull, of which 989 are academics (University of Hull, 2019). The BJL comprises of an original 1950s Art Deco building (including northern extension) and an eight-storey Brutalist tower block (Sheppard Robson, 2015). Between 2012 and 2015, both buildings were refurbished (Mark, 2015; RIBA, 2015; Sheppard Robson, 2015). It is this refurbishment that makes the BJL a compelling case study. Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; the BJL serves as the University's primary open-access computer provider and main study space. The BJL is also famed for its relationship to the English poet Philip Larkin, who served as the University's librarian for thirty years from 1955 (RIBA, 2015). Larkin's contributions represent an essential part of the architectural and environmental heritage of the building, something which is both respected and contested in the library of today. The library was named after Sir Brynmor Jones in 1967, the University of Hull's Vice-Chancellor from 1956-1972 (Heseltine, 2016). Sir Brynmor Jones was a strong advocate for the library and is said to have offered much support to Larkin throughout his tenure (Heseltine, 2016).

The BJL is also a compelling case study thanks to the redevelopment timing, which coincided with the government's decision to raise tuition fees to a maximum of £9,000<sup>1</sup> (Johnston, 2013). This signified the first significant step towards neoliberalisation in the HE sector, with uncapped student places forming a core part of this policy change (Johnston, 2013). As the previous section has already established, this led to the extending of 'free market' and capitalistic ideologies into the HE sector (Breeze et al., 2019a). This ultimately meant more competition in the sector. While not directly related, the redevelopment of the BJL was an opportunity to develop a library that was sector-leading, something that would make the university stand out, and more focused on delivering an exceptional student experience. It is, nevertheless, also designed to impress both current and prospective students and their parents (RIBA, 2015). As such, the redeveloped library signifies a dramatic change from the original purpose of the library spaces within both the original building and tower block. As RIBA (2015) so eloquently summarise:

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<sup>1</sup> Technically, the fee was raised to £6,000, with the option for institutions to charge up to £9,000 if they funded additional widening participation activities to increase participation in HE from under-represented groups. In reality, most institutions charged the maximum £9,000 (Johnston, 2013)

In [Philip Larkin's] time, university libraries were all about silent, concentrated, book-based study. Today they work in various different ways, with the printed page in sharp decline relative to electronic working – often in groups. The blurring of the boundary between formal and informal is the key change.

As this thesis will go on to explore, the BJL is more than its physical components. The staff working in the BJL are an essential aspect of the BJL. Considering the importance of library staff both within the literature and findings of this thesis, it is important to introduce how the BJL is staffed briefly. For much of this research, the BJL sat within the University Library Directorate. This Directorate was organised into three groups: Customer Services, Information Services, and the Skills Team (Graduate Development Services). Customer Services forms the largest body of staff, tasked with the day-to-day running of the building, managing of the physical collection (for example, shelving) and front-facing user support. As outlined earlier in this chapter, it can also be argued that Customer Services frames students as customers, a principle strongly associated with neoliberal HE. Information Services are responsible for managing collection finances and purchasing decisions, also including the managing of information, metadata and research outputs. The Skills Team support the development of study, academic, research and digital skills for all library users. Since the completion of the empirical research and analysis, the BJL was merged with the Information Communication Technology Department (ICTD) to form the Information Services Directorate. As this process started in late 2019 and is only just complete at the time of publication (March 2020), this has no reflection in this thesis and its findings.

### 3.3.1 Redeveloping the BJL – The library reconceived

Between 2012 and 2015, both the Art Deco building and the Brutalist tower block were fully refurbished in a £28 million scheme (Heseltine, 2016). To lead on the project, the University appointed Sheppard Robson to serve as both architects and design team. Sheppard Robson worked alongside the then University Librarian Richard Heseltine, who played an essential role in managing and driving forward the redevelopment (Heseltine, 2016). This is atypical as most academic library redevelopments were estates-led. In the case of the BJL, the redevelopment was very much librarian-led, with Heseltine serving as the client (Mark, 2015). Heseltine

provided the architects with a strict and detailed brief, orientated to the future, and aimed to set a new standard in academic library design:

The brief was to create a library for the 21st Century and move forward the agenda for university libraries, which had been through a period of rapid change over the last decade. (Sheppard Robson, 2016)

As such, the BJL as a case study captures a shift in library design, moving away from the isolated book-based study of the past towards current study trends associated with the use of technology and group work. This was one of the primary reasons the BJL was chosen as a case study as it represents a space designed to in part redefine library.

The impetus for the development was driven by Heseltine (2016) in partnership with Hull University Union (HUU, 2011a; 2012). Heseltine (2016) identified the following drivers for the redevelopment:

1. 'transform the student experience by creating a modern, flexible, technology-enabled environment with the rich variety of learning spaces that students clearly needed' (Heseltine, 2016:2).
2. Modernise infrastructure and replace end-of-life services.
3. Seamlessly joining both buildings with a new central atrium, giving the impression the library is now a single building (Mark, 2015; RIBA, 2015; Sheppard Robson, 2015).
4. Reorient the library to integrate the East Campus and West Campus better.
5. 'make the Library a key gateway into the University for wider communities particularly a cultural gateway, an aspiration that was eventually to be realised by the incorporation into the Library of a new art gallery and exhibition hall' (Heseltine, 2016:2).

In many ways, these aims aligned to neoliberal ideals. Delivering a better 21<sup>st</sup>-century student experience was essential to both modernise and maintain competitiveness with the libraries of other institutions. Replacing infrastructure through a redevelopment was cost-effective and efficient when compared to multiple building works. Encouraging access to the building by members of the public also helps showcase the university and may attract students. Furthermore, as suggested above, the redevelopment aimed to make the BJL a space to impress (RIBA, 2015). It is fair to argue that neoliberal ideals certainly influenced the design process, and the resulting library is very much a neoliberal space.

Looking at the redevelopment through Lefebvre's (1991) spatial frame, the BJL redevelopment perhaps represents a reappropriation of space, all be it for a similar, but subtly different purpose than before. Even Heseltine (2016:3) notes:

The redevelopment has also defined new purposes for the building, giving it yet greater stature.

While the BJL is still predominantly library space, a sizable portion of the space within the building is being used for different purposes than pre-redevelopment. One example of this can be seen in the tower block configuration. Five of the floors of the tower block now have at least 30% less shelving, allowing each to accommodate more study space. A total of 25% of the print collection was moved to be housed in the basement (RIBAJ, 2015), a process not dissimilar to that of many other academic libraries (Seaman, 2003; ACRL, 2015). This indeed represents a dramatic change in space use for the tower block.

Similarly, the redesigned ground floor spaces introduced an art gallery, exhibition space and café, all representing a very different use of space to that of the library pre-redevelopment. Perhaps the redevelopment pre-empted the vacancy Lefebvre predicted for spaces outliving their '*raison d'être*' (Lefebvre, 1991: 167). It indeed represents a reframing of the library space towards different uses with a more public audience. These changes in audience and scope have not gone unnoticed with library users, especially during the City of Culture year, 2017, where the BJL played host to multiple exhibitions (University of Hull, 2018b). This changing audience also represents a change in build access, with the entire ground floor open to the public and external visitors. This is a contrast to the BJL before redevelopment which had gated entry based at the door, allowing only members of the University community access.





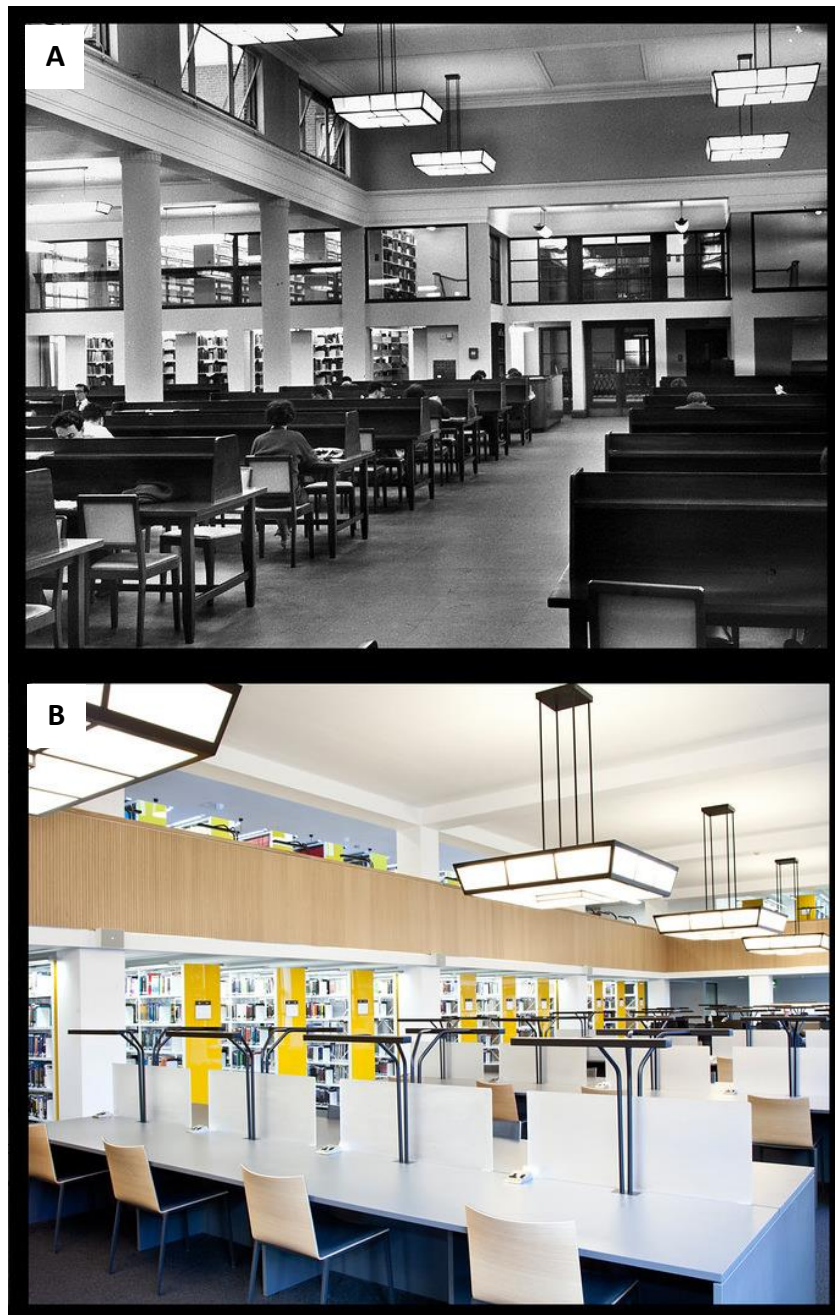
[Photos © University of Hull – reproduced with permission]

**Figure 3-1 Ground floor timeline A, B & C (Brynmor Jones Library, 2013a)**

Architecturally, the changes in the redevelopment were quite dramatic as the library buildings had not seen significant investment since their original construction. An excellent example of this are the changes to the ground floor shown in Figure 3-1. Analysing these photographs reveals important stages in the development of the BJL, also outlining the transformations in how the building is accessed and navigated. The grand 1950s library (A) is a stark contrast to the same space as shown in 2010 (B). The most significant change between these dates is the removal of the card indexes. By the 2010 photograph (B) they are nowhere to be seen, yet they were something which dominated the ground floor in the 1950s photograph (A). This is because the catalogue was entirely digitised and searchable online, with no need for the bulky cabinets that previously held the card catalogue. The 2010 photograph (B) also shows the link to the tower block (at the rear), an element not yet built in 1950s first photo (A). The final, present-day picture (C) shows the new atrium and staircase linking both buildings. This

bright, modern glass atrium is a purposeful contrast to the traditional architecture of the Art Deco building it joins to the Brutalist tower block. It also signifies a change in the access of the building, as the ground floor is made publicly accessible with the move of the entry gates to the bottom of the stairs forming a centrepiece of this development (bottom left of C).

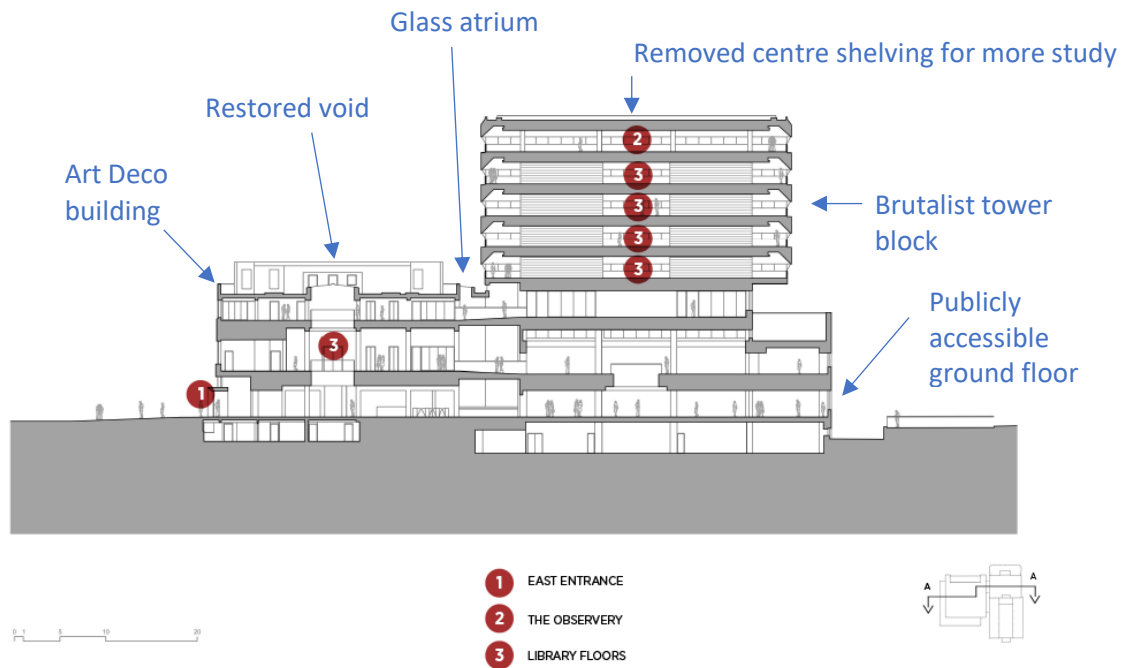
Another striking feature of the redevelopment was the restoration of the Reading Room (Figure 3-2). The present-day Reading Room (B), a result of the redevelopment, represents a sensitive attempt to restore the original 1950s Reading Room (A). Figure 3-2 shows this well, picturing the original Reading Room (A), which had been turned into teaching spaces by 2010. This restoration of the Reading Room shows the heritage aspect of this redevelopment, also hinting at a cyclical rhythm (Lefebvre 2013) in the conceptualisation (and reconceptualization) of this particular space. While this may represent an architectural return to elements of the past, the new Reading Room is still much changed, with power sockets or computers at every desk to enable modern study practices. It now also stores the libraries high-demand undergraduate collection of books.



[Photos © University of Hull – reproduced with permission]

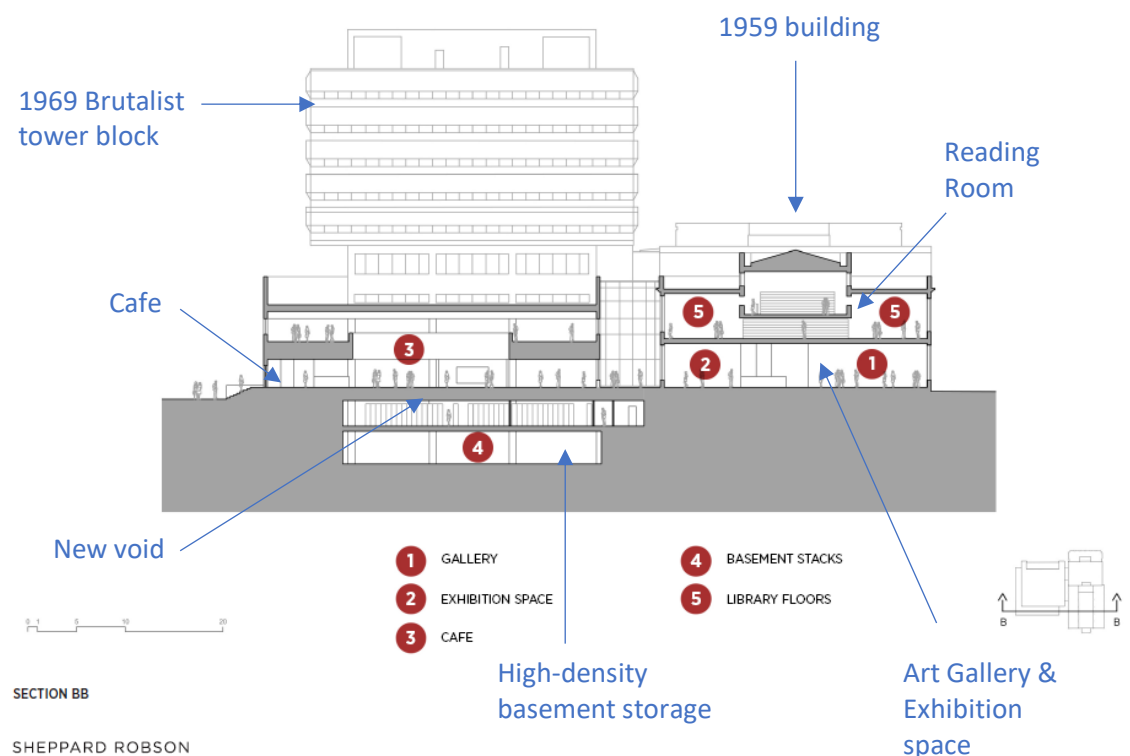
**Figure 3-2 Reading Room timeline A & B (Brynmor Jones Library, 2013b)**

The Reading Room was not the only restored feature of the redevelopment, and the cross-sections demonstrate the restored voids in the Art Deco building (Figure 3-3) which allow greater use of natural light in the building, alongside the newly created voids and atrium (Figure 3-4). These cross-sections also show the newly added spaces: the café, the gallery and the exhibition space, all taking prominent ground floor positions in the building.



[Plans © Sheppard Robson – reproduced with permission]

**Figure 3-3 Cross section AA - Brynmor Jones Library (Sheppard Robson, 2020)**



[Plan © Sheppard Robson – reproduced with permission]

**Figure 3-4 Cross section BB - Brynmor Jones Library (Sheppard Robson, 2020)**

While the cross-sections show the careful work undertaken to restore features, they also visualise some of the more dramatic changes. Both cross-sections (Figure 3-3 & Figure 3-4) also clearly show the BJL is formed of multiple buildings, now seamlessly integrated into what appears to be one cohesive building with the use of the glass atrium. This is a stark contrast to the BJL before the redevelopment, where navigating the buildings was difficult and problematic.



Own photography

**Figure 3-5: Photo of the southern entrance of the BJL**

In Figure 3-5, the Brutalist tower block can be seen in the centre of the photograph, extending into the sky. At seven storeys high, it is fair to argue the BJL not only dominates the skyline of the campus but that it also stands as a recognisable landmark in the surrounding areas of the city. Beneath the Brutalist tower, the red brick plinth is an extension to the original extent of the tower block ground, first and second floor, following the 2012-14 redevelopment. This was designed to make the ground floor look more robust and more in-keeping with the 1959 brick building (RIBAJ, 2015) shown in this photograph to the right. It also serves to add more bulk to the building and propagates the symbolism of a 'red brick' university, at least more than the red tile cladding of the original tower plinth.

It was somewhat by accident that the BJL is situated in the centre of the campus. The BJL was located on the western edge of the University of Hull until the purchase of what is now the west campus from the University of Humberside. While this placed the BJL at the heart of the campus, it also left it facing east with no entrance towards the significant western campus. Figure 3-5 shows the new southern entrance of the library, purposefully added in the redevelopment to re-orient the building towards the Western campus while retaining the now smaller, original Eastern entrance (RIBA, 2015). The significance of this new entrance and the associated landscaping can be seen on the ground floor building plans (Figure 3-6). It is no surprise that the framing of the library as the centre or ‘heart’ of the campus is a common reference. While the position of the BJL is an ‘external’ (Temple, 2014b) feature of the building that cannot be moved, the purchase of the west campus shows how it can move relative to the rest of campus. The University made a conscious decision to retain this location as opposed to creating a newbuild library elsewhere, later demolishing the current buildings. The retained location of this library at the ‘heart’ of the campus is no coincidence and represents a conscious decision to maintain this centrality.



**Figure 3-6 Ground floor plan of the Brynmor Jones Library (Sheppard Robson, 2020)**

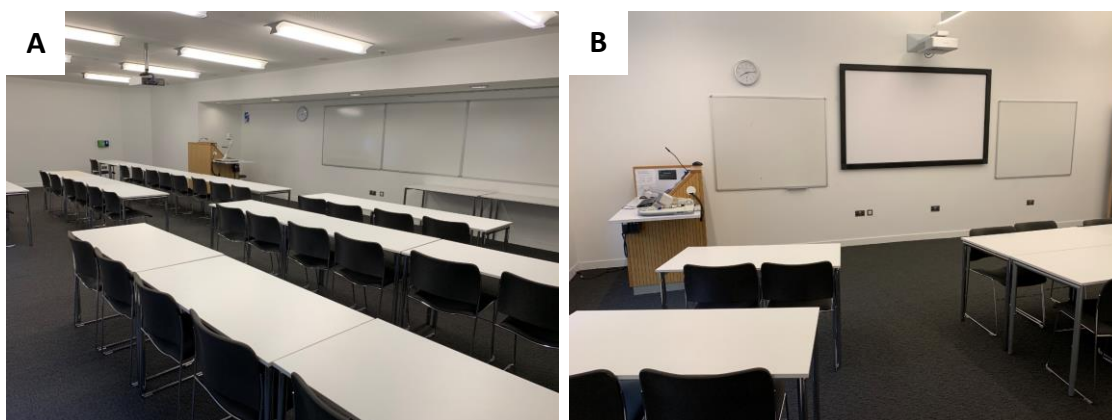
### 3.3.2 The conceived spaces of Brynmor Jones Library

The section above has overviewed the objectives of the redevelopment and the fundamental architectural changes. This section will look at this in more detail and will introduce how the spaces within the BJL were considered for staff and student use. This section makes an vital contribution to this thesis as it represents the BJL as it was conceived by the University Librarian and the architects. The photographs and descriptions based in this section represent the intention both in designing the BJL. It identifies how these spaces were conceived. The data and findings presented later in this thesis represent the library user perspectives of this, incorporating the perceived and lived aspects of these spaces as introduced in the next chapter. The following pages will briefly introduce each of the main categories outlined in Appendix A, forming the most concrete representation of space. The photographs in this chapter should not be considered in relation to building usage, as all photographs were taken when the spaces were empty or from an angle in which users could not be identified.

There are various spaces in the library, each conceived by the University Librarian and architects, each carefully designed to fulfil a range of requirements. Analysis of building specifications shows that the BJL offers students 1,777 study spaces and 26 group learning rooms, representing over 30 different types of study environments (RIBA, 2015) and eight staff spaces (see Appendix A). This works out at six undergraduates per study space available (RIBA, 2015). To identify these different spaces, Solk and Heseltine's (2014) conference presentation was used as a starting point. This identifies 38 different spaces conceived as part of the BJL. Solk was one of the architects involved in the redevelopment, and as introduced earlier, Heseltine was the University Librarian, and therefore the institutional lead on the redevelopment. This is significant for it represents that both are in a position of power as to how these spaces were conceived, echoing Lefebvre's concern of the role of power in understanding space.

It was possible to refine the 38 listed spaces into ten overarching categories: teaching and public; service; postgraduate; group study; informal study; individual study; computer-based; accessible; specialist, and staff (see Appendix A). The way in which each of these spaces was conceived has a significant impact on the affordances of the

BJL. Interestingly, none of these spaces was conceived to store the collection itself directly. Evidentially this is a vital function, suggesting this these spaces are more focused on people than the collection.



Teaching room (A) & Training room (B) – Own photography

### **Figure 3-7: Teaching and public spaces – Teaching rooms**

Teaching and public space(s) are not necessarily components of an academic library but feature as core components of the BJL. This includes spaces to support teaching (Figure 3-7), including rooms used for discipline teaching (A), as well as spaces to support training delivered by the library (B). This was purposefully designed to frame the BJL as a space of teaching and learning (Heseltine, 2016). All of these spaces are equipped with desks, chairs and projection facilities like all campus teaching spaces. After redevelopment, the BJL had seven teaching spaces; however, one of these was later turned into the Shoosmith Language Learning Centre (discussed later).





Library Café (A) & Art Collection (B) – Own photography

**Figure 3-8: Teaching and public spaces – Library Café & Art Collection**

The Library Café (A) and University Art Collection (B) are both situated on the publicly accessible ground floor (Figure 3-8). The Art Gallery also features a dedicated exhibition space that has housed internationally significant collections, especially during the city’s tenure as UK City of Culture 2017 (University of Hull, 2018b). It can be argued that all these teaching and public spaces represent a sizable footprint on the ground floor, all of which take valuable space away from traditional library usages such as study space and bookshelves. This is no oversight and is very much purposeful. As discussed above, the BJL redevelopment purposefully moved 25% of the collection into the basement to release space previously occupied by books for other uses (RIBA, 2015). This not only allowed the creation of additional learning spaces throughout the building but facilitated space for the gallery and teaching rooms. While these may not be necessary components of a library, their inclusion is strategic. Both the teaching spaces and the gallery attract people into the building, including both staff and students and members of the public in the case of the latter (Heseltine, 2016). While these spaces may take from the library floor space, the café is arguably an exception to this, in that, as Bruce (2012) suggests, it is now an essential social space in most libraries.

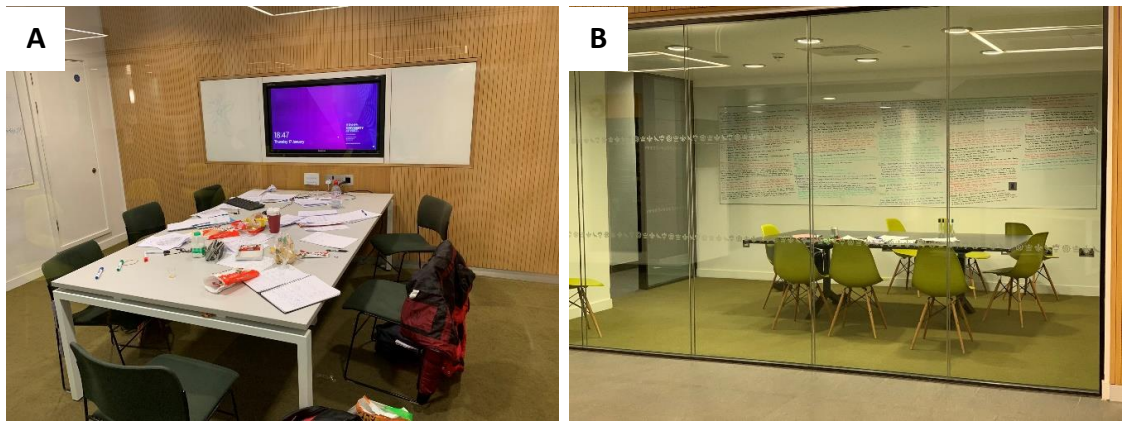


Information Points (A) & self-service machines/printers (B) – Own photography

**Figure 3-9: Service spaces**

Service points (Figure 3-9) are installed on every floor of the BJL and are designed so students can help themselves. This includes the information points (A) and self-service machines (B) that allow students to search the catalogue and check out or return books themselves. These spaces allow students to book library services (such as appointments and room bookings). These spaces also feature multi-function devices for printing, photocopying and scanning. These are purposefully placed on every floor of the building to provide access to technology across all the spaces within the building. They also reflect the shift in customer service, putting more emphasis on self-service, requiring students to check out and return books with these devices as opposed to staffed counters. There is also a self-service book return point on the ground floor, allowing students to return books without the need for staff intervention.

In addition to the self-service provision, there are two staffed service points — the Welcome Desk on the ground floor and the Reading Room Desk on the first floor. The Welcome Desk serves as the BJL’s reception and main customer service hub, located near the stairs and elevators. The Reading Room Desk is situated in the BJL’s only dedicated silent study space. This is problematic as customer service requires dialogue, therefore working counter to the silent study space it is situated in. This perhaps represents the most significant design flaw with the BJL and continues to represent something challenging to address. How a space was conceived as both a service point and a silent space has to be questioned, although the fact staff are always working within this space does go some way to enable active management of noise.



1<sup>st</sup> Floor GLR (A) & Ground floor open learning (B) – Own photography

### Figure 3-10: Group study spaces

The BJL offers 26 bookable Group Learning Rooms (GLR), with many may open-use spaces for group study. Rooms vary in what they offer, with some including whiteboards and computer access (see Figure 3-10 for examples). At a minimum, all of the GLRs feature rectangle desks and seating for a minimum of six people. While these may have been conceived as group spaces, the observations within this study often recorded these being used by a single person, perhaps reflecting a need for more quiet study spaces as opposed to dedicated spaces for group work. Nevertheless, these rooms are popular and heavily used (even if only by one person). In the wider library, every floor offers some aspect of informal study space (see below), much of which is used for group-based study. These informal group study spaces are characterised by comfy seating, including sofas and armchairs, but also include circular tables and chairs for more formal group work (see Figure 3-11).



7<sup>th</sup>-floor informal study (A) & breakout space (B) – Own photography

### Figure 3-11: Informal learning spaces

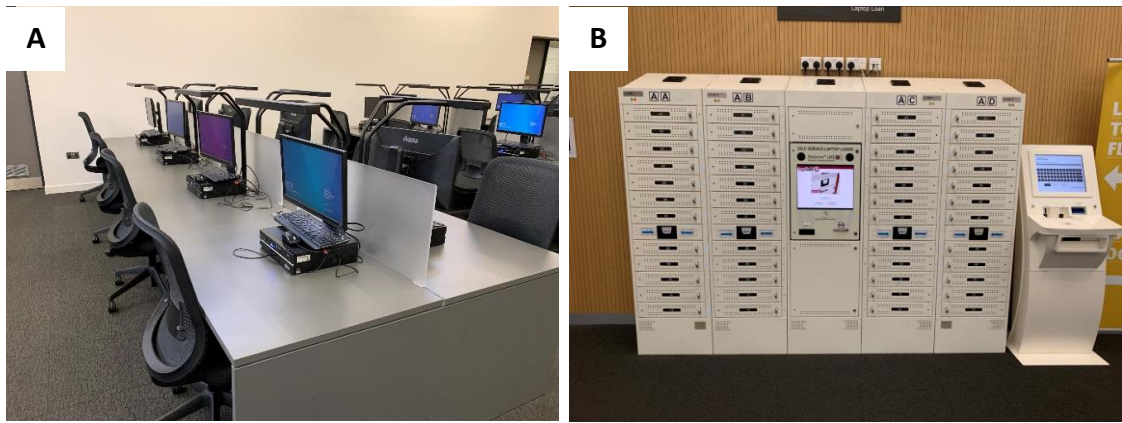
Informal study spaces are characterised by their comfier furniture and group-orientated focus (Figure 3-11). While these do include individual spaces, group and collaboration is the primary focus. Furniture includes sofas, coffee tables and armchairs. Nearly every space offers access to an electrical socket, support students in laptop use. It can be argued that the redevelopment placed a particular focus on the creation of these spaces, integrating them throughout every floor of the building and dedicating most of the seventh floor for this purpose. This is a stark contrast to the BJL pre-redevelopment which featured no such space until a 2011 trial. This also reflects the broader trends reflected in the library literature, the creation of more spaces focused on group learning as opposed to more traditional forms of individualised desk-based work.



Reading Room silent study spaces (A) & stacks (B) – Own photography

### **Figure 3-12: Individual study**

There are a large number of individuals study spaces throughout the library. This includes carrels (desks with high sides to form divided partitions for privacy) throughout the tower block, as well as PC desks throughout the building. As with the informal study spaces, all of these environments provide access to electrical sockets for personal device use. The Reading Room is specifically focused on individual study as this is a silent study space where talking and group work are not allowed (see Figure 3-12). This is monitored actively by library staff, although one slight contradiction within the Reading Room is that it also contains one of the two staffed points within the building. The inclusion of a service point where users will need to approach and speak to staff is counter-intuitive when trying to provide a silent study space.

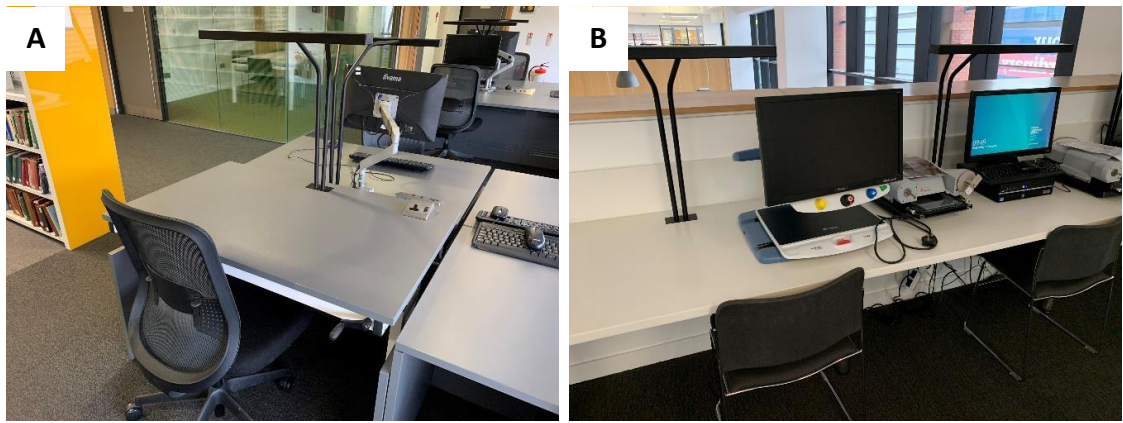


Tower block computers (A) & laptop lockers (B) – Own photography

### Figure 3-13: Computer-based spaces

There are a large number of computer-based study locations throughout the building with computers on every floor. Computer access is provided at 410 desks throughout the building. Some of these are additional to those scoped within the redevelopment, representing a higher demand for fixed desktop computers than was initially conceived. The library also offers 72 laptops for loan, available through a self-service locker. These lockers were initially situated in the Reading Room but have since been moved to a new location on the first floor (see Figure 3-13 B). This was to reduce the noise created by those collecting and returning laptops in the Reading Room, which is a silent study space. Many of the bookable GLR (see above) offer access to computers with large screens.

The ground floor of the BJL also features a bank of short-term or quick-use computers. These were included because of student demand, principally to enable quick access to a computer for printing assessments (HUU, 2011a). While conceived as an essential feature, the University's introduction of electronic submission waived the need to print assessments, and as such, these computers are infrequently used. As these computers were designed for walk-up use, they have no seating, discouraging their use for more prolonged activities.



Height adjustable desk (A) & magnifier (B) – Own photography

**Figure 3-14: Accessible study spaces**

There is no specific space within the library for accessible study. Instead, these spaces are spread throughout the library, with accessible desks located on every floor amongst the standard study spaces (see examples in Figure 3-14). The library also offers a range of services to support users with accessibility needs, including access to alternative resources. The redevelopment introduced two new elevators which service the first two floors, allowing greater access within the building for those who use large wheelchairs or motorised scooters. The floors in the tower block (3-7) are only accessible via three smaller lifts that present an access problem for some users.



Smoosmith LLC (A) & Rare Books Cube (B) – Own photography

**Figure 3-15: Specialist study spaces – Smoosmith LLC & Rare Books Cube**

The BJL features three specialist study spaces. The first is the Shoosmith Language Learning Centre (LLC), which was recently moved into the second floor of the BJL (Figure 3-15). The second space is the Rare Books Cube, offering the safe, climate-controlled storage of rare collections and environment for them to be used and read



The Postgraduate Research Lounge features a variety of spaces to support individual, informal and PC-based study (Figure 3-17). This space is access controlled, so only postgraduate research students have access. While the space was conceived as a research lounge, the original signage and glazing referred to this room as the 'postgraduate lounge' (A), leading to much confusion and annoyance when postgraduate taught students tried to get in only to be denied by the access control system. Since the original fieldwork of this research, the glazing and signage have been amended to add research into the title. This is a good example of the conceived space being contested by those interacting with the space. In this case, it did not lead to a repurposing of the space, but a clarification of how it may be used.



Open plan offices (A) & Staffroom (B) – Own photography

### Figure 3-18: Library staff space(s)

A significant portion of the conceived spaces – eight of the 38 identified is designed for library staff. These spaces are conceived to facilitate a range of working practices, including desk-based office work, meeting space and break out space (Figure 3-18). It also includes kitchenettes for refreshment and a staff room to provide staff with a space to take a break from work. These spaces are furnished to the same high standard as the rest of the building, including high-quality desks and chairs. The staff room includes furniture identical to that provided for the informal spaces. It is also important to acknowledge the Welcome Desk and Reading Room Desk referenced above as staff workspaces, even though they are customer-facing service points.

### 3.3.3 Summary

This section has introduced the ten overarching categories of space within the BJL: teaching and public; service; postgraduate; group study; informal study; individual



study; computer-based; accessible; specialist, and staff. These represent the different spaces conceived by the architects in the redevelopment of the BJL. How space is conceived is an integral part of understanding library space. Chapter 4 discusses this further and how it supports the reading of academic library space in the neoliberal university.

## Chapter 4 – Methodology: Reading and researching space(s)

This chapter will introduce and reflect on the methodological practices used to answer the research questions introduced in Chapter 1. Firstly, to empirically investigate SQ2 and SQ3, this chapter will establish what is meant by 'space'. This will focus on the Lefebvrian approach, which forms the philosophical backbone of this thesis. Secondly, this chapter will also provide an overview of this thesis's research design. This includes justification for the use of observations and focus groups within the context of the BJL case study. Thirdly, the research ethics for this study and my positionality as someone working within the BJL will be discussed. This will include measures undertaken to protect participants and to mitigate any bias I may have in undertaking this research. Finally, this chapter will introduce and justify the number of participants in this study and the analytical approach used. Collectively, this demonstrates the rigour in the selection and application of this thesis's methodological approaches to researching library space.

### 4.1 Philosophical considerations

#### 4.1.1 The problem of understanding space

Educational scholars tend to use the word space without really establishing what they mean by it or how they are framing it. Such a lack of consideration for space is common for many scholars (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005). While the literature often conceptualises the library as a space (see examples: Crawford, 1999; Butkovich, 2010; Zverevich, 2012; Yoo-Lee et al., 2013; Doshi et al., 2014), this is often in simple terms. It is often represented by a singular approach to space, epistemologically framing space as a physical given. It provides no hint to the multitude of approaches or frameworks that philosophers use to expose space. Where space is considered, it is often labelled as physical, tangible space or that of digital or virtual space. This produces a spatial dichotomy where library space is either 'physically existing and visible ('real' segment)' or 'invisible to the human eye and physically intangible ('virtual' segment)' (Zverevich, 2012:5). In analysing space, this thesis argues that this is too simplistic a way to conceptualise library space and demonstrates the potential of using something more nuanced for this thesis' approach to library space.

#### 4.1.2 Using Lefebvre to read the academic library

To address the issues highlighted above, this thesis uses a Lefebvrian-based conceptualisation of space as its primary philosophical framework. The ontological and epistemological considerations which underpin this framework will be discussed. However, it is first essential to consider the concept of space and the concepts of place and rhythm which support it.

Lefebvre's (1991) ontology of social space is based around a three-part trialectic, with each part forming a different facet of space. These facets conceptualise space in three ways: representations of space (conceived space), spatial practice (perceived space) and spaces of representation<sup>2</sup> (lived space). To provide a simplified summary:

The **conceived space** is conceptualised space, as articulated in models, plans, maps and designs (Lefebvre, 1991).

The **perceived space** is physical or 'real' space (Elden, 2004:190). The space of day-to-day interactions and use (Lefebvre, 1991).

The **lived space** is directly lived (Pierce & Martin, 2015), a space that is experienced by people, influenced by complex symbolisms (Lefebvre, 1991).

There is no particular order to these three facets of space, and each is interrelated (see: Figure 3-1), collectively producing a simultaneous social space (Pierce & Martin, 2015).

For Lefebvre (1991), space is socially produced. With the trialectic of space as conceived, perceived and lived, it is possible to see how spatial 'reality' is actually a social construction. This is built through the experiences of individuals and their interactions within space (Lefebvre, 1991; Pigrum, 2008). The social construction of space does not happen in isolation, and sits within existing power structures, controlling how individuals are able to interpret space.

This understanding helps address the SQs and MQ of this thesis. Only through researching each of these facets can the neoliberal academic library be fully exposed.

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<sup>2</sup> While Nicholson-Smith translated this originally as 'representational spaces', it is now standard practice to translate this as 'spaces of representation' (Elden, 2004:206)

In framing space as a social construction, it also raises the question of how space is 'read' by individuals and how spatial practises are shared. It is through a wide range of signs, symbols, images, and words that knowledge about space is socially constructed. In considering this, it is always essential to note power and who is controlling the narrative.

Such order is constituted via control over knowledge, signs, and codes: over the means of deciphering spatial practice and hence over the production of spatial knowledge (Lefebvre, 1991:38-39)

For example, in the case of the BJL redevelopment, as introduced in the previous chapter, it was the University Librarian, the architects, the university, and to a lesser extent HUU that controlled the narrative – or at least established it. Spaces are ultimately subject to interpretation, influenced by the production, order and design of the space in question (Soja, 1996).

As a social construction, space is far more than something that is physical and tangible. Spaces can be mental and imagined too (Anderson, 2006; Said, 2014). These imagined spaces are powerful and represent the mental process of 'reading' space. This is because spaces are built through a range of signs, codes, ideologies and required knowledge(s), all of which are intellectually worked out (Soja, 1996). For example, a library may be framed as spooky, yet this is more of an imaginary than a literal representation of space. This does not make them any less real to the people who see them that way. While imagined spaces may appear individualistic, they are socially constructed and communicated. This aligns them to a Lefebvre's conceived space, the space of knowledge, or as Soja (1996:67) refers to it, a 'storehouse of epistemological power'.

There is a tendency for geographers to glance over the distinction between space and place (Agnew, 2011). As place later emerges in this thesis, it is essential to distinguish between these two concepts. While some authors generalise 'place' as 'location' (Agnew, 2011), for Lefebvre, place is the manifestation of space (Lefebvre, 1991). It is therefore through place that the trialectic of space as conceived, perceived and lived can be realised. As such, it is by using a case study approach that this thesis was able to

read library space. Focusing on the BJL it allows a glimpse into the conceived, perceived and lived spaces of the academic library.

To help understand the Lefebvrian approach to space and operationalise it in research, it is essential also to consider Lefebvre's concept of rhythm. While Lefebvre establishes the philosophical framework for rhythm analysis, he does not attempt to outline an approach to conduct such research (Jones & Warren, 2016), allowing a great deal of freedom in undertaking such research. Rhythm can be defined as 'regular repeated pattern of sound or movement' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2020). For Lefebvre (2013:16), repetition is an essential aspect of rhythm, but so is 'difference', as 'there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive'.

Rhythms can be found in actions, activities, movements, sounds, smells, urban functions, and seasons. Applied to a library, Lefebvre's call to analyse rhythms can recognise the patterns - and moments of difference - with staff and students' practices of entering and leaving the building. It takes note of the hourly cycles associated with the movement to lectures, the 24-hour cycle of night and day, the smell of food from the café over lunchtimes and the cleaning of the building in the morning. All this is seen in the context of larger rhythms that shape the library over a week, a trimester and a year. Rhythms within rhythms.

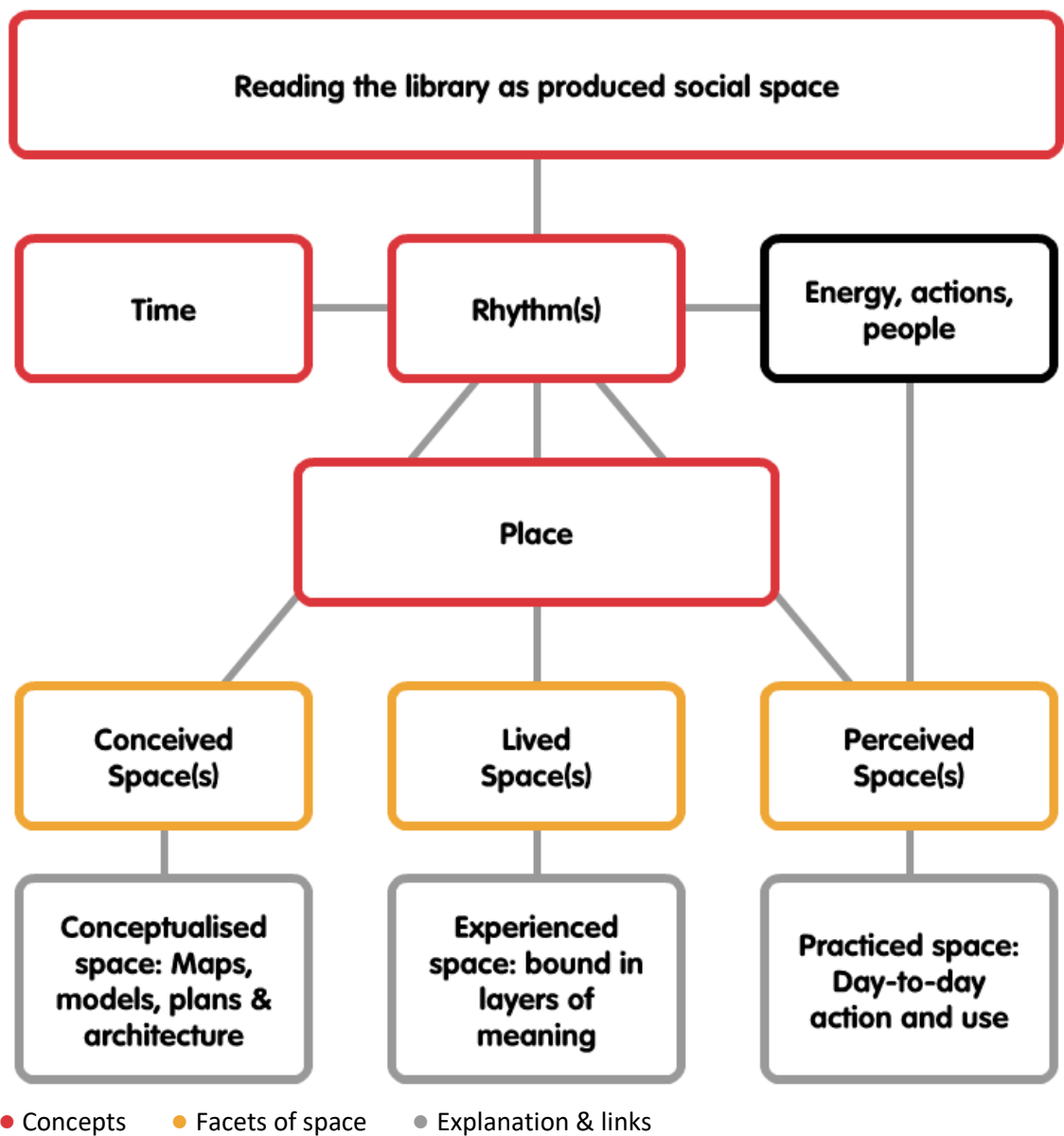
Rhythm and space are inherently linked. Rhythms are situated within the conceived, perceived and lived spaces (Figure 4-1). Lefebvre (2013:25) suggests that:

Everywhere there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure energy, there is rhythm.

Rhythm is the means of understanding time and space together (Lyon, 2018). It takes the focus off the present and instead identifies movements, flows, rhythms and patterns (Pigum, 2008). As suggested in the examples above, rhythms can be circular (for instance, the cycle of day and night) or linear (the reading of a journal article). Rhythms can also be mechanical, biological, continuous, discontinuous, quantitative and qualitative (Lefebvre 2013:19). This represents the multiplicity of rhythms in space (Jones & Warren, 2016). When applied to the library, rhythm analysis helps to identify

the flows of library users and their activities and interactions in space. As opposed to just snapshots in time, the focus on rhythm helps to generalise findings, identifying patterns in library use. As this thesis aims to understand how academic library space is felt and experienced by library users, rhythm analysis is an important analytical tool.

As such, it is space, place and rhythm that have informed the structure, research design and analytical framework used herein. In particular, acknowledging space as multi-faceted is fundamental to how this thesis reads space.



(based on: Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996; Lefebvre 2013; Pierce & Martin, 2015)

**Figure 4-1: The spatial trialectic**

### 4.1.3 Ontology and epistemology

Ontologically, this thesis borrows much from the Lefebvrian approach to space (Lefebvre, 1991; Lefebvre 2013), but does not adopt it wholesale. While Lefebvre's approach to space has been highly influential in geography (Unwin, 2000; Shields, 2011; Pierce & Martin, 2015), there are many problems in operationalising this work practically, despite the fact his principles of space have been used widely in contemporary geography. The problems originate from Lefebvre's focus on how space is produced (Lefebvre, 1991). As such, he determines what social space is ontologically, framing space as a material object within a materialist/realist ontology (Pierce & Martin, 2015). This is further problematic as Lefebvre's epistemology is elusive, and ultimately, he does not address what can be known and examined (Pierce & Martin, 2015). In this research, this is resolved by framing Lefebvre's work within the ontology of critical realism.

Critical realism represents a broad range of theorists, and while they share similar approaches, there is no single, agreed unitary framework or set of beliefs that unites all these theorists (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014; Archer et al., 2016; Martin, 2018). This section will set out the interpretation of critical realism used in this research, focusing on the application of critical realism for ontological purposes, based on the theories of Bhaskar. As ontology, critical realism posits a double recognition about what is and can be known. Foremost, the ontology of critical realism theorises that an objective world exists, completely independent of humans, their perceptions, their language and their imagination (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). However, critical realism as ontology also explicitly acknowledges that 'part of that world consists of subjective interpretations which influence how it is perceived and experienced' (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014:5). For this research, this ontology provides a frame through which Lefebvre's 'real' or physical perceived space can be accounted for, alongside the elements of interpretation, perception and experience of his lived space. Both the conceived space and the overarching material social space that Lefebvre aims to expose are well placed within the realist frame of this ontology. Furthermore, critical realism puts the ontological question before that of epistemology (Ackroyd & Karlsson, 2014), echoing the favour Lefebvre places on ontology (Pierce & Martin, 2015)

Critical theory frames reality as multiply determined, and Lefebvre's trialectic of spatial facets provides the mechanism through which the library can be explored through multiple lenses. Indeed, critical realism lends itself to inter-disciplinarity (Martin, 2018), and the incorporation of Lefebvre's spatial ontology with critical realism constructs a laminated ontology to deal with the levels of reality uncovered in this research. As this project engaged with distinct groups of library user (students, library volunteers, library staff and academics), critical realism does not strive for a single 'truth' that all must share. Indeed, while there may be a real, objective library, it does not stop these different user groups and individuals from having their own disparate perceptions and experiences. This is crucial for this research.

Epistemologically, critical theory uses a form of epistemic relativism, recognising there is no one way of knowing. This is important as Lefebvre's framework is often interpreted with multiple epistemologies (Pierce & Martin, 2015), recognising each facet of the spatial trialectic requires an acceptance of different forms of knowledge. Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014:21) suggest that the real issue for critical theorists is:

what concepts are required to understand the data available and to bring into focus the processes or mechanisms that are really at work?

Here, a combination of Lefebvre's rhythm analysis and spatial trialectic serves as the conceptual framework through which to focus on the data collected in this research and understand what it says about the academic library.

## 4.2 Research questions

As established in the introduction, this thesis aims to address a single MQ and three SQs. The literature review (Chapter 2) addressed SQ1 by identifying how the literature defines 'library' and 'academic library'. Having answered SQ1, the rest of this thesis will focus on the investigation of SQ2 and SQ3, which focus on the meaning and experience of academic library spaces. The rest of this chapter will detail how these two questions are to be investigated.

## 4.3 Research design

The use of critical realism for ontology allows for great freedom in methods, suggesting successful research does not depend on methodological rules, but on the



creative application of appropriate methods (Ackroyd & Karlsson, 2014). Considering both the MQ and SQs, as well as the Lefebvrian approach, this thesis uses a holistic analysis that considers each facet of space: conceived, perceived and lived. This is done carefully, because an empirical investigation focused on each facet alone could work from a methodological perspective, but could also cleave each of these facets apart, producing three distinct sets of reflections which are difficult to reintegrate into a whole (Pierce & Martin, 2015). For this reason, instead of considering each facet as an individual area for investigation, this thesis considers them as a lens through which to explore a spatial whole. This section will establish the practical methodologies used to specifically explore the conceived, perceived and lived space of the BJL.

The case study approach is the fundamental element that structures this research design. Indeed, it has already been introduced in Chapter 3. It can be argued that the research questions can only be addressed when considered in a context. This is because, as both Chapter 3 and the conceptual element of this chapter have suggested, any investigation of 'space' needs to be an investigation of 'a space' or 'a place'. I would argue, it is not possible to empirically address the conceived, perceived and lived facets of a space that is not real to research participants. For example, to look at how library space is conceived requires insight into the architectural and design process, something that is difficult to generalise. A case study approach is an appropriate vehicle through which to explore the research questions above. As the focus is on an aspect of libraries, as represented by the research questions, an instrumental case study is the most appropriate approach. An instrumental case study focuses on an issue as opposed to capturing a sense of the case as a whole (Stake, 1995; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). As such, the use of a case study does not focus on the case addressed at the expense of addressing the research questions. While this research could have been conducted through multiple cases, it was not possible to facilitate the deep enquiry required within the restriction of this thesis. The issues of generalisability associated with this are considered later in this chapter.

The case study used to address the MQ and SQs in the BJL at the University of Hull. While a fuller introduction to the BJL was provided in Chapter 3, this section will briefly identify why this was chosen.

An essential component of the BJL's suitability for this study is its recent redevelopment. This is because studying an older library would have jeopardised the ability to engage with the modern library spaces reflected in the literature (Chapter 2 & Chapter 3). As Chapter 3 demonstrated, neoliberalism has dramatically impacted the HE sector, with the BJL redevelopment coinciding with the most significant policy changes that transformed HE into a consumer-driven market. In essence, the BJL is a neoliberal academic library. Having undergone the redevelopment between 2012-2015 (Mark, 2015), studying the BJL also offered the opportunity to engage with a newly refurbished library that was beyond the initial snagging issues of any major building work. It also provided full documentation of the design process and the decisions made, allowing consideration for the conceived elements of space. Furthermore, conducting this study a few years after the reopening, also ensured research conversations were not overshadowed by before and after comparisons or comments on the refurbishment process. Indeed, in the case of students, no first-time undergraduates remain who will have experienced the original building.

Another distinct advantage of studying the BJL is my role as a member of staff in the building. After identifying the case study approach, the above characteristics of the BJL made it a suitable research site. This was deepened by the advantages of being able to conduct insider-research. While this was not a primary factor in choosing the BJL for the case study, I had to acknowledge the advantages it would bring to the reflective components of case study research, access and contextual understanding (Stake, 1995; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). Although these advantages helped ensure an appropriate depth to this research, it did also raise important issues around positionality, power and influence, which are addressed later in this chapter.

#### **4.3.1 The case study: A lens for the conceived library space**

As established in the introduction and as justified in the research design above, this thesis uses a case study to investigate the research questions. The introduction to the case study was already set out in Chapter 3, which introduced the context for this study. Now the spatial philosophy has been established; it is essential to reflect on the role of Chapter 3 in establishing how the BJL was conceived by the University Librarian and the architects. It was initially hoped that Sheppard Robson (2016), who served as

both architects, design team and lead on interior design (RIBA, 2015) could be engaged for interview. This focus was chosen to reflect the conceived space as the space of architects, as argued by Lefebvre (1991). While, unfortunately, this could not be facilitated, secondary documentation and photography were used throughout Chapter 3 to consider the conceived facet of the BJL.

Chapter 3 presented the analytical categorisation of the 38 spaces conceived within the architectural plans for the BJL. This identified ten broader categories of space that are introduced and illustrated with photography throughout that chapter. This was an essential component of this research as the affordances of these conceived spaces are contested through the daily practices observed and discussed as part of the other research instruments in this study. In answering SQ2, SQ3 and the MQ, the other chapters of this thesis will reflect back on these spaces, particularly when comparing participant perceptions versus the conceived space of the BJL.

#### **4.3.2 Direct observations: A lens for the perceived library space**

Direct observations and the quantitative secondary data collected from the Library were used to explicitly address SQ3, which focuses on the experience, use and navigation of library spaces. Direct observations are highly effective at understanding the contexts within which people interact (Patton, 2015), and this was required to understand how people use and experience library space. As the perceived space is Lefebvre's (1991) space of day-to-day interactions and use, direct observations provided valuable insight into the perceived facet of library space. As suggested by Patton (2015), direct observations also provided the opportunity for me to gain first-hand experience of using the library, which later informed both interactions within focus groups and data analysis. This was also fundamental for reflecting on the rhythms that take place within the library. The approach to direct observation used for this research was previously piloted in an unpublished EdD essay (Fallin, 2016b). This involved only limited observations of the first floor and the approach used in this thesis expands this approach to multiple locations across three months.

As part of this research, a total of 57 half-hour observations were conducted within the BJL, resulting in over 350 A4 pages of observation notes. Half an hour was deemed long enough to capture the essence and activities within a space, following a similar

approach to Dominguez’s (2016) use of ‘sweeps’ to identify patterns and space usage. These observations were structured around four distinct time periods within a day, influenced by the occupancy numbers shown in Figure 4-2. This figure shows the identification of distinct differences in the morning, lunchtime, afternoon and evening library use across all days of the week, indicating the value of separate observations within these periods. This full schedule was delivered within three distinct periods encompassing the induction period, study period and examination period of trimester 1 in the 2018-19 academic year. This approach is justified when looking at the annual occupancy statistics shown in Figure 4-3, which indicates patterns within these three periods. Observations were conducted within five distinct library spaces (see schedule set out in Table 4-1), enabling all the conceived types of space to be observed (as identified in Chapter 3). This approach was strongly influenced by Lefebvre’s (2013) rhythmanalysis and enabled observations to be made on the rhythms within the library both by the time of day and time of year. As individual days varied, no observations can be made on the impact of day on these rhythms (for instance, the rhythm of Monday versus the rhythm of Thursday). This was an intentional decision as this would have required an undeliverable number of observations (over 400 observations to ensure full coverage).

**Table 4-1 Schedule of observations**

	Ground Floor	First Floor	Reading Room	Study Floors	Seventh floor
Morning					
Lunchtime					
Afternoon					
Evening					

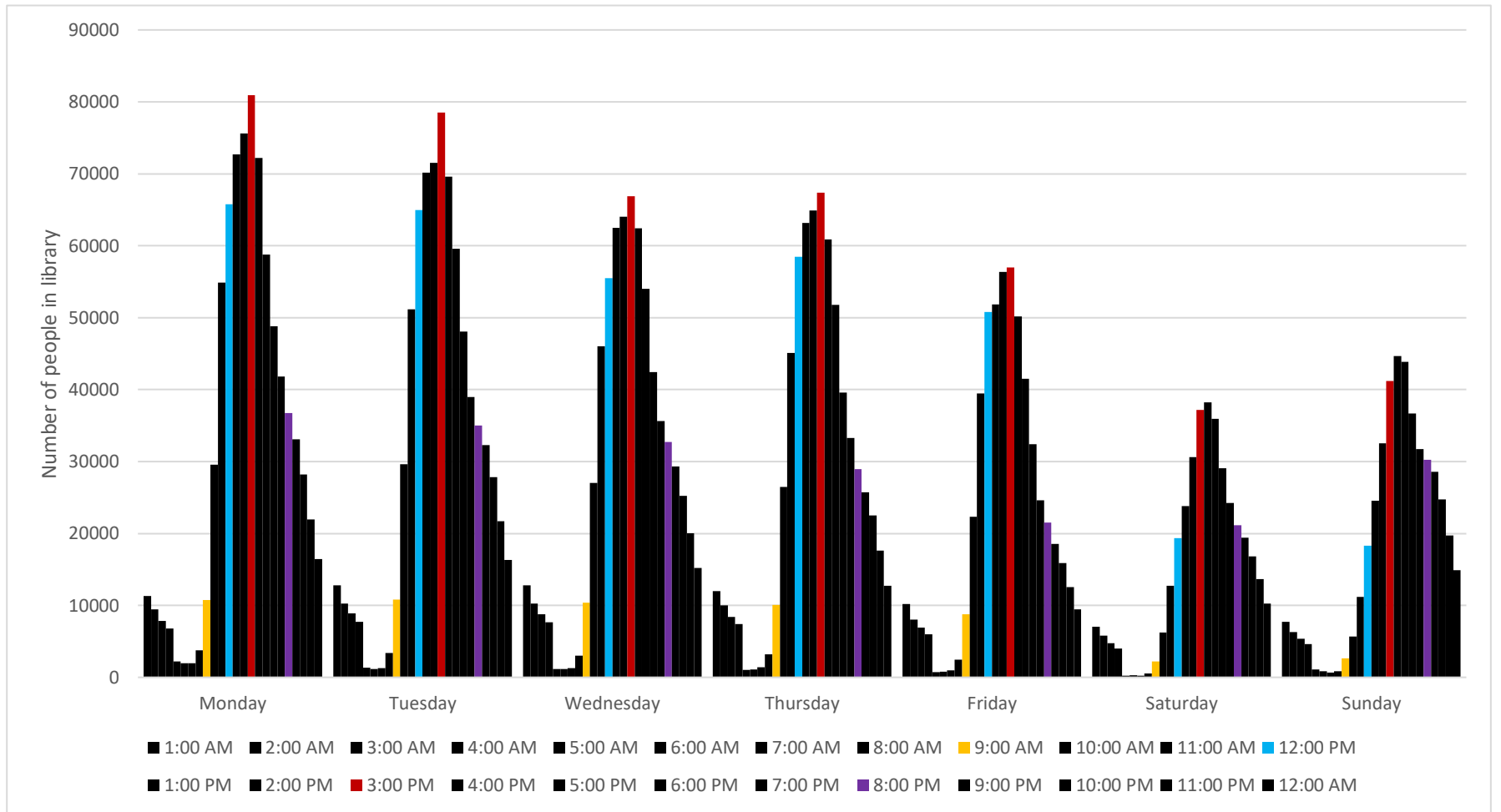


Figure 4-2 BJT hourly occupancy trends in the BJT 2016 - 2018

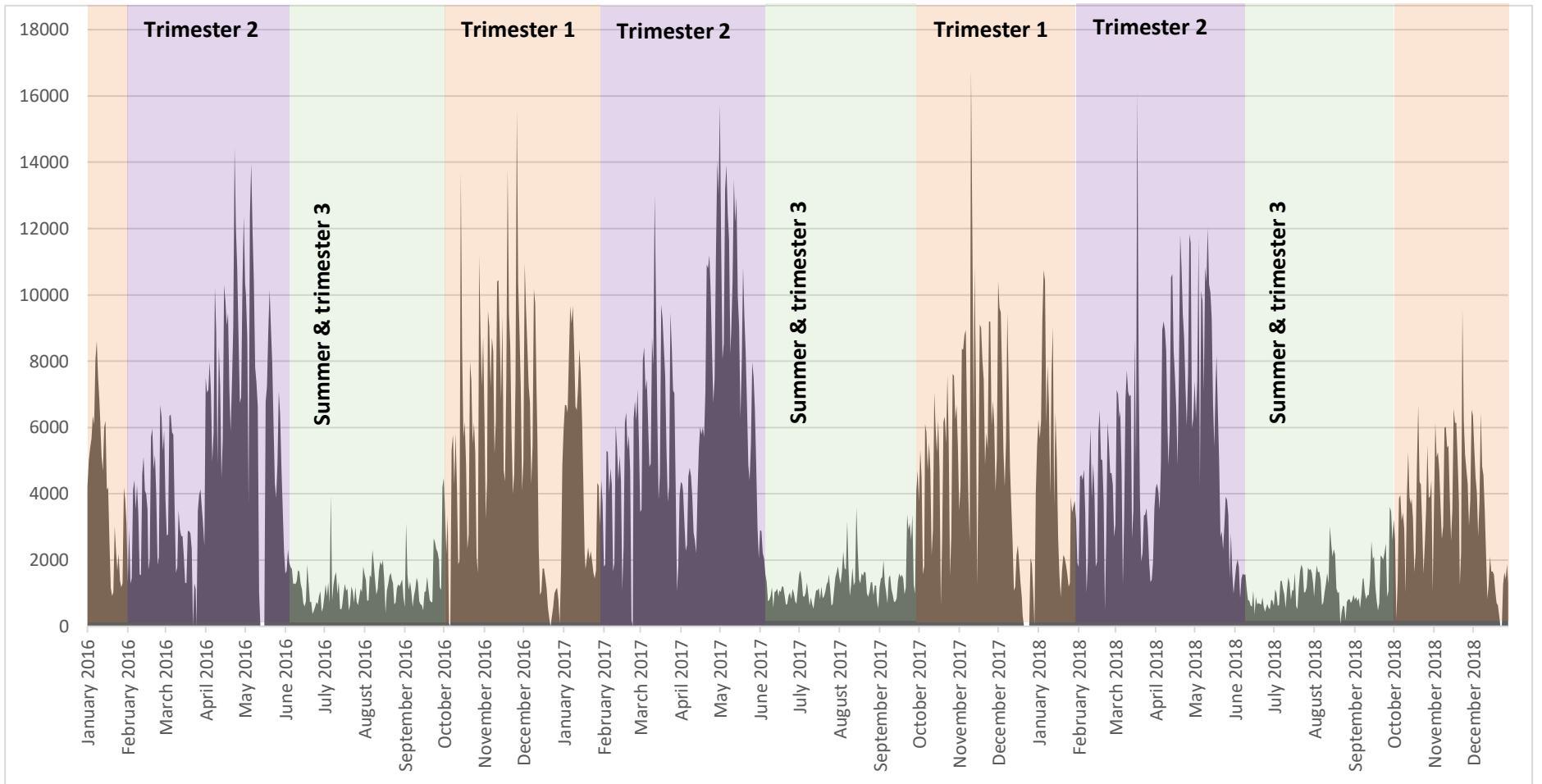


Figure 4-3 BJL daily occupancy headcount 2016 – 2018

The structure of each observation was framed around the AEIOU framework (see appendix B), which focuses observation around 'Activities, Environments, Interactions, Objects, and Users' (Ethnohub, 2015). This is an essential part of these observations, as it places the focus on things that are possible to observe and descriptively record, aspects that Patton (2015) suggests are markers of high-quality observation. The focus on the descriptive recording (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011) ensured recorded observations were as 'objective' as possible, as opposed to focusing on more 'subjective' elements (Priestner et al., 2016:6). The AEIOU framework helped to achieve this by serving as a 'lens to observe the surrounding environment' (Ethnohub, 2015), focusing the observations on these five areas of human/spatial activity, as opposed to more analytical observations. The only adjustment made to the AEIOU framework was to remove the consideration of 'users' directly. This avoided the requirement to make any assumptions about the biography of users such as their gender identity, race or age. It also stopped inaccurate assumptions on their status as student, academic or member of the public. This model is perhaps best considered as AEIOU, reflecting the removal of the 'user' element.

To collect this data, I sat in a variety of student library spaces and made structured observations. I intentionally stayed in these student spaces to experience them the same way as the students within them, and I intentionally wore clothes that would not distinguish me as a member of staff. In my role observing, I was both inactive and unknown. This means that I was not taking part in the activities I observed and that those I was observing, did not know they were being observed (Newby, 2010). Being non-identifiable provided me with the opportunity to observe things people may not be willing to talk about; for example, sneaking banned items of food into the library (Patton, 2015).

The inactive and unknown approach, however, can be highly problematic from an ethical standpoint (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011) as it lacks informed consent. To ensure participants are protected, observations were made very sensitively. No identifiable information was recorded, no names (if known) were used, no assumptions (as far as possible) were made, and recording was focused on the descriptively observable. It is also important to remember the context of the

observations. As they take place in a semi-public environment used by tens, if not hundreds of people, the observations are more about holistic trends than they are personal invasions. This non-participatory approach to observation was necessary for organisational consent as it ensured students, who were coming to the library were not disturbed from their studies. This is important in library-based research, as the first duty of a researcher is to protect their participants (Malterud, 2001). For this same reason, no observation notes recorded any personal or identifiable information. I still carried participant information sheets should anyone have any queries, although at no point in this study did an observee approach.

#### **4.3.2.1 Secondary data: A lens for rhythm**

While rhythm was explored through the time-varied nature of these observations, the BJL collects a range of quantitative data that was used to support this research project:

**Occupancy:** Sentry, the turnstile entry system used by the library monitors every entry and exit to the upper floors of the building. Hourly data from the last three calendar years (2016-2018) was processed as part of this project. This was shown in Figure 4-2 and Figure 4-3 (above) and used to identify optimal timings for the observations.

**Headcounts:** The Library Customer Services team also conduct floor headcounts, providing in-depth data around the number of students in the building, where they are and what they are doing. While this dataset has varied over time, it includes one to two hourly counts of students within the building by floor. Some parts of this dataset also record how many students are working alone or in groups and if they are using university computers or their own.

Both datasets were quantitative data, and it should be noted that both were completely anonymous and non-identifiable. This is because both datasets are stating the number of users and not their identities or demographics. Organisational permission was granted for access to this data.



### 4.3.3 Focus groups: A lens for the lived library spaces

The focus groups were a vital part of this research project, enabling engagements with library users to identify their perspectives on the academic library and to directly address SQ2: What does 'academic library' mean to Brynmor Jones Library users? This instrument not only addressed the experience element of SQ3 but provided further contextualisation and detail for the data collected by other instruments. As well as addressing these elements of the research, the focus groups provided essential insight into the lived facet of library space. This facet is the aspect of space which is directly lived and experienced by people (Lefebvre, 1991), or library users in this case. This is not readily observable and required an instrument which would involve the different groups of library users.

Focus groups were chosen to facilitate this aspect of the research to allow both individual and group responses to emerge. Focus groups are an established research method, often considered a 'collective conversation' or 'group interview' (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011:545). As a method, focus groups can be cost-effective, provide enhanced data through participant interaction and allow the emergence of diverse perspectives (Patton, 2015). While there are some disadvantages to focus groups (Patton, 2015), the use of the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method introduced below was used to mitigate this to some extent as it is based on using a small number of questions and has an approach that can mitigate more vocal or opinionated people in a group (Kristiansen & Rasmussen, 2014; Roos & Victor, 2018). For this study, a total of 11 focus groups were held with 40 participants (see: Table 4-2).

**Table 4-2 Focus groups and participant numbers**

<b>Focus group audience</b>	<b>Focus groups held:</b>	<b>Total number of participants:</b>
Library staff	3	16
Library volunteers	5	4
Students		15
Academic staff	3	5

Given the conceptual nature of the questions that these focus groups needed to address, a more visual research method was used. The approach taken was based on

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, a creative facilitation approach to meetings, initially developed by Roos and Victor (2018) in the mid-1990s that uses LEGO® bricks as a language. This allows the use of different shapes, textures, sizes and colours of LEGO® bricks alongside the use of symbolism and metaphor for the communicative process (Roos & Victor, 2018). The approach has been heavily used in business for creative thinking (Kristiansen & Rasmussen, 2014; Blair & Rillo, 2016), and has begun to become established in HE. Some examples include the use of LEGO® to conceptualise plagiarism (Buckley, 2015), undertaking reflective practices (Peabody & Noyes, 2017), for fostering narrative identity amongst disadvantaged students (Wen-Chih, 2017) and my use of LEGO® for teaching essay writing structure (Fallin, 2017). This thesis also contributes to the development of LEGO® as a research method. LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® has also been used in some library contexts for activity facilitation and, in particular, for makerspaces (Lotts, 2016a; 2016b). In the case of this research, LEGO® allowed a more concrete expression of spatial ideas. Conversation based on these models allowed targeted discussion on how these spaces are lived. This was important as both the research questions and the Lefebvrian framework of analysis are highly conceptual and difficult to ground. Using LEGO® ensured conversations stayed on the topic of the library without falling into the meta-philosophy of space.

To support participants in engaging with LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY, all focus groups included introductory activities to help develop the practical LEGO® assembly skill of participants, as well as their use of metaphor. While this did not lead to data, such activities are recommended by Blair and Rillo (2016) to orient participants ahead of moving a session onto more complicated topics. Participants were forewarned the research involved the use of LEGO® and they would enter the room to find boxes of LEGO® on the tables along with flipchart paper and pens. After consent forms were signed and before engaging in the research process outlined below, participants were invited to build a LEGO® tower in 60 seconds and share it with the rest of the group. They were also invited to take a photograph of it to fully replicate the approach they would be using for the research questions. This activity is just designed to get people used to using LEGO® and to familiarise themselves on how to put it together (Blair & Rillo, 2016). The next activity was designed to support participants in their use of metaphor, showing them how to use LEGO® in a less literal way. For each session, I

would build a small LEGO® crane and asked participants what it could be used to symbolise – things like strength, weight, movement or heavy. To practice, participants were asked to pick up a random brick and discuss what possible things it could be used to represent. This activity was designed to help build each participant’s use of metaphor in their LEGO® builds (Blair & Rillo, 2016). These starting activities formed an essential part of the focus group, taking up the first 20-30 minutes.

The body of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® sessions is structured around a four-step model of challenge, build, share and reflect (Blair & Rillo, 2016). As such, a challenge is posed, participants use LEGO® to communicate their response and then everyone is given a chance to share their response. While this works well for creative idea generation, the sharing element posed a problem for use in research. In sharing, participants could influence each other’s responses. While this works well for forming collaborative ideas, one of the reasons for choosing focus groups, it also meant initial reactions to the question could be influenced. For this reason, the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® approach was adapted as detailed in Table 4-3.

**Table 4-3 Adaptation of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® for research**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® (Blair &amp; Rillo, 2016)</b>	<b>This research equivalent</b>
1	Challenge	Question
2	Build	Build
3	Share	Capture
4	Reflect	Share and reflect

The first aspects of challenging (setting a question) and building an individual response remained the same. After participants had built their model, I provided them with a camera so they could take a picture of their model. Participant-led photography was used to give them power and control (Shortt, 2015), in this case, over how their model was represented. Instead of moving on to share their model with the group, research participants were instead given pens and paper with which to annotate their models. This, in effect, ‘captured’ their initial thoughts. Once this was done, a second photograph was taken, this time by me to capture both their model and their annotations. Double photography was an essential part of my research ethics because

it gave me clean photographs for use in the thesis, without the identifying marks of handwriting. Once annotations were complete and photographs were taken, participants were invited to share their model. In doing so, they were encouraged to reflect and, as with LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, ask questions of each other (Blair & Rillo, 2016). Given the visual nature of the discussions, they were filmed with the camera focusing on the models, not the people. This aligned to another principle of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, which always places the focus on communicating through the model and putting the model centre stage (Blair & Rillo, 2016). Arguably, the LEGO® models built by participants become a form of visual or artefact elicitation, which Prosser (2011) suggests can evoke memories, develop conversation and minimise power differentials. The focus groups were two hours long and focused on four questions (see Table 4-4). These questions were addressed by each participant individually and then discussed collaboratively as part of the group. These questions were targeted to address SQ2 and SQ3, as indicated in Table 4-4.

**Table 4-4 Focus group outline**

#	Question	Rationale
1	What does the word 'library' mean to you?	This question was left intentionally open so that participants could interpret this as either 'library' or 'academic library'. This was confirmed in their explanation of their models and reflected heavily on SQ3 concerning experiencing the library. For most participants, it was possible to directly contrast their interpretation of library versus their interpretation of the BJL (question 2) and academic libraries (question 4).
2	What is your relationship with the Brynmor Jones Library?	This question was designed to identify what the BJL meant to the participants for SQ2, also addressing the experience element of QS3.
3	How do you think (other) students see it?	For academics and library staff, this was an important question as it allowed them to reflect on how they thought students perceived library space, based on what they see and what students say. For students, there were asked how they thought 'other' students saw the BJL, allowing them to discuss contrasting (or supporting) views to their relationship with the BJL.
4	What does 'academic' library mean to you?	This question was a tweak on the first to see if participants generalised their answer for the broader context or reformulated it.

As there were 40 participants, each creating four models, this gave a total of 160 LEGO® models for the data analysis. As described above, the LEGO® models were photographed, with the photographs, annotations and videos of them forming the raw data of this thesis. Figure 3-5 below gives an example of a model created for question 2, 'What is your relationship with the Brynmor Jones Library?'. This photograph is just an example where I have included the annotations to provide a better overview of how this method worked in practice. To preserve the anonymity of this participant, I have blurred their handwriting and overlaid their annotations as typed text. As part of data analysis, QSR NVivo was used to organise all this data by the question and participant pseudonym, also allowing these photographs to be paired with the transcript of the conversations that introduce them.

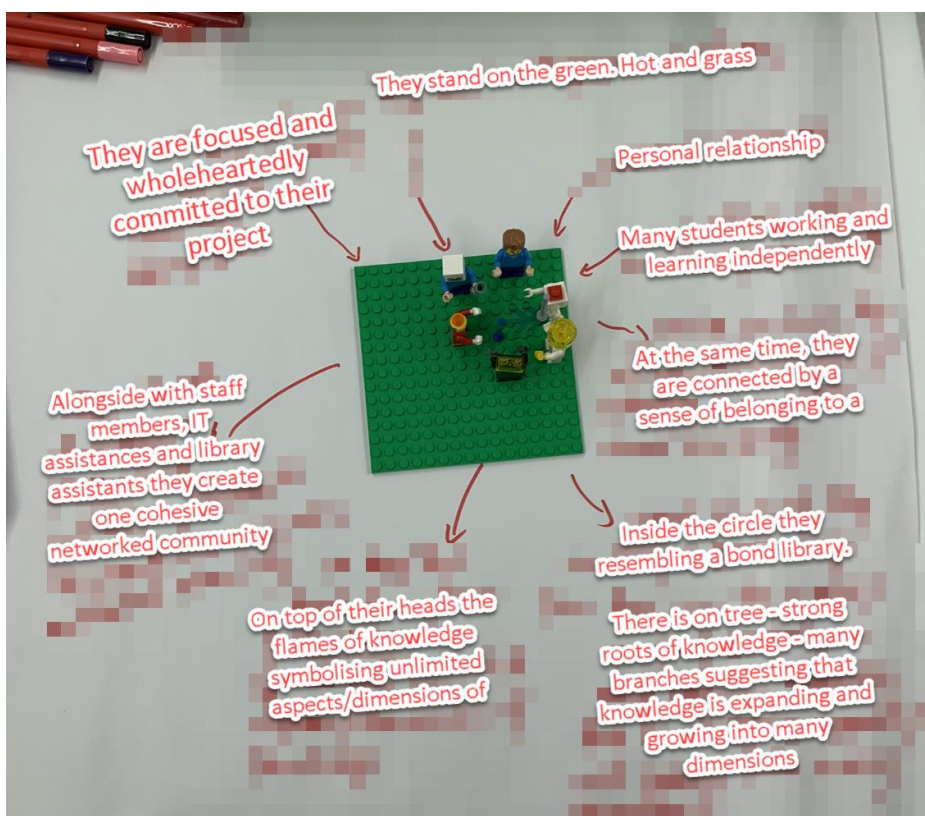


Figure 4-4 Student 18's response to question two.

#### 4.4 Ethical considerations

This research was approved by the Faculty of Arts, Cultures and Education Ethics Committee on 30th May 2018. This section will outline the critical considerations submitted as part of this approval. This research design, including methods and methodology; participant recruitment and consent; data storage and analysis; and

future issues concerning dissemination were considered with the use of the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research drafted by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011; 2018)<sup>1</sup>. For all focus group participants, detailed study information sheets were provided ahead of the research, and detailed consent forms were explained and signed ahead of their research participation (Appendix D, E & F). Participants were provided with the opportunity to ask questions ahead of the study. Participants were also given the option to withdraw their consent up to four weeks after their participation (before analysis), although no participants took advantage of this. The four weeks limit was required, given the nature of the data as participants would be unidentifiable within the research data after anonymisation and analysis had taken place. There was no use of incentives to encourage participation. The research design above also includes details of how participants were protected in the sharing of research outputs. This included only filming their models and not them, as well as taking additional photographs without their annotations to ensure no one would be identified through their handwriting.

The most problematic area of this research to consider were the direct observations, especially given the range of issues associated with observations in a public space and the issue of consent (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). The BERA (2018) guidelines acknowledge the complexities around this, suggesting researchers need to reflect on the rights and interests of anyone included in or affected by their research. In the case of this project, these were non-participant (or observer) observations as I did not directly know or engage with those being observed (Patton, 2015). As these observations were in a relatively public space within the context of the university community, and it was not a privileged space like a classroom or staff only space, I did not need to engage the participants to seek permission (Brooks et al., 2014). I frame these observations as covert (Patton, 2015), as opposed to directly deceptive. This is because there was no direct attempt to deceive or mislead people, other than my choice not to wear clothes that would identify me as a staff member. The covert nature of the observations was vital as it ensured my research was not disruptive to students; another ethical issue (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011) I was keen to avoid. If I

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<sup>1</sup> This research was originally considered with the third edition of these guidelines (BERA, 2011) and later revisited with the use of the fourth edition of the guidelines (BERA, 2018).

was approached by anyone in the course of observations, I had prepared information sheets which also provided the opportunity for people to withdraw or complain (Appendix E). This was incredibly important to ensure I could disclose what I was doing to anyone who enquired (BERA, 2018). While I was approached by some colleagues or students known to me in the course of the observations, no issues were raised.

The approach to conducting these observations was also essential to ensure the study remained ethical. The data collection focused on description as opposed to making assumptions about what is seen, a trademark of high-quality observations (Patton, 2015). An example of this would be an observation of someone using a computer. This is an interaction that can be recorded. Without directly seeing their computer screen, it would not be possible to identify this interaction as a study activity, for example. To further protect those involved in the research, I made no recording of any detail that would make someone identifiable such as using their name or recording a detailed description of an individual (Patton, 2015). Simply not recording such details was the simplest way to protect anonymity and confidentiality as required (BERA, 2018). As discussed above, I also did not use the included 'user' aspect of the AEIOU observation framework and instead focused on the activities, environments, interactions and objects.

Alongside the consent of individual participants and observations, it was also essential to get organisational consent. A detailed organisational consent form was used to outline all the details of this research (Appendix G) in line with BERA (2018) guidelines. This included consent for the use of internal data that I had privileged access to as a member of staff (i.e. headcounts and gate entries). An essential part of this process included discussions around the naming of the BJL in this research. As the BERA (2018:21) suggest:

*when researching a very well-known institution, it may be possible for some readers to infer the identity of that institution even from a fully anonymised account of that research*

The usual convention would have been to simply refer to this as a HE library in a mid-sized university in England (Brooks et al., 2014). However, given the nature of this study, this would not have provided sufficient protection. My role in working within

the building also identifies it. Even without this aspect of the study, references to building plans, the use of photographs and references to the heritage of the building (i.e. Philip Larkin's Library) all would identify this particular library. It would not be possible to omit these details without impacting the depth of this research. However, with the inclusion of these identifying details, it would ultimately be unethical to suggest I could offer anonymity. Careful discussions with the organisation through the University Librarian were essential to moving forward with this project, including permission to name the organisation. A core part of the organisational consent form allowed the organisation the final say on any details published in the public thesis. However, given the nature of this research, problems were neither anticipated or experienced.

In including library staff and academics in this study, I am arguably not just an insider researcher, but 'researching one's own' (Brooks et al., 2014:111). This has required careful consideration of the balance between my role as an employee and my role as a researcher. In short, when conducting observations in a public space or focus groups with those that consent, I fell into my researcher role. At all other times, I was an employee and colleague. This placed focus on only using data and insights gained as part of the formal research. Another aspect that supported my work with colleagues was the use of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® as a form of visual or artefact representation. Prosser (2011) argues that visual methodologies, including LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, can provide more authentic responses than words alone. They also help to allay any power differentials by placing focus on models, not the individual participants. The combination of this with the annotations and narratives that form part of this method ensure I did not misrepresent their voice. The confidentiality process was also essential to ensure no one was in an uncomfortable position should one of their contributions disagree with management.

#### 4.5 Researcher position and positionality

I took the opportunity to briefly state my positionality in the introductory chapter of this thesis. This is because I work for the library I am researching, and I felt the need to acknowledge my position as an insider-researcher (see: Merriam et al., 2001; Mercer, 2007; Holmes, 2014) from the start. In all social and qualitative research, positionality



is a critical concept to reflect upon. This is because researchers play an active role in the process of research and are positioned by their experience, their biography (or demographic) and their history (England, 1994). While there are many benefits to researcher attributes and insider-based research, their positions also afford the potential to both influence the research process and lead to presumptions regarding findings. As Mercer (2007) suggests, positionality is a 'double-edged sword', bringing both benefits, but also concerns of bias or blindness. For this reason, it is crucial to both introduce and reflect upon my position. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate how I have achieved a critical self-awareness to my thoughts, feelings and pre-existing experiences of the BJL. This section will set out my position for the benefit of readers, and to also demonstrate robustness in my approach to ensure I approach the research with an aspect of reflective self-awareness. This idea will be revisited throughout the thesis to continue to demonstrate robustness in my approach to the research process.

#### 4.5.1 Me and the BJL

While I identify as an insider researcher, it is important to note that my role does not actively involve librarianship, customer services within the library or any library-focused activities such as collections and processing. It is for this reason that I describe myself as an 'insider researcher' as opposed to a 'practitioner-researcher'. This is because I work within the environment I am researching, but not directly within the area of practice associated with it. I work as a Learning Developer for the Skills Team, which is operationally based within the library. Broadly defined, learning development is 'teaching, tutoring, research, and the design and production of learning materials, as well as involvement in staff development, policy-making and other consultative activities' (Hilsdon, 2011:14). At the University of Hull, this is based within the library. My role tends to involve a range of personal appointments, workshops and in-programme teaching with both students and staff. I firmly believe this gives me an advantageous position for this research. This is because I am close enough to the library to have access to the networks required to conduct this research, but far enough away to not be too overly influenced from operational experience working within the library.

It should also be acknowledged that my experience of the BJL goes beyond my employment. I did my undergraduate and postgraduate study at the University of Hull, giving me first-hand experience of studying within the library and using it as a student. However, since this direct experience, the library has been significantly redeveloped and so this experience is of little consequence for the library spaces of today. While it is easy to say my research requires that I am not unduly influenced by my own student experience of the BJL, the dramatic changes to the library through the redevelopment truly make this a straightforward process. The library spaces are somewhat unrecognisable to those I used as a student. I also have experience from my time working at the Student's Union, Hull University Union (HUU), where I took a leading role in the campaign to redevelop the library (see the following papers I wrote at part of the campaign: HUU, 2011a; 2011b; HUU, 2012). This gives me an insider's insight into the architectural aims of this space and the affordances it aimed to achieve. This is a very valuable insight into what was conceived for the BJL as a space, an essential part of the methodological approach set out earlier in this chapter.

#### 4.5.2 Making my position work

It is not only my work that positions me but also my biography and history (England, 1994). I am a white, male, English, gay postgraduate student with an undergraduate degree in geography. All these aspects of my identity are important to reflect upon, especially as the library and university welcome a diverse range of students of different nationalities, religions, cultures and other identities. Throughout this thesis, I have detailed the approaches I have undertaken to develop a critical and reflexive approach to this research.

In this research, my position was an advantage because of my experience of working for HUU on the Library Campaign, and then working for the Library throughout the duration of the redevelopment has provided me with a unique insight as to how the library spaces were initially conceived and how they are used in practice. For this research, I was fortunate that my role does not see me working on a day-to-day basis within the spaces that library users are in. This gave me a fresher perspective on the wider library than someone working every day in those spaces. I must, however, acknowledge the fact my role in the library did give me certain preconceptions, and

that I was, and continue to be positioned by my biography and experiences (England, 1994). Where required, in writing the findings and discussion across the following chapters, I will place myself within this thesis and make clear my own reflections. Lefebvre's (2013) rhythm analysis is clear that the researcher's own rhythms are essential and should be considered. As the observations also involved experiencing the spaces myself, personal reflections on temperature, sound and smell form a small but essential part of the data.

As discussed, when introducing the research instruments above, most of my data came from the people interacting with the library. The fact that they independently conveyed their answers to the questions through their LEGO®, models and the description of them ensured the focus was on them and their perspectives (Blair & Rillo, 2016) or lived experiences, as opposed to the potential for me to influence them in the discussion. This is one of the reasons why the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® approach is effective (Blair & Rillo, 2016) and why I was able to use it within the research context. Any questions I asked of participants were based on their constructed model, which represents their straight answer to the original question. While I was responsible for the observational data records, the AEIOU framework does focus observations on more factual and descriptive elements within space as opposed to judgement (Ethnohub, 2015). Focusing on the descriptive recording, as outlined by Patton (2015) also helped limit potential bias (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011).

#### 4.6 Participant population, sampling and inclusion

As introduced earlier in this chapter, the University of Hull has 16,000 students (RIBA, 2015) and 2,366 staff (University of Hull, 2019). It would have been impossible for the qualitative approach set out in this research to be delivered to a statistically representative sample. Indeed, that is not the purpose of qualitative research. This study would have required over 370 participants to be statistically representative (based on: Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987:163). This would have needed a broader research instrument such as a questionnaire which would not adequately address the research questions set out at the beginning of this thesis. This study approached sampling qualitatively, adopting purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), targeting

selection as opposed to a statistically controlling it (Opie, 2019). This was a much more appropriate approach for the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® based focus groups.

To determine the appropriate number of focus group participants to address the research questions of this study, I initially opted for a minimum sample size to be reviewed as the research progressed. Minimum samples are set to provide reasonable coverage of the issue being investigated (Patton, 2002). This allowed me to reflect on the research as it progressed and deem if I needed to recruit more participants to exhaust the issues raised fully. The initial minimum samples I set were 12 students (including three volunteers), 10 library staff and three academics. An important aspect of minimum sampling is a set of criteria to trigger further research if the initial sample does not achieve sufficient depth and breadth (Patton, 2002). After undertaking my initial data collection, I reflected on the ideas discussed in the focus groups and the data I was collecting through observations, realising I needed to engage more students and academics. There were some things I had found in the observations that were not yet reflected in the focus group data. I wanted to see if that was the intention of my participants and so needed more data. This allowed me to note practices that were occurring yet were not acknowledged by participants. Without comparing focus groups and observations, I also felt I had yet to exhaust the range of ideas they were discussing. After initial data collection led to the recruitment of 16 library staff, 13 students and three academics, I extended my data collection to engage a further six students and two academics. The final participant samples were presented earlier in Table 4-2 (page 93), demonstrating a total sample of 40 participants.

An important aspect of sampling was to achieve a varied and representative sample of different users by demographic. While the aim was not to be statistically representative, it was important to avoid a gender imbalance or focus on users from one subject area. As recruitment was primarily through email, social media, newsletters and lecture shout outs, it enabled me to target certain participant groups and demographics as required for the study. For example, I was able to email only undergraduates when I felt I needed more to better reflect the student body. I was also able to stop the recruitment of certain groups when I felt ideas were exhausted.

As above, the initial round of focus groups attracted 16 members of library staff and I was able to stop recruitment in this area.

Targeting the recruitment of broad groups allowed me to have a good range of demographics across my research. With library staff, I was able to achieve a representative sample across all departments and areas of the organisations. My students represented all the four faculties at the University, and I had a good range of male, female, home, international, undergraduate and postgraduate students. These details have been purposefully omitted from Appendix C to help maintain the anonymity of participants. The only areas of concern in my sample are related to academics and undergraduates, as greater participation from both would have benefited the study. For academics, the primary concern was that one faculty was not represented and with undergraduates, I was slightly concerned by the strong interest from postgraduates. Despite trying, I was unable to recruit more participants. However, this was mitigated to some extent by the observations which were include of all users accessing the building at the time of observation. Furthermore, while postgraduates may have been over-represented, many had completed their undergraduate degrees at Hull and drew more on their experiences of using the building at this level. This was particularly the case for four of the participants who were only a few weeks into their postgraduate studies at the time of the focus group.

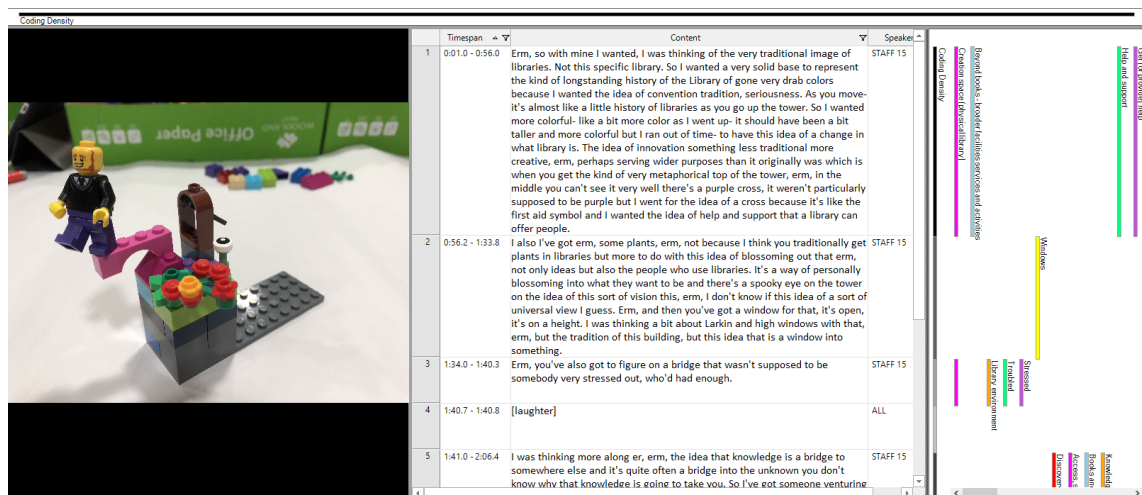
Throughout my research, I was keen to facilitate an inclusive and participatory approach for participants. For some participants, the use of LEGO® was a concern, as they feared they would be judged on their building skills. For any participants raising this concern, I was able to allay their fears by describing the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® ethos and that the aim was communication, not art. Blair and Rillo's (2016) introductory activities supported this, establishing how LEGO®. This is something I spent time working on to ensure people felt included, ensure no judgements were passed on building skills. There was only one participant that had serious concerns over the use of LEGO®, and this was because the noise and 'disorder' of bricks was a form of sensory overload for them. For this participant, I facilitated a personal one on one focus group, allowing them to draw their answers as opposed to using bricks. This

ensured I did not exclude them from participating. I have not identified this participant or their category to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

While discussing sampling, it is also important to acknowledge that the observation schedule set out earlier in this chapter (see Table 4-1 on page 88) is, in essence, a sample. As discussed above, this was a representative sample based on both quantitative data and range of conceived spaces. This research instrument also allowed the observation of the broad activities of thousands of library users (predominantly students) across the period of this study. The observations were used to help to understand to what extent some of the focus group data may be more generalisable and reflective of library experience, or may be more personal and reflective of just the individual.

#### 4.7 Data analysis

All recorded data was digitised, stored and categorised in QSR NVivo 12 to facilitate the process of analysis. As NVivo allows for the analysis of unstructured data in a range of formats including video, photo, and text, it made it a suitable program to both manage and work with this diverse range of data (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). NVivo does not assume the process of data analysis, giving researchers freedom in how they use it for data analysis (Fallin, 2019), giving the ability to shape its use for this project. From an ethics perspective, it also allows a systematic approach to data analysis and a full audit trail of all analytical and coding decisions (Brooks et al., 2014). Given the quantity of data in this project, and the depth of analysis that is achievable with qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) like NVivo compared to paper-based techniques (Opie & Fallin, 2019), NVivo seemed an appropriate choice.



Video (left), transcript (middle) and researcher-identified themes (right).

**Figure 4-5 Example of data within NVivo project.**

All of the handwritten AEIOU observation sheets were scanned and added to the NVivo project to prepare data for analysis. They were then classified by space, time of day and time of year; and, categorising by observational element (activities, environment, interactions, objects, users). For each focus group, photographs of every LEGO® model and video recordings of every model, including the explanation of its meaning and the conversations around it were added to NVivo stored by both focus group and question number. All video recordings were fully transcribed to allow for easier analysis (See Figure 4-5 for example). Each photograph and line of transcribed text was attributed to individual participants using cases in NVivo, each case named by participant type and a sequential number as its pseudonym (for example, Academic 2, Student 12).

#### 4.7.1 Data coding

Coding was an essential component of the analysis, allowing the identification of shared ideas and threads across the focus groups and observations. All data in this study was initially approached with 'elemental methods', outlined by Saldana (2015:97) as focused filters that 'build a foundation for future coding cycles'. The very first round of coding was structural. This involved the creation of codes that reflect the topics of inquiry (Saldana, 2015). In the case of this research, this involved coding each element of data to the structures that represent this study. This included the research question for focus groups (for instance, Q1 What does the word library mean to you?) and the relevant AEIO section for the observation (for instance, 'activity'). Initial coding

also required the establishment of cases, with each participant having their own case (for example, Student 1, Academic 3). In NVivo, cases are the units of measurement, allowing differentiation between who said what (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019), and in the case of this research, what type of participant they were (for example, a male student in the Faculty of Arts, Cultures and Education). A full list of all participant metadata is presented in Appendix C. Such structural codes were the foundation of the data in this study, allowing enquiry based on the attributes noted above.

For the focus groups, the initial coding approach involved the use of descriptive (sometimes called topic) coding. This involved summarising passages of text with a word or short phrase, focusing on identifying the topic that is discussed (Saldana, 2015). For example, Academic 1 stated 'It's more of a solitary experience in space for me', and this was initially coded to 'solitary study'. While Saldana (2015) cautions the use of descriptive coding for small group interviews such as my focus groups, he does recommend it for field notes, artefacts and video. As the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® based approach is focused on artefacts, and the individual's narrative more than it is a group conversation, it is fair to argue that descriptive coding was appropriate as the method is better labelled as an artefactual interview than it is a focus group. As analysis continued, this approach rapidly built up into substantial codes, representing many common topics between the participants. These codes were later processed with second-order coding.

For the observations, In Vivo coding was used for the initial analysis. In Vivo codes are literal or verbatim (Saldana, 2015), so for example, if I identified an object such as 'mobile phone' in my observation notes, during analysis that would be coded to the 'mobile phone' code. Similarly, if I observed an interaction of 'reading', that would be coded to the 'reading' code. This ensured an approach to analysis preserved the views I developed in the observations themselves, as opposed to developing meaning from them in the first round of coding. Where In Vivo coding was not able to represent some of the commentaries I added alongside my observations, I used descriptive coding (as discussed above). Once initial In Vivo coding was complete, as with the focus groups, second-order coding was used for further analysis. It was also an opportunity to refine the categorisation of observations within the AEIOU framework.



Given the speed required to record observations in the field, I would occasionally write notes on the incorrect page of the AEIOU framework. Such mistakes were fixed at this stage. For example, if in the process of recording observations in the field I incorrectly wrote an observed interaction on the activity page, through the coding process I was able to code such errors to the appropriate area of the AEIOU framework.

Second-order coding was used to develop the analysis of the first order codes developed from the focus group and observational data. This allowed some checking of data as it brought together both data sets into a common coding hierarchy (Patton, 2015). While the focus groups and observation had looked at the same thing (the BJL), they had done so through very different methods, allowing distinctions to be drawn between both data sets. It also allowed the identification of things that were observed, yet not discussed and *vice versa*.

The second-order coding of all focus group data (photographs, writing and video) and observational data led to the creation of five top-level themes that represent the core principles that identify the meaning of the academic library for the participants of this research. These five themes sit above an original collection of 126 sub-codes and sub-sub-codes that were created to represent all findings of the focus groups. Secondary and tertiary analytical passes of the focus groups data were used to refine this to the 17 sub-codes, with a further 11 sub-codes in the physical space. Some sub-codes had additional sub-sub-codes where these add further clarity. This was further supported by comparing these findings against the findings from the observations. As is apparent, all of these themes are to some extent different to those set out in the literature-based model.

#### 4.8 Generalisability

There is much debate over the generalisability of case study-based research, well summarised by Bassey (1981; 1998; 2000). While some authors favour wider generalisation from case studies (Cohen et al., 2011), others are critical of this, remarking the point of a case study to be the opposite – particularisation (Stake, 1995). Simons (1996) considers both standpoints in her paper *the paradox of the case study*, suggesting that ‘By studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal’. In this, Simons (1996) suggests this paradox is the very point

of case study research, as it allows the researcher to (paradoxically) address both the unique and the universal. While the research aim requires this paradox to be embraced to some extent, this research takes a broader perspective on how generalisation is achieved. It can be argued that Stake (1995) favours an approach of assertions, so instead of making generalisations, a researcher instead focuses on building theory which can ultimately be explored in further research, in different case studies. This approach is important for it reflects how generalisability may not be achieved in one project alone but can be considered through its contribution to the wider literature.

Stake's (1995:12) perspective of 'good case study is patient, reflective and willing to see another view of [the case]' well reflects the purpose of the growing practitioner-led research in libraries. This is represented by the User Experience in Libraries (UXLibs, 2019) group as introduced in the literature review. The group aims to promote library-based practitioner research and has run annual conferences since 2015 and published a book advocating for this research (Priestner & Borg, 2016). A core argument within the book is that through multiple, contextually-bound research projects, practitioners can begin to understand the whole (Ramsden, 2016). Not only does the conference facilitate this, but annual yearbooks provide opportunities for these cases to be published (Priestner, 2017; 2018). For this research, it means that while findings may not be directly generalisable, they can be considered within this wider body of similarly focused research. Secondly, as this research follows a highly theoretical basis as identified in the literature (Chapter 2), it is possible to relate to what extent this research reflects the literature. It should also be noted that the research method and analysis of this thesis is also highly novel and therefore contributes to the wider literature on artefactual and constructive research methods.

## Chapter 5 – The meaning of academic library



Figure 5-1 Wordcloud for adjectives and keywords used to describe and define BJL

This chapter will use the focus group data to address SQ2 of the thesis: What does ‘academic library’ mean to library users? The wordcloud above (Figure 5-1) is built from the adjectives and nouns used by participants to describe libraries, academic libraries and the BJL. The bigger the word, the more frequently it was used. This is a visual representation of the diverse ways in which participants discussed academic libraries, hinting at a wide range of different meanings. *Books* and *knowledge* dominate, as do *accessible* and *welcoming*. Further down, a more diverse range of words with both negative and positive connotations emerge. Words like *comfort*, *safe* and *limitless* are contrasted against words like *daunting*, *intimidating* and *barrier*. The academic library can mean many things.

This wordcloud serves as a roadmap for this chapter. Firstly, the two most discussed terms, *books* and *knowledge* indicate the main tension around how collections form a part of the meaning of the academic library. This is considered in the first section, *Library as collection*, which also considers the implications of this tension for the neoliberal academic library. The second section, *Library as social interaction* considers how people, both library users and staff form an important aspect of what the neoliberal academic library means. This is built from terms like *diverse*, *approachable*, *friendly*, *happy* and *individual*, all of which are mostly used to reference social aspects of the academic library. The third section *Library as physical space* represents what the physical library building means in the context of 'academic library'. This is defined by an extensive range of ideas: *pleasant*, *peaceful*, *safe*, *creative*, *home*, *light*, *monastic*, *tradition* and *attractive*, to name a few. While no significant terms dominate here, this represents some of the range of ideas associated with library buildings and how important they are to the meaning of the library. As such, this third section will assert the importance of the physical library space, despite an increasingly digital collection that can be accessed anywhere. The last section of this chapter will consider some of the other significant terms identified above: *accessible*, *welcoming* and *open*. All these terms are associated with the audience of the academic library. In short, whom academic libraries are for. This question served as the main distinguishing feature between 'library' and 'academic library,' and is addressed in the final section, *Academic library as exclusive*.

### 5.1 Academic library as collection

This section will discuss how participants framed the academic library as a collection. While this would seem a simple and obvious finding, the detail of this is quite complicated. Participants represented academic library collections using many different ideas, signified through discussion, annotations, and/or LEGO®. These ideas framed the collection by using books, bookshelves, knowledge, information, and electronic resources. While all these terms may characterise academic library collections, they represent it in nuanced ways. This section will unpack these ideas.

All the representations of academic library collections can be generalised into three distinct themes. The first frames the academic library as predominantly book-focused,

emphasizing physical collections and the library building. The second frames the library as knowledge, allowing for broader interpretations of the collection, inclusive of alternative formats as well as digital texts. These first two approaches were represented equally in all participant groups, with no favoured representation. The final theme represents electronic resources and how online access to academic library collections were portrayed. This was the least prevalent theme. After introducing these findings related to the academic library collection, this section will discuss the implications this has on the neoliberal academic library.

For participants that frame the academic library collection as book-focused, there was a tendency to focus on physical collections. For these participants, their primary representation of the collection was through books and bookshelves.

*Okay so when I thought of the library I thought specifically about the books and the librarian. The bookshelves. When I think of the library that's always what comes to mind I think rather than the the building I think of all the books and I guess the knowledge that's inside it. (Student 11)*

*Books on shelves. And to me it's mostly about books and journals I suppose. I run out of shelves. But yes it's meant to be lots of different types of books and lots and lots of them. I like books. (Academic 1)*

This focus was also represented in the physical models created by people, with many using books and bookshelves as a literal representation of the library. Figure 5-2 is an example of this, with Library staff 16 using their model to represent the library as a literal bookshelf.



**Figure 5-2 The library as a bookshelf (Library Staff 16)**

While no group of participants favoured framing the collection as book-focused, there were different ways in which books were represented between the groups. For example, students were more likely to represent books as a component of a much larger model, whereas library staff were more likely to place books as the primary focus (Figure 5-2 & Figure 5-3). This suggests that students were more likely to see the use of books in the broader context of library functions. When discussing books, academic and library staff were more likely to focus on books as the single defining feature of libraries. It was also interesting to see how much focus library staff placed on books, as their awareness of the broader (digital) collection would likely be more developed than the other users. This may, however, be explained by the fact that 10 of the 16 library staff participants worked more directly with the physical collection(s) through processing and shelving.

Some participants that focused on books did, however, acknowledge collections may be broader in scope.

*But to me when I think libraries, I do still feel- think of books and shelves rather than all electric- I know it's largely electronic, but to*

*me it is a book on a shelf at the end of the day. That's what I fell in love with. (Library staff 16)*

Responses like this demonstrate how strongly linked both 'library', and 'academic library' is to the book. Even when such participants acknowledged libraries as more than just books, many still purposefully focused on books throughout the focus groups. For them, it is the book that is the answer to what academic library means to them.

While this section has so far suggested books and bookshelves are a strong reflection of physical library collections, there were some cases where books were used more metaphorically. In these cases, books were used by participants as a symbol or metaphor for broader types of resources. This is well exemplified in the model from Library Staff 1 (Figure 5-3), who framed their representation of a library as a book, that also served as a doorway. They used this to effectively link books to the wider principle of knowledge, also arguing that the book is a 'symbol that crosses languages' in a way no word could. This illustrates how books can be representative of more than just a physical book. This use of a book, perhaps, better reflects on the second theme in this section, the academic library as knowledge.



*it was designed to look like an elaborate book, you know like a weighty tome you'd have, you have, you'd sort of have treasures with all that knowledge inside*

**Figure 5-3 The library as a book/door (Library Staff 1)**

For participants framing the academic library collection as 'knowledge', their representation of library collections was much broader. Such participants used a wide range of terms including 'sources', 'information', 'resources', and, of course, 'knowledge' itself. Knowledge was used as an explicit acknowledgement of libraries being more than just books. Participants referred to electronic resources, information,

journals, CDs, DVDs and other forms of knowledge forming the collection of libraries. While this was suggested with some participants using 'books' as a representation, 'knowledge' allowed more capacity to infer broader ranges of resources.

*libraries are are really important to me as a you know - knowledge-like what we were talking about before erm, fonts of knowledge erm, the information is all there erm, it is a gateway. (Library Staff 9)*

This suggests there is a broader acknowledgement of the kinds of items a library may have in its collection, as opposed to a specific focus on just books as above.

Quite often, the knowledge that libraries were said to represent was celebrated or even idolised by participants. While 'books' were respected, they were never referred to with the same level of esteem by participants.

*This is a place for knowledge is quite, holy is not the right word. The word is it's kind of a bit sacrosanct. (Student 13)*

In this context, knowledge was almost seen as a higher purpose and certainly implied something broader than just books. Participants using knowledge as their basis always framed it as a core component of the library. A central tenant. This is well represented by Student 5 who likened the library to a vehicle that drives you towards the information you need, and ultimately towards success in your studies.

*What does library mean. It's mean [sic], I just present it as a car or a something, to take you to get your knowledge and to get you to get your PhD. (Student 5)*

This also portrays how the knowledge libraries provide access to is operationalised by students for their studies and research. While this shows that knowledge is an essential aspect of the meaning of the academic library, it also shows how this is crucial to the success of library users.

Whereas books were often seen as something to be read or consumed, knowledge had a broader range of connotations. The library is not just a repository of knowledge, but it is also a place in which knowledge is constructed or created. In an academic library context, most users are engaged in some form of study or research. Whatever form of work they are engaged in, whether a simple essay or the write up of a complicated



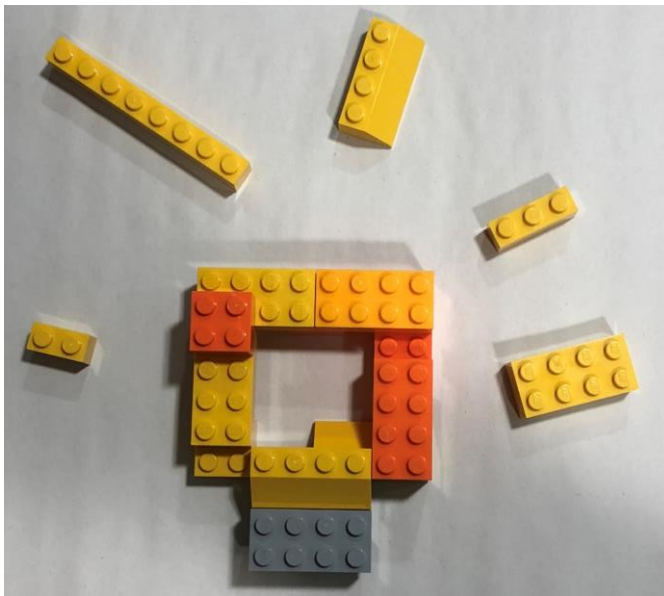
study, all academic outputs represent the creation of new knowledge, new connections or new ways of seeing something.

*This whole idea of it being a knowledge base but also where knowledge is constructed. (Student 19)*

This recognises the close association between the knowledge held by the library and the knowledge created by those using it. After all, conducting literature searches and finding out what has already been done is a core part of the research process for every field.

*I think part of knowledge construction is to find out what knowledge there already is. (Academic 3)*

The link between these is well reflected in Library Staff 10's model (Figure 5-4) which calls the library a space of 'lightbulb moments' demonstrating the link between the library and knowledge creation (Library Staff 10).



**Figure 5-4 The library as lightbulb moments (Library Staff 9)**

As suggested in the introduction to this section, another important aspect of the academic library collection is that of electronic resources. Digital access to electronic resources, however, rarely featured in the models built by participants to define 'library' in the generic and were exclusively discussed by participants in the context of the BJL or academic libraries. This suggests that participants recognise electronic

resources as something more associated with academic libraries than with public libraries. It is fair to argue that this places electronic resources as something clearly associated with the meaning of 'academic library'. Electronic resources were framed as an essential component of academic work for many participants.

*All students, all scholars, have go to the library, to read through the books or journal's articles. But now, there is also, online, like, the knowledge developed, technology developed. We have two kinds of library like online library, and uh, like yeah building. (Student 7)*

One student participant even modelled the BJL on wheels to reflect how the digital library is accessible wherever they are (Figure 5-5).

*So I started with the sort of the wheels. Because erm, for me as well, this library is quite different to any others. In my opinion in that it has a massive sort of online database, and that's something you can access, and it makes it very accessible. It doesn't sort of ground you in one place. It's very flexible. And it's very mobile which is really helpful. (Student 13)*

Many participants reflected on the growing importance of electronic resources and how they have changed the way in which they work. This was mainly raised by academics who were able to contrast their current research practices with those they used as a student.

*It's a more ephemeral thing right? You know, you can find information while you're on the bus, because you put it on your phone, you know, as long as you've got some connectivity to the world wide web. So, when I was a student, you know, things were starting to be online by that time I was a student, I'm not that old! hah. (Academic 3)*

However, considering the importance of electronic resources to contemporary study and research, they were under-represented in the models constructed by participants when contrasted to the representation of the physical library collection.



**Figure 5-5 The BJL is very mobile (Student 13)**

Acknowledging electronic resources as an aspect of the BJL or other academic libraries was, however, not the case for all participants. While all academics featured electronic resources in their models, some students stated that digital access did not form a part of their conceptualisation of the BJL or libraries in general. This was because they very much thought of the physical library, as opposed to the digital library when asked to define libraries (Q1/Q4) or explain their relationship with the BJL (Q2).

*No I didn't think about digital at all because when I think of the library I think of the physical going to a library and grabbing a book in going and taking it home or whatever (Student 11)*

In the explanation of their models, some admitted their lack of reference to the electronic resources was an oversight. This is interesting as it suggests electronic resources did not come to mind when asked about libraries. For others, however, the omission was purposeful. Two students openly framed electronic resources as something they associated with home study as opposed to something related to the BJL.

*For me personally, [electronic resources] are always resources that I'd access at home. So, it was never really a thing that was linked, in my mind, to the library. Whereas when I've actually come to the library,*

*it would be for the books, for the Skills Team as opposed to, using the online resources. (Student 1)*

For this reason, and contrary to the literature, the place of electronic resources is not as established as might be expected. This poses specific challenges for the neoliberal university.

While the literature makes a clear distinction that libraries are more than just books, this section has shown this is not reflected in the way most participants discussed the library. When asked what the words 'library' or 'academic library' mean, books and knowledge (or associated terms) were the most common responses, with these two terms representing distinct perspectives. References to library as books represented the times participants focused on books, providing a sharper focus on the physical collection stored within library buildings. This echoed the Oxford English Dictionary Online (2019d:206) definition of the library as a 'building, room or set of rooms, containing a collection of books'. This was, however, acknowledged as out of date within the literature review. As explained above, there was no difference in the way students, volunteers, academics, and library staff framed the library as a space of books or knowledge, with an even split between both themes represented across all participant groups. This suggests a substantial number of library users still see the academic library as a book space, potentially under-acknowledging the broader scope of materials that academic library provide.

The distinction between books and knowledge may seem nuanced, but it is an important distinction to make. This is because suggesting the academic library is just a space for physical books does them a disservice. It is not representative of what they have to offer. As noted in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, academic libraries are now more reliant on their digital collections (Lamagna et al., 2015; Powers, 2015), and this is very much the case with the BJL too. Not unlike other academic libraries, 85% of library spending in the BJL is on electronic resources (Sarjantson, 2020); however, as revealed above, a sizable portion of participants focus on books. There is little acknowledgement for the thing that represents the most substantial portion of library spending. For such people, the academic library means books. For academic libraries, it is fair to argue that it is not tenable for the most significant area of spending to go

unacknowledged. This is problematic in the competitive environment of neoliberal HE, where value must be demonstrated in all areas of a university. If academic libraries cannot get their users to acknowledge this value, spending on electronic resources may be threatened.

It is important to frame these findings in the context of neoliberalisation. Collections stand as the most significant area in which academic libraries face competition from outside the HE sector. As noted earlier in the thesis, competition for big tech companies like Amazon, Google and Apple (Grosch, 2012; Noh, 2015) has led to users consciously choosing to purchase resources they could otherwise have from an academic library for free (Galloway, 2017). Some users even forgo full resources for 'Google Book Preview' or 'Amazon Look Inside!', something that Student 9 openly admitted. This raises fundamental questions around the user experience provided by academic libraries for the access of electronic resources. It also highlights potential future avenues of research into how students utilise book previews.

How the digital library facilitates home or office-based study is very much an aspect of the neoliberal library, echoing the idea of 'library as platform' or 'place as library' (Davenport, 2006:12). It is interesting to see this was not acknowledged more by participants, with electronic resources seeming quite peripheral to most of them. Regarding the future of academic libraries, this is perhaps not a bad thing as it reasserts the importance of physical library space – in itself a distinctive aspect of what participants suggested academic library meant to them. This is, however, also a contradiction, for electronic resources are also the area in which libraries need the value of their expenditure to be realised by both those using academic libraries, and those funding them (management). Clearly, academic libraries need to navigate this issue carefully, although it must also be stated that online access and physical library presence are not mutually exclusive. Library users can use physical library space and the technology it provides to access digital resources.

## 5.2 Academic library as social interaction



**Figure 5-6 People at the heart of the academic library (Library Staff 10)**

People and the connections between them were a significant aspect of what the library meant to many participants. They were at the heart of the many of the models built by participants, often represented in models with the use of LEGO® Minifigures often taking a central role (see Figure 5-6 above). Indeed, the importance of people and the connections between them were a core part of the way participants framed the academic library.

*For me from the Brynmor Jones is all about community, and relating to people and relationships. (Student 19)*

*People. They are at the heart of how I see the BJL (Library Staff 10)*

*As opposed to where I was before of how central library is, and how much the library is is not the dusty collections of shelves. So yes, it was coming into this library, and realizing that this library was about people. (Academic 2)*

As these quotes demonstrate, the idea of libraries, and in particular the BJL being about social interactions. This was a sentiment shared across all groups of participants, students, library staff and academics alike. This section distinguishes between two

different forms of social interaction that are linked to the meaning of the academic library. The first type of interactions involves those between staff and library users, very much framing the support offered by academic libraries. The second interactions are those between library users and their contribution to the environment of the academic library.

Library staff featured prominently across academic, student and library staff participant groups, but interestingly not with the volunteers. While organisationally there are distinctions between the roles of the staff working in the library, there was little acknowledgement of this by participants. The terms 'library staff' and 'librarian' were used interchangeably by them. As all staff are not librarians, here I use the term 'library staff' to reflect the context more accurately. Library staff were most often represented in their role of supporting users, well represented by Library Staff 6 who framed their role as a 'champion' for students.

*This person will shine a light your on the knowledge you require ... you're seeking some knowledge so you will go to him- or her, and then, she will show you where to go to get that knowledge that you're needing. (Library Staff 6)*



**Figure 5-7 Your champion (Library Staff 6)**

The positive framing of library staff was dominated with reference to information literacy support, such as finding library materials, as visualised in Figure 5-7. Library staff were placed in most participants representations of the academic library, but mainly by students and library staff. The latter is not surprising as it was an act of placing their roles in the context of the library. Students referencing staff tended to discuss them as providing help.

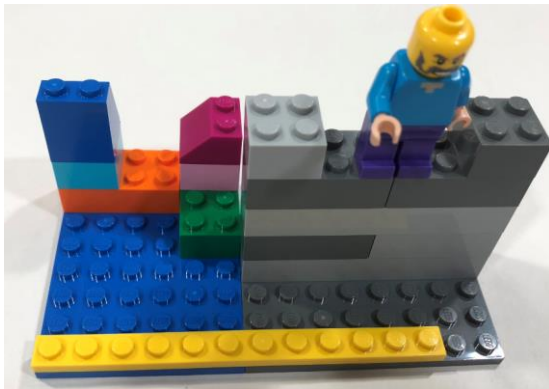
*Staff smiling ready to help with customers and giving an experienced and knowledgeable. That's whenever a student is in trouble, looks for*

*a particular item on the shelf, staff are always on top of things.*  
(Student 18)

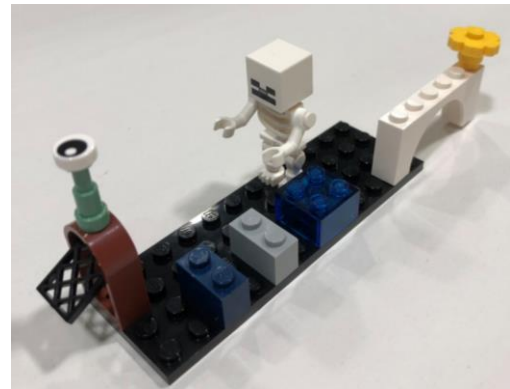
Students spoke highly of the support staff offered, often referencing the Skills Team, a source of specialist support within the BJL.

*then within the library. I've always had help. So again, from [REDACTED] from the rest of the Skills Team, from the people on the desk, there's all- and from all the students- There's always somebody who can point you in the right direction when you're stuck.*

These references to library staff positively framed the aspects of help and support they offer as an essential aspect of the meaning of the academic library.



**Figure 5-8 Authoritarian and intimidating food and drink police (Library Staff 14)**



**Figure 5-9 Fusty gatekeepers and eyes of surveillance (Library Staff 15)**

While a significant aspect of the academic library, library staff were not always seen as positive and there were negative conceptualisations of library staff. Interestingly, library staff were the predominant sources of these comments, perhaps a reflection of how they feel about some of their duties. Library Staff 14 framed their role as 'authoritarian' food and drink police (Figure 5-8) whereas Library Staff 15 likened their role to one of 'surveillance' (Figure 5-9). This certainly reflects some of the negative connotations associated with library staff, as identified in the literature review. Library Staff 14 mentioned their perception of this originated from the ways in which they overheard library staff being discussed.

*When I first started working here, I heard the phrase food and drink police and it's one of my sort of worries is that sometimes particularly when it's busy. Most of my interactions with students seem to be*



*telling them that they're doing something wrong which I don't really like and isn't sort of the image I really want to put across (Library Staff 14)*

In the same focus group, this led to reflection on how staff felt about these perceptions.

*it's not, not necessarily the way that we're actually acting but it's the perception that the students have of us as we're moving around the building. (Library Staff 12)*

Student participants also referred to the issue of food and drink policing, particularly Student 14 who found the rules around coffee in the building problematic (flasks only, no paper cups). The issue even appeared in an article from an unofficial student magazine, *The Hull Tab* (2015), which framed staff as the 'library eating patrol'. Fundamentally, this demonstrates that the BJL (and its staff) are associated with the enforcement of rules. Some of the framings of library staff and their association with academic libraries are arguably an issue that neoliberal academic libraries must overcome if it negatively impacts the student experience of library space. For example, the decision to allow flasks in the BJL was a compromise to facilitate student requests for access to hot drinks within the study spaces of the BJL.

This is not to say all participants recognised library staff as an essential element of the academic library, particularly academics.

*I don't think we have any library staff in any of these models which is maybe interesting – we have de-staffed them. (Academic 3)*

This perhaps reflected the focus on some academics on the use of electronic resources, as opposed to using the building as a space to work as was more common with students. Having said this, academics did also generally recognise the role of library staff in their support of students.

*Brynmor Jones - is a space where I send students (Academic 4)*

While perhaps not for their own use, at least academics acknowledged library staff as an important.

The eminence of library staff within the data was not surprising, especially considering the framing of the library as librarian (Radford & Radford, 2001; Sennyey et al., 2009). This was also strongly reflected in answer to SQ1, presenting library staff as an essential aspect of academic libraries. Just as both the dictionary definitions and SQ1 suggest, library can quite literally mean librarian, and as the data above has shown, this too was represented by participants. Most often, library staff were presented as both an asset to academic libraries and an integral part of what they mean. As such, it could be suggested that library staff and the help they offer library users is a significant aspect of the value library spaces bring. This is one of the unique selling points of academic libraries as the support referenced by participants is rarely available in other locations beyond the library. This is undoubtedly the case at the University of Hull. For the most part, library staff are an asset to the neoliberal library.

As foreshadowed in the literature, there were, however, no unified perspectives on how library staff were presented by participants. The negative conceptualisations (Radford & Radford, 2001) and stereotypes of library staff (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014) were foreshadowed in the literature. Comments related to this in the data tended to focus on negative stereotypes of staff as rule enforcing 'library police'. While this perspective was mostly voiced by library staff themselves, it was clear that these feelings were based on how they believed students perceived them. Some students also acknowledged similar thoughts about library staff, and this can be seen as very problematic in the neoliberal academic library. Ultimately, library staff are fulfilling customer service roles, and if library users perceive this role negatively, it may be perceived as a poor customer experience studying in 'policed' library spaces. Furthermore, the idea of staff as 'police' has negative connotations of oppression. If library users feel they are being watched and controlled, it does not make for a happy working environment, at least to those who intended to break the rules.

As suggested above, library staff were not the sole focus of social interactions within academic library spaces. Participants also acknowledged the broader social environment library users were interacting within.

*...although the tradition of libraries is very much being book focused, I think nowadays we tend to think of the people in a library who users, what it's doing for the people who use the library. (Library staff 14)*

The way in which people were modelled and discussed suggested the library is a space that is actively used by people. While collections were still prominent in participant's models, when combined with the focus on people, it suggested a different kind of library. Indeed, many participants framed people as of equal importance to the collection. This suggested that the library was perceived as a space of social interactions.

Interestingly, library users were represented as a part of the fabric of the library and were one of the reasons why people chose to study in the BJL.

*What the library kind of meant to me was it was very much a kind of communal space. It was where I'd come with people and work. It wasn't necessary somewhere I'd be by myself, I would normally meet people. (Student 1)*

*also give you motivation, because you see other people studying also will get some motivation to study also. (Student 7)*

*They are all um, um, participating in something that is uh larger than them, themselves. (Student 18)*

From this, it is fair to argue that without people, academic libraries would mean something different.

While libraries can be individual (or personal), such as a music collection or home bookshelf, the academic library is explicitly social. Even if the object of people being there is individualistic, they are collectively individualistic. This is well represented by Library Staff 9:

*There are lots of people in the library but, erm, my traditional way of thinking they're all separate. And just like working on their own things and now having worked in this library erm, and the wonderful space that is I have become more open minded to other ways of working, so I er, y'know now do see the need for erm, group learning places and more social spaces but that's so that the tradition, to keep alive and and to keep in use the more traditional spaces where*

*people can do erm, their individual learning which I. Which is really important to me in the library. So. I think that's it. (Library staff 9)*

It is also interesting to note how individualistic study is framed as a 'traditional' aspect of the academic library. This hints at the growth of more social ways of learning that also emerged as a significant aspect of 'people' in the context of the academic library. This suggests that an entirely different kind of library space is emerging.

*I do think the majority of people benefit, especially young people, the undergraduate students, benefit from the library as communal space, for group work, for partnered work, for being able to walk up and down, drink coffee, all of that. I think that is good. (Academic 5)*

As with the data above, the importance of social interaction is starting to emerge as a significant aspect of the academic library.

References to people rarely suggested they were passive 'others' working in academic libraries. Participants often acknowledged group learning and peer-support as a vital part of the academic library. Indeed, peer support is a core aspect of how the BJL facilitates support for library users. Student 1 even referred to the BJL as a 'space to help each other'. There were numerous references to students seeking help from other students or providing that support themselves.

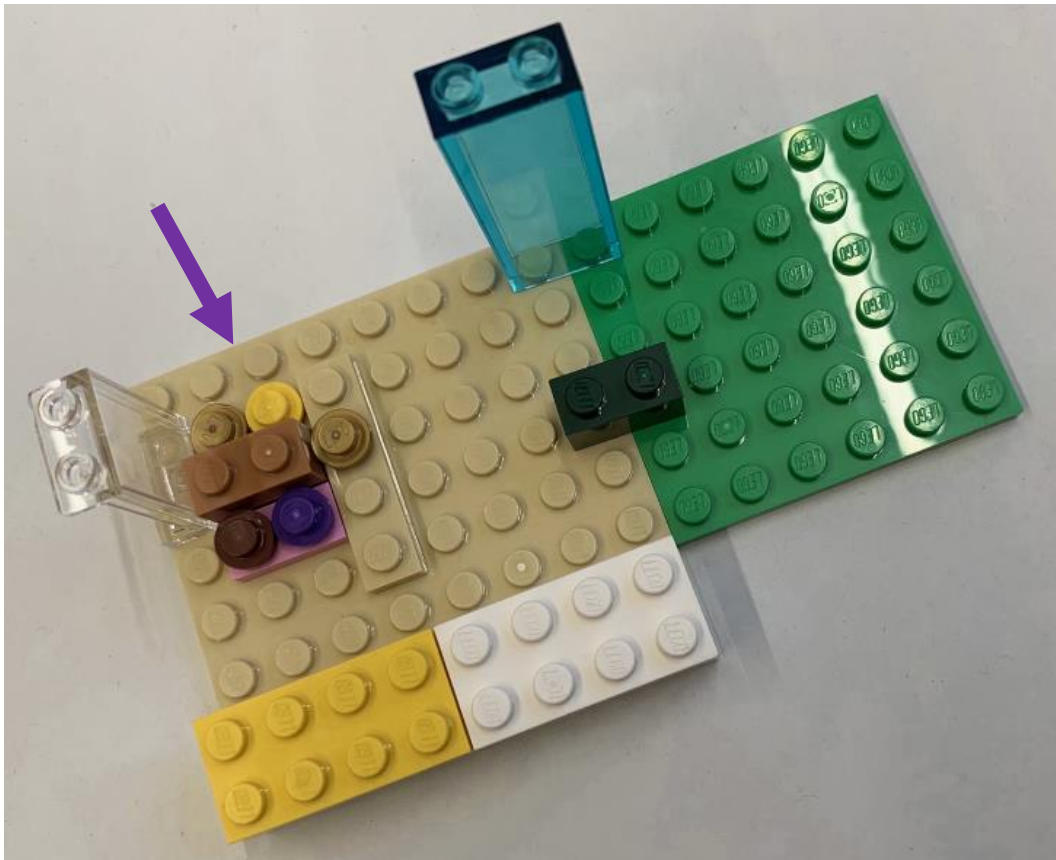
*Also we come meet, meet er, meet friends like when we have any problem or any discussion, we book a room, come through and discuss, and share knowledge, and try to sort any problem. (Student 7)*

*I feel confident to help people to, uh, I feel proud of myself of using my library and spending a lot of time. (Student 5)*

*And I notice that because when friends tell me that you are really good they always come to me to like, to help them find a book or somewhere or something in the library. (Student 10)*

The affordance for this kind of activity is very much built into the physical library environment, as there are plenty of spaces that are designed for social learning. This suggests an explicit design intention to place people at the centre of physical academic libraries. This is a contrast to traditional library design which placed books and their preservation first (Leedham-Green & Webber, 2006; Murray, 2013). This user-centric

design was also reflected in participant models, with many including students working together, often around tables added explicitly to the BJI to facilitate social learning (see Figure 5-10).



**Figure 5-10 A study group with friends (Student 11)**

While people may have a strong association with the meaning of the academic library, it is not always positive. Several students raised concern over the disruption (often noise) from other library users. This is well exemplified in Figure 5-11, which depicts Student 2's model, showing other students to be noisy and disruptive. There is also litter and rubbish all over the desks and floors, representing the mess left by other students. Indeed, many of my reflections regarding the library environment within the observations commented heavily on noise (see: Chapter 6). Clearly, while *social space* can frame people as an asset, it is also important to acknowledge them as a hindrance too.



**Figure 5-11 Other students as messy and noisy (Student 2)**

Even when not being disruptive, people can still be a distraction. An interesting comment from a Library Volunteer revealed how they spent a great deal of time in the building to volunteer but tended to avoid it for their own study use. This because the library was too distracting, pushing their use of it to mornings and evenings.

*Yeah. It's just like when I do volunteering, it's- I mean I enjoy it, but when it came like to study my friends just like tend to ask like a lot of questions and instead of doing work, I don't do it. I just talk. So I just like come here like really early in the morning or really late. So to avoid like having this kind of problem. And I have like a select group of friends I go to a library because I know other people would actually distract me. So that's why I just like come with my study group and my friends like that. (Student 12)*

This certainly reflects how other library users can be a detractor for some participants and the way they see academic libraries. This was also acknowledged by some students that associated the library with procrastination.

*You go immediately for coffee, haha, and meet up with friends and talk about what you need to do for that day and do a little bit of procrastination. Or a lot of procrastination. (Student 19)*

While this further represents the association between academic libraries and socialisation, it also signifies a very different library space to the traditional silent study environment.

This section has shown that while not a physical part of the library architecture, the other people using library spaces are nevertheless an essential aspect of the academic library. The association is so significant that many participants recognised people as an essential part of the meaning of the academic library. As Academic 2 stated in reference to the BJL, 'this library [is] about people'. This also reflects the significance the literature places on people-centric design, well represented in the UX Libs group (UXLibs, 2019) introduced in the methodology (see: Chapter 4), and on the broader scholarship this group curates (Priestner, 2017; 2018; 2019). Much like the literature review argued, the library has increasingly become a space designed for people. As the data in this section shows, this has become a significant part of what the academic library means. This reflects a change in how the library space is used, especially when comparing to before the BJL redevelopment. The strong representation of people as an integral part of what academic library means is intriguing. If, in the context of neoliberalised HE, the academic library is seen as a product, it suggests that people's participation in the library enhances the product. This may make libraries more akin to a busy music concert where the crowd enhances the atmosphere than a shopping centre where other customers just annoy and get in the way.

Unlike the previous section on collections, the topic of social interaction represented a much broader range of perspectives. Where participants see other users as disruptive, too noisy, or annoying, it negatively impacts their experience of the academic library. This can have profound consequences in the way in which students respond to NSS question about the library and learning resources. This can impact how competitive a university's library is in league tables. Such negative perceptions may also drive students to other spaces. Student halls of residence, break-out spaces on campus, coffee shops and other such spaces are all viable alternative study venues, even though some are paid. Interestingly, one participant even acknowledged cafes as an alternative:

*I think the options for collaborative space are, you know, you can go to a cafe, you could go to Planet Coffee<sup>2</sup> or whatever, but the library is a unique space that is one of the few spaces that is allowed to be peaceful (Academic 2)*

In this case, the library maintains itself as a distinct space suited to their preferences, hinting at the importance of the physical academic library space (see next section). It also presents a warning in that a disruptive library would be their second preference for working. If large numbers of library users started to see alternative spaces as preferable, it would lead to a reduction in library investment, especially if library spaces are underutilised. It also shows how the neoliberal academic library must be competitive. If students choose to study elsewhere, library space can be repurposed for alternative uses. This also presents a challenge for libraries to manage the extent to which they can support different working or study styles, and account for a variety of noise level preferences within their defined space(s).

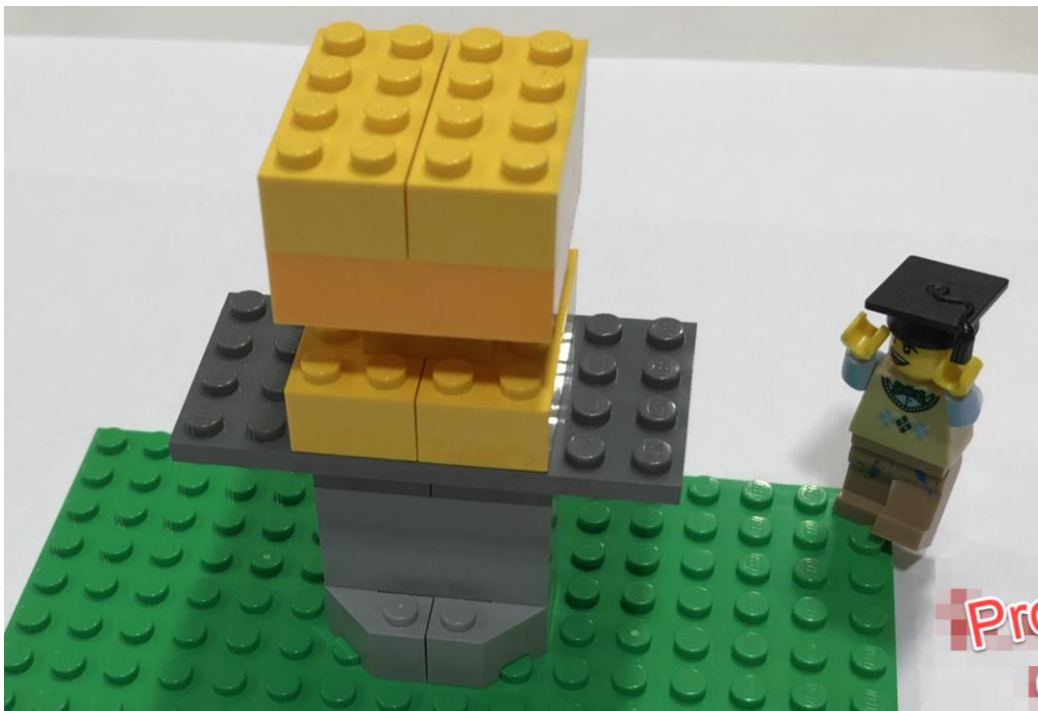
The strong association of social interaction with the meaning of 'academic library' may be a problem for some users. Libraries were traditionally seen as places to get away. Academic 5 drew attention to the library as a former safe space for introverts, arguing 'people who are not neurotypical, who may find social situations stressful'. It is, therefore, vital that academic libraries continue to facilitate spaces for such library users (Choy & Goh, 2016). To do anything less would be exclusionary. It does, however, present another issue of marketized HE, in that the spaces developed are generally for the marketable majority which can exclude, all be it unintentionally, other users. This is an issue that impacts upon all areas of the university and inclusive design needs to be considered throughout institutions. This is because universities are now more diverse in both demographics and needs. Libraries must consider how they support these students (Farmer, 2009; Bligh, 2014). In providing social and study spaces for all users, consideration needs to be given on how to accommodate different user requirements.

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<sup>2</sup> Planet Coffee is a local coffee shop, around a 10-15 minute walk from the University campus.



### 5.3 Academic library as physical space



**Figure 5-12 The Brynmor Jones Library – It’s on a pedestal (Library Staff 3)**

This section will overview how physical space (or library rooms and buildings) are still a significant aspect of the academic library and what it meant to participants. This is well represented in the model pictured above. Built by a member of library staff to represent their relationship with the BJL, it perfectly asserts the importance of the BJL as a physical space. Here, they represent the BJL’s brutalist tower block as the symbol of the library. The tower block and its distinctive architecture are an important part of the BJL’s identity, and until late 2019, it was even used as a logo to represent the BJL (see Figure 5-13 below). This also shows how the academic library at the University of Hull is linked to both powerful and spatially based imagery and symbology. It is the building that is of importance, not just the stuff within it. This section is purposefully brief as the way in which the academic library is experienced is fully considered in Chapter 6. At this point, it is, however, essential to assert the physical environment and how this it is a core component of what academic library means.

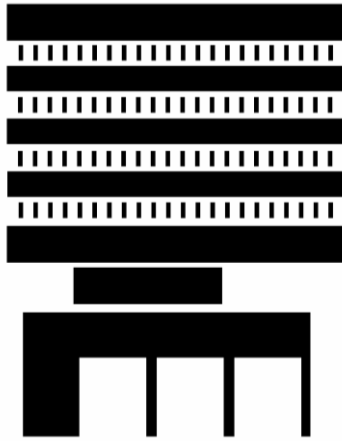


Figure 5-13 Brynmor Jones Library logo 2012-2019

Academic libraries cannot be framed as just one unified physical space. Participants referred to many different spaces within the BJL, acknowledging both the different activities they facilitate and the aspects of user preference they support.

*And I think that is important to note because everyone comes away from it with different experiences. You know, for some people sitting in these big open spaces in the middle and just sort of soaking it all in. And for others it's finding that it's nice quiet corner to just consume knowledge at their leisure. So it's interesting and it's nice because there's some- there is something for everyone. (Student 13)*

*People can come and choose. Do they want a nice, sort of quiet space or they can choose to go in a warm space, or they can choose to go for some help. (Library Staff 6)*

Participants suggested that these diverse physical library spaces were a valuable environment for their productivity. This included reference to the facilities and resources available within the building. This went beyond the collection, acknowledging the importance of the working spaces, technology, and the library environment itself.

*And at the end I put this: the sacred and the profane. I think there is something very different, very holy about a space set aside for a really, erm, perhaps focused type of work. (Academic 1)*

*I thought like it's maybe space where it's not just like studying. It's just like a place enjoy, to pass time, to be with friends and everything. (Student 12)*

Clearly, academic library as a physical space delivers more than access to a collection of resources.

As demonstrated in the wordcloud at the start of the chapter, participants described the BJL with the use of interesting terms. This included *pleasant, peaceful, safe, creative, home, light, monastic, tradition* and *attractive*. No single term was dominant, demonstrating the range of different qualities that were attributed to the BJL. It also suggests a wide range of interpretations (or imaginations) that can be associated with academic library space and what it means to people. Unlike the sections above on collections and social interactions, the interpretations of physical space were far more individualised, although there were some common threads. The first is that the academic library was a comfortable space. It was something that users identified with, going as far as suggesting it is like a 'second home' (Students 2, 4, 15, 16 & 18). The second was the recognition that using the physical spaces of an academic library is choice. It is also a choice that many students make, and as such, the library is a busy space. For academics, it was seen more as a choice they would like to make, but other work gets in the way.

As overviewed above, for many library users, the physical library was framed as somewhere they felt they belonged and wanted to stay. This was not just related to their need to access library resources or facilities, but because the physical library space was welcoming and inviting.

*I've put a fire there to represent that it's warm because it's a place that you want to be erm, you look forward to be in there you want to stay. (Library Staff 9)*

*Because when you go in and you're comfortable, when you're in your element, it's really a place you can feel quite protected as you enjoy the sort of the library. (Student 13)*

Academic libraries are clearly a desirable place to be. This chapter has so far shown libraries to be a productive space. Somewhere users can access the resources and support they need for their studies and research. Library space goes beyond this; it is more than just productivity. It is a space users can have a great affinity for, and it is also a space that is part of their success.

*For me libraries is like the home, for you to, just like grow up, to develop or, there's a place that helps you for your degree or profession (Student 6)*

It is the physical academic library space that is the facilitator of this, serving as far more than a container for books.

It can be argued that the physical library was a destination for participants. The library is a space people must choose to come and study. It is an active choice.

*I think people need that ability to choose whether or not to use the library, ... you have to choose to go through it to take the knowledge and the resources are inside. (Student 11)*

The idea of choice is crucial as it reflects one of the core tenants of neoliberalisation and marketisation. Library users and particularly students as consumers have a choice, and they are choosing to study in physical library spaces. The built library environment is made of more than just furniture, equipment, and technology. Participants suggested that working in library spaces supported their productivity, suggesting a mental element to the academic library as an imagined space.

*This is sort of a little antenna for receiving inspiration and erm, I dunno - quite abstract (Academic 3)*

While this is difficult to represent, it hints at a potential reason physical space is still an essential aspect of the academic library. Most people have access to computers or laptops elsewhere, but they still choose to use the library. It somehow offers more than resources and equipment. The more experiential aspect of the academic library is more fully explored in the next chapter.

While the physical, built library environment may seem like an obvious aspect of the academic library, this is not necessarily the case. The significance of electronic resources as presented in both the literature review and the section on collections above could raise the question over the importance of physical library space. Indeed, the framing of the academic library as a platform (Bennett, 2003; Andrews et al., 2016a) or 'place as library' (Davenport, 2006:12) explicitly challenges the need for dedicated physical library space. This because these approaches argue that the library

can be placeless, accessed whenever and wherever people need it. Based on the data in this section, however, it is vital to reassert the importance of physical library space. This is because academic libraries are more than just resource collections. As this section has shown, they are physical spaces that students and academics value, and this value extends beyond collections. The academic library is a space that people are productive in, and the use of BJL suggests it is still valued above alternative study spaces. For library staff, the physical space is also their work environment and something of importance to them.

The data in section demonstrates support for Wilkin's (2015) argument that physical library space is one of the central pillars of library activity.

the proximity of user spaces to librarians and to collections or collection-related tools created a very different kind of environment where our users, individually and collectively engage with ideas and collaborate with one another in their research pursuits. (Wilkin, 2015:242)

Just as with this section, however, Wilkin finds difficulty in framing what exactly makes library spaces so special and distinct. They facilitate a wide range of activity, but it is challenging to abstract what qualities library space brings. This is very much the territory of SQ3 as covered in the next chapter, utilising the observational data to determine how space is used and valued in practice.

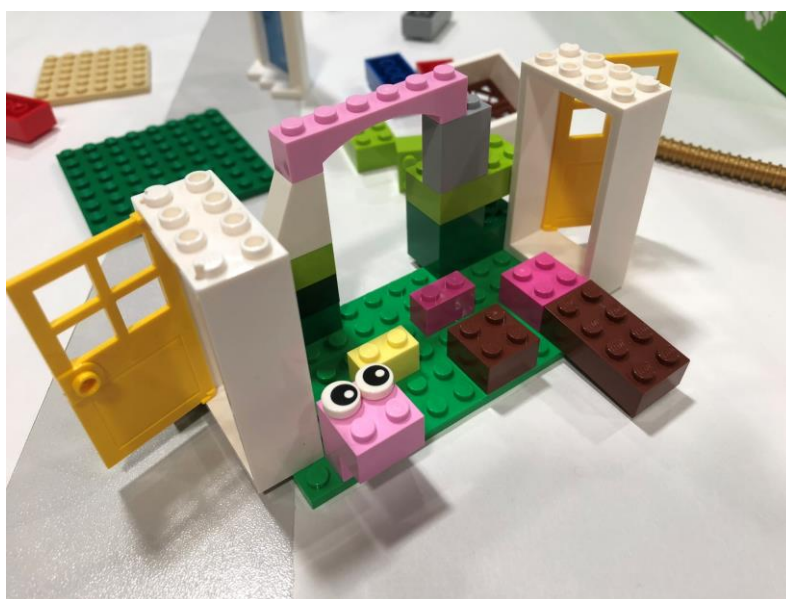
It is fair to argue that this section has shown the importance of physical library space. This suggests electronic resources are yet to devalue the requirement for physical space, as foreshadowed in the literature (Carlson, 2001; Ross & Sennyey, 2008). This is because libraries are more than just resource collections. If there were just collections, then electronic resources would prove a tangible threat to the continued development of physical library space. For all participant groups, this section has hinted at physical academic library space as something experiential. It is not just a storage container. In addressing SQ3, Chapter 6 will explore how the academic library is experienced in far greater detail than here. This will more than anything else, demonstrate how academic libraries have changed, arguing that further work is needed to ensure people's attitudes towards them change too.

#### 5.4 Academic library as exclusive

The most significant contrast participants drew between ‘library’, and ‘academic library’ was that of their audience. Indeed, the concepts of collection, people and space were just as readily applied by participants to ‘library’ as they were to the BJL or ‘academic library’. This is not to say there was not further nuance as to what these words mean, but it was the idea of their audience that distinguished the two. Openness was discussed as a core feature of ‘library’ in the generic, with participants making clear libraries were open, public, and welcoming spaces to everyone.

*the windows and the door and they represent like so a library is an OA to everybody, like everybody can use a library in a different way so no matter the type of person that they are. (Student 4)*

Often participants build models with open doors and windows, or doorless arches to communicate this idea (Figure 5-14). Openness was also framed as something that makes libraries ‘welcoming’, mentioned by many participants, but particularly library staff.



**Figure 5-14 Library with open doors (Library Staff 5)**

However, when questions turned to the generic academic library (focus group Q4), the idea of openness and freedom was absent with only a couple of references to openness across all 40 participants. Instead, academic libraries were framed as a barrier (5 participants), as exclusive spaces (6) or explicitly not for the public (6).

*So when you said academic library, it just, it made me think of it now. It made me think of quite an exclusive place. Erm, not a very inclusive space. It was as with my other libraries, (Library Staff 9)*

*So I got the door which I've got is closed on purpose I think because I kind of, when I think of academic libraries I think of it as sort of gated access for some reason even though I'm sure it's probably not. There's certainly some- not certain, but in my opinion there's probably some level of closedness to an academic library (Student 11)*

This is the one area that showed the most significant contrast when comparing perceptions of public versus academic libraries. Participants clearly presented academic libraries as exclusive spaces, not for members of the public. As such, academic libraries were framed as being for experts (2), researchers (6), students (3) and academics (4). This is not surprising, considering the large number of academic libraries that use access control (Storey, 2015), as does the BJL for upper floors. Nevertheless, this idea was not reflected in answer to SQ1, which did not incorporate access or audience as part of the definition of an academic library.

The BJL, however, was somewhat of an exception to the framing of exclusivity. Openness represents one distinction participants drew between the BJL and other academic libraries. They represented the BJL as more open and welcoming than academic libraries, with reference to the café, gallery, and exhibition spaces. While the symbology of openness was very much used with the frame of the public library in mind, it was also reflected in some models of the BJL. Some library staff and students, as well as all volunteers, framed the BJL as a space open to all. Arguably, the overtly public art gallery, exhibition space and café go some way towards physically enabling the BJL to serve as a space open to the public. This is undoubtedly reflected in building plans with the conceived purpose of the gallery and exhibition space being to open the BJL to the public.

The idea of openness frames the BJL as a space open beyond the university community, including members of the public. It was interesting that one participant framed the gallery and exhibition spaces as so explicitly public, they did not consider them somewhere they could visit in work hours.

*Do I ever think - Oh, I'm going to take 20 minutes out of my day to just go and look at some art... The only one I've ever been in to actively was when the Lines of Thought Exhibition was there, and I came in on a Sunday. It was with my husband. It was a thing to do and it happened to be at the university. And then [REDACTED], a colleague was there doing exactly the same thing. But on a work day, I would never think that is something that would - even when I'm - I need to for a go change of scene or whatever (Academic 2)*

Considering this individual felt they needed to revisit the BJL outside of work hours to be able to utilise the public exhibition presents an interesting issue for the BJL and how to engage the university community. While such activity may not be work, there is potential for visits during lunch breaks or after work, presenting some challenges as to how the BJL frames these spaces and their use. This indicates the potential for future research to investigate how the public spaces of the BJL are seen by the university community.

For academic libraries, there is a delicate balance to strike in neoliberal HE. Openness and public engagement are good for institutional reputation and can encourage more people onto campus, breaking down barriers to future study. As discussed in Chapter 3, free or public access to university libraries can lead to the question of the value they offer students. It can lead to the question that if students are paying tuition fees to a university, why should the library they fund make resources available to those that do not pay. This is an excellent example of the conflict between HE as a public good and as a business delivering value to customers.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has identified that there are four crucial aspects of the meaning of the academic library for participants. To them, 'academic library' represents resource collections, social interaction, physical space, and exclusivity. Without intending, this is perhaps well summarised by Student 9:

*so there's books, book shelves, students working on computers, on books laptops and just, generally, educating themselves thousands of people surrounded by other people studying.*

While the literature review did construct a new definition, this chapter has demonstrated that participant views of 'academic library' more readily reflect the



dated dictionary definitions of 'library'. This suggests that despite the wide-ranging changes to academic libraries driven by globalisation, neoliberalisation and technological development, older ideologies of the library still propagate. As argued in the literature review, these definitions are no longer an accurate representation of academic libraries. This is a concrete example of the issue set out in the introduction. If the way in which academic libraries are perceived and defined is seen as dated, they are spaces that risk redundancy. As Gayton (2008:60) argued, this is the 'plight' that academic libraries face. This shows there is still a strong tendency to focus on classical imaginaries of 'library' when discussing what the 'academic library' means.

Through reference to information, books, journals, knowledge and other library resources, the idea of the library as a collection was the most significant theme identified in answer to SQ2. It was often the first thing participants discussed, it was the thing they talked about the most, and it was also the focus of many of the LEGO® models built by participants. The library, as a collection was the foremost idea that participants attributed to the meaning of the library. As suggested above, very much channelled the classic definition of a library as introduced in the literature review, framing the library a 'building, room or set of rooms, containing a collection of books' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d:206). There was, however, an important distinction in the findings of this chapter relating to how the collection is discussed. Many participants readily acknowledged the collection is more than just books, unlike the dictionary definitions which solely focused on this. While this reflects a better acknowledgement of the broader collections held within academic libraries, this was not recognised by all participants. As discussed above, this is a significant problem for the neoliberal academic library. Another important aspect of academic library collections were electronic resources. While this served as another distinction participants drew between 'library' and 'academic library', it ultimately does not reflect the real value academic libraries present to library users.

In reference to library users and library staff, social interactions were also identified as a significant aspect of the academic library. People were often framed as helpful, supportive, and an essential part of the environment. However, while positive aspects of 'people' dominated models, some participants framed them as disruptive, noisy,

and inconsiderate. The importance of library users in the way participants defined library also hints at how the academic library is socially defined. It would clearly be a different space without the people within it. It was here that the findings drew distinction from the literature. Defining the library as librarian (Radford & Radford, 2001; Sennyey et al., 2009) very much aligned to all of the references to library staff. The emergence of (other) library users as of equal importance to the meaning of the library is something distinct.

Physical space has, historically, always been a central component of any library. The dramatic increase in electronic resources and the framing of the library as a platform place the importance of physical space at risk. This was something acknowledged in the literature and formed one of the distinct threats that academic libraries face. This chapter has, however, demonstrated an acknowledgement of physical library space as still relevant. While other spaces are available to study, there was still something about the library that makes it a desirable place to be. This is, perhaps, the most essential element that will stop libraries from becoming redundant spaces.

Finally, the answer to this SQ has identified the main distinction between 'library' and 'academic library' as that of their audience, or whom they are designed for. Here participants suggested academic libraries were exclusive spaces designed for students, academics and researchers, excluding members of the public and those not a member of an institution. To some extent, the BJL was recognised as an exception to this. The public gallery, exhibition space and café were acknowledged as public spaces. There was, however, no reference to use of the rest of the library by public audiences.

This chapter has successfully identified collections, social interactions, physical space and exclusivity as the concepts at the root of what 'academic library' means. The next chapter, however, looks at experience instead of meaning – and does not produce the same answers. Chapter 6 will show how the reality of how the academic library experience is very different from how people talk about libraries.

## Chapter 6 – Experiencing the Brynmor Jones Library

While this chapter may be about the experiential aspect of library space, it is better considered as a chapter on the experience of one particular *place*, the BJL. As shown in Chapter 4, it is through place that the conceived, perceived and lived spaces are exposed. As Chapter 3 has argued, the BJL is an example of the neoliberal academic library. As experience is an essential component of understanding the neoliberal academic library, the following part of this thesis focuses on exploring this in more detail. It is through the case study of the BJL that this thesis shows how physical library space is experienced, felt and lived as a place.

Drawing on both the focus group data and my observations, this chapter addresses SQ3: how do academic library users experience, feel and live physical library spaces? This allows consideration of not just what is said about the BJL, but also the unspoken practices that occur within it. This chapter relies heavily on critical realism's ability to account for subjective interpretations, perceptions and experiences (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014:5). As it is focused on the case study, the sections below do not aim to present a definitive representation of academic library experience, but instead share glimpses into the six most interesting (and dominant) ways in which the BJL is experienced. This is very much grounded in my observations and reflections, cross-referenced with findings from the focus groups. This also means that the presentation of these findings takes a different literary approach to the thesis so far. As the answer to this question includes observations, there will be narrative aspects to the presentation of observational data. This also allows me to approach my observations reflexively, also accounting for my feelings and rhythms, based on Lefebvre's (2013) writing.

This presents a distinct perspective on the academic library compared to Chapter 5. While the academic library may be associated with collections, social interactions, physical space, and exclusivity in definition, it is far more in experience. The consideration of how the BJL is 'felt', in particular, shows the affective quality of the Lefebvrian perceived space and how it can be feelings more than thought that frame space (Lefebvre, 1991). This is reflected in the following sub-sections. This chapter is by no means exhaustive as it would be impossible to present every single way the BJL is

experienced. Instead, this chapter focuses on the six dominant themes constructed in answer to SQ3, identifying the most prominent experiences identified in this research.

### 6.1 BJL as a place of learning

Library desks full of books, handwritten notes, ring binders, pencil cases, pens and printed lecture slides were a typical sight in most of my observations of the BJL and its study spaces. These are just some of the artefacts that hint at the BJL as a space of learning, with Figure 6-1 and Figure 6-2 showing some of my sketches of these scenes. While from observation alone, it is not possible to tell if people are cognitively engaging in learning, it certainly looked like it and what I heard in the library only confirmed this. Sometimes groups of students would be discussing a problem aloud, particularly in the social study spaces of the tower block or the seventh floor. Other spaces, mainly the Reading Room, were characterised by relative silence with individualised work being the norm. Unsurprisingly my observations identified both computers and laptops were featured in the study practices of nearly every single library user observed. It is, however, also important to acknowledge that some users were not using electronic devices, sitting and reading or writing. The BJL is far from an all-digital space.

Sitting in the spaces of the library for my observations, I could almost 'feel' the learning as though it was a tangible aspect of the BJL. The artefacts, the discussions and sometimes even the quiet all hinted at this. This was only affirmed by watching library users, most of whom were students, engaging in their work. Sometimes they appeared focused, concentrating on the materials in front of them, other times distracted, engaging in socialisation or procrastination, which are also elements of learning whether acknowledged or not. The feeling of the BJL as a space of learning is not something I experienced alone, with the focus group data in this section demonstrating how this was also conceptualised by participants.



Figure 6-1 Reading Room observation notes (November [Study time] Afternoon)



Figure 6-2 Reading Room observation notes (January [Exam time] Lunchtime)

It was not through observation alone that the association between the BJL and learning emerged. The focus groups also identified the BJL as a space of learning and study, framing it as a central experience of the library for students (including volunteers).

*This is me, studying and reading all the time, even on weekends ... I have a lot of distractors so in fact, I prefer to study here because I feel more comfortable. (Student 4)*

*it's like staged or stepped because I was thinking about, everybody's at different levels learn and then go into a library you know all at the same point or you know all going for the same reason. (Student 10)*

While students discussed their experiences of learning in the context of the BJL directly, academics and library staff also acknowledged these as crucial for students.

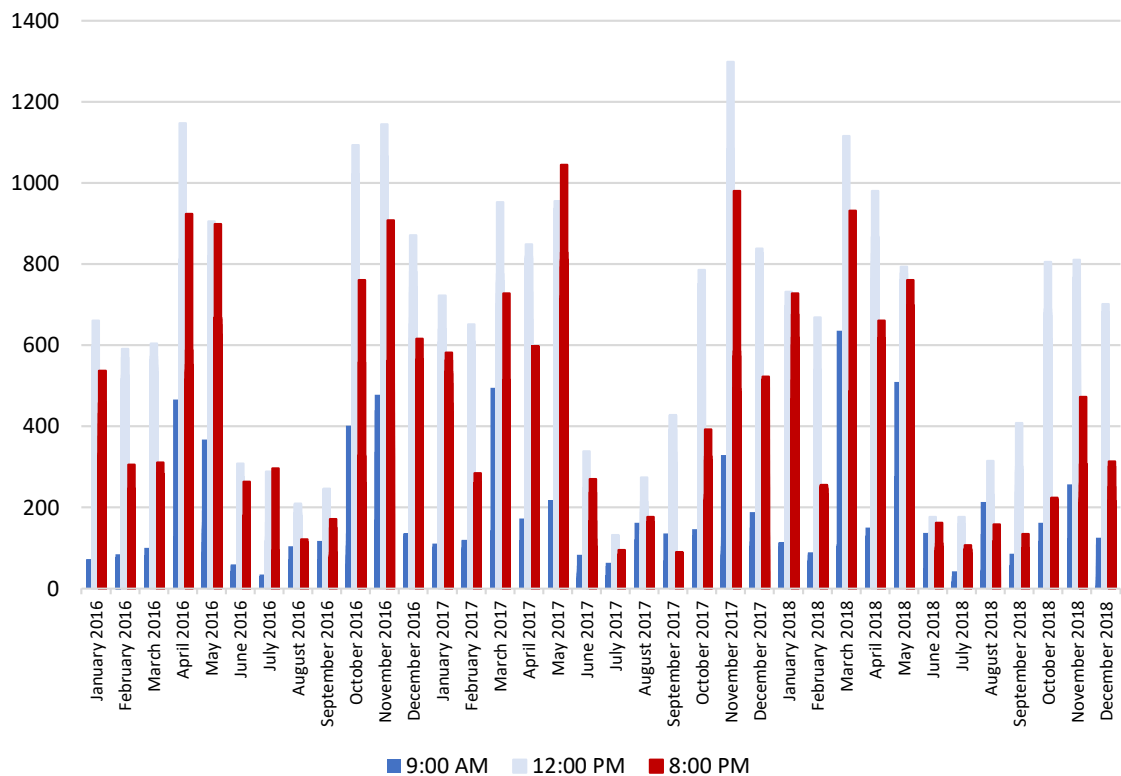
*I've got erm, some plants, erm, not because I think you traditionally get plants in libraries but more to do with this idea of blossoming out that erm, not only ideas but also the people who use libraries. It's a way of personally blossoming into what they want to be (Library staff 15)*

While academics did not frame the library as a space for their learning, they did at least recognise the importance of this for their students.

So far, the lived experience of the BJL as a place of learning serves as a distinction from how the academic library was understood by participants. The previous chapter showed a focus on the academic library as a container and repository for the collection. This gave little consideration to how the collection was used and how the library facilitates this. In looking at how the BJL as an academic library is experienced, however, it is learning – not collections that come to the fore. While this reflects Bennett's (2003; 2009) learner-centred paradigm of the library, Bennett also suggested the book-centred and reader-centred paradigms were historical. This may be accurate when looking at how academic libraries are experienced (SQ3), but it is not reflected in what they mean to people (SQ2). Here a contradiction is demonstrated. While library users may actively engage in learning in their use of the academic library, this is realised in their experiences and not how they talk about libraries.

The experience of the BJL as a learning space had a definitive rhythm when considered over the academic year. The BJL's desks and the other scenes of study were busier and messier as the trimester moved from induction to teaching weeks. Things would peak before assessment periods and then slow down as the examination period progressed, presumably because more and more students would finish their studies for the trimester. This was indeed expected and reflected in the gate entry counts presented in the methodology (see Figure 4-2, page 89). This rhythm was also shaped across the times the BJL was in use. Daily rhythms varied, with students working later into the evening and across the weekends more often as the trimester progressed. This too, was shown in the BJL's data. Figure 6-3 (below) shows how occupancy at 8 pm peaks in November, the height of trimester 1's study period each year, dipping in December as

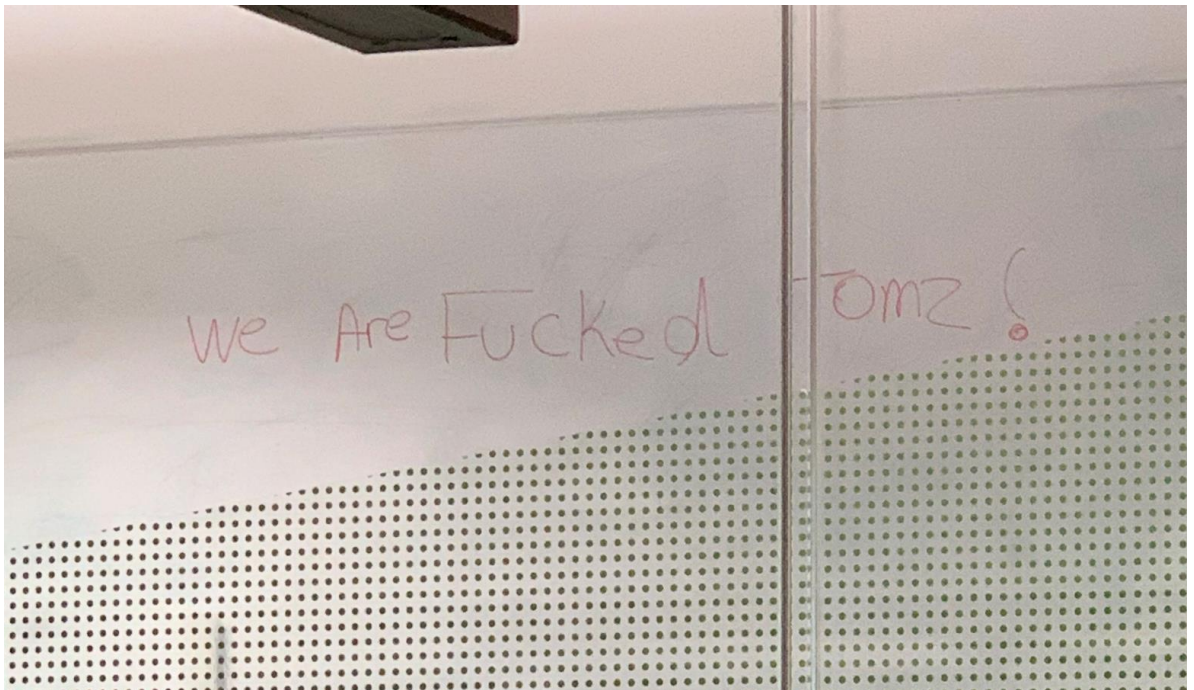
the Christmas break approaches. The next significant peak comes in trimester 2, with evening occupancy going up in April and May as the assessment period approaches. This pattern varies but is still reflected across the last three years of data. Not only does this data show specific pressure points for study and learning in the trimester, but it also shows how library space is not static, it evolves over time, as does the experience of it.



**Figure 6-3 Library occupancy at 9 am, 12 pm and 8 pm**

These rhythms did not just result in the library being busy and quiet. What I had not expected was a notable change in the atmosphere this brought, with the pressure and stress growing more visible and tangible as the trimester progressed. Relatively relaxed students in the first few weeks of trimester were replaced by groups that looked stressed, tired and under pressure by exam time. My most notable observation of this distress was a loud group of students discussing their revision woes in front of a whiteboard with the phrase ‘We are fucked tmoz!’ scrawled across it. This was in one of the Group Learning Rooms in the tower block, right in the middle of the January exam period (Figure 6-4). While this is not to suggest all users felt this way, it does illustrate how the deadlines associated with exams and assessment due dates

influence the BJL's spaces too. This can, at times, frame the library as a space of anxiety and stress, both of which can be associated with learning.



**Figure 6-4 'We Are Fucked Tomz!'**

Focus group data also supported these observations. In the same way that the idea of learning and the BJL was represented in the focus group data, so too were the negatives associated with learning. Participants acknowledged that learning could be at times challenging, uncomfortable and problematic.

*You're stressed out, cry over a book, but, you study by yourself- so you think you're going to work because there'll be no distractions. Then you're like- Oh my God I can't cope! And then there's a load of people around you, but they're doing their own thing, because they're doing the same thing as you. So it's pretty much-. you're done You have to just get through it. (Student 9)*

As the BJL is the site of learning and study for many students, it is also sometimes the space in which the stress and upset of study take place.

*Again, I don't know if anyone else has seen it, but the number of people that have breakdowns in the library, start crying. It's happened quite a few times... (Student 16)*



There are times that it may be the library space or environment that contributes to the stress of some students.

*not necessary just because they're in the library but [students] are stressed due to distractions and other things getting in the way of which some of the aspects of the library space may be contributing.  
(Academic 2)*

As the later section titled *BJL as place of perplexity* shows, the library is often the cause of problems for some students.

Furthermore, as learning is an inherently problematic process, it is no doubt that the feelings associated with this also become linked to the spaces they are felt within. Student 3 represented the challenges of study well in their model (Figure 6-5) and the narrative behind it.

*it's full of knowledge and that some of it is very clear hence the clear bricks some of it is much more opaque and some of it is totally impenetrable to me (Student 3)*

This is a good representation of the challenges of learning, particularly from high-level reading. There is a chance that the library can become associated with these challenges and stresses, especially if it is the environment and distractions that are the cause of the upset. This is especially the case when reading or finding materials is the cause of stress or upset. As Chapter 5 shows, libraries are foremost associated with their collections. When it is the reading of materials in the library collection that is problematic, it is easy to see how the library becomes associated with this.



**Figure 6-5 The tower of knowledge (Student 3)**

The strong association of the BJL and learning is unsurprising. After all, academic libraries are designed for ‘academic pursuits’ (Lopatovska & Regalado, 2016:393), most of which are processes of learning. Material activities of learning like reading, writing and research were witnessed throughout all the spaces of the BJL. As this section has shown, the experience of the academic library as a place of learning can be problematic. Learning is not always a positive experience, and some of the negatives of learning are ultimately experienced in the BJL. This is a contrast to the meaning of the academic library, as presented in Chapter 5, which was mostly positive. This shows that while the abstract meaning of an academic library is positive, the lived experience of this can, at times, be messier. This is because as a place of learning, the library is also a place of stress, anxiety, and other emotions. Participants did not draw this link explicitly, but it was heavily inferred and implied. This means the academic library is associated with both the positive and negative aspects of learning.

## 6.2 BJL as a place of community

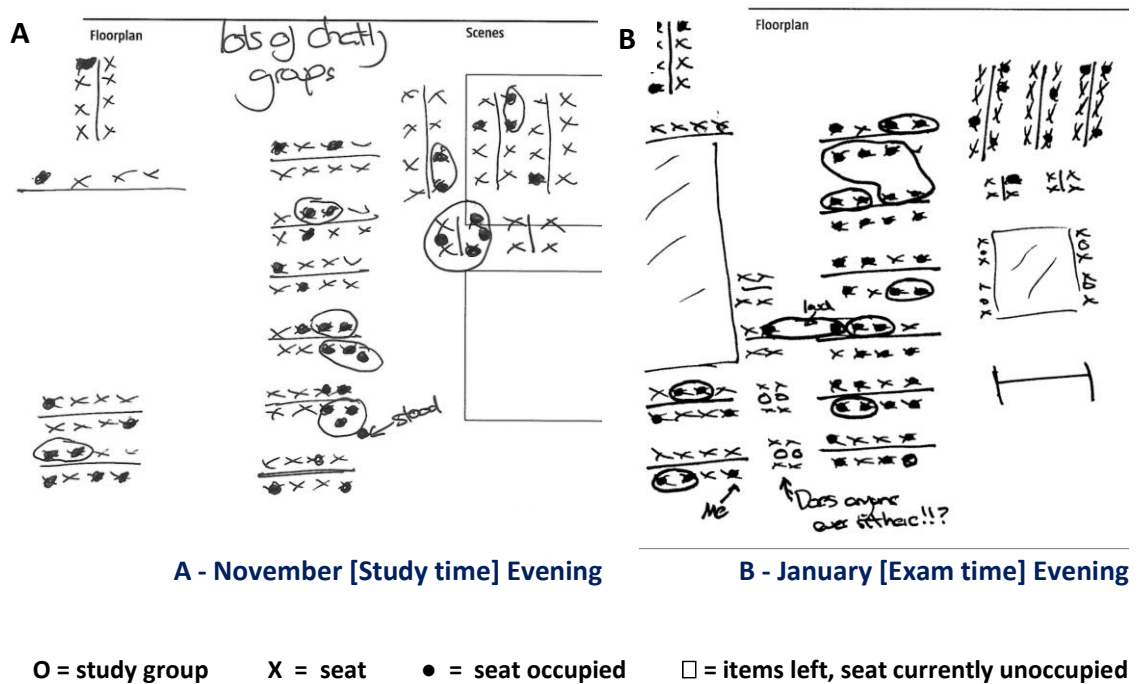
The BJL as a community space was a common theme in the observations. It was impossible to miss. In most spaces, except for the Reading Room, I would see students sat in groups talking and/or working together. Indeed, at times the noise from so many people talking was deafening, particularly on the ground floor, first floor and seventh floor. There were a couple of times that I even struggled to think while making my observation notes because there was so much background noise. When sitting in any library space, it is impossible not to acknowledge the noise, for better or worse, as part of that space. This is, however, also a reflection on how the library is experienced by individuals. While the noise did not, at times work for me, it seemed fine for those using the space. Given that social activity formed an aspect of most library spaces, it is fair to argue that – without question – there is a communal and social aspect to the BJL. This community, however, is one built of students. This is because students formed most of the observed users and user groups.

My choice of the word ‘community’ was carefully designed to represent the experience of the BJL as I observed it, going beyond the frame of social interaction, as discussed in Chapter 5. It was also a word used by participants to reference their experiences in the building

*But it's that community element of it that is so important. You can go on any floor, and they are students from the ground floor where you get the coffee, to floor seven where they're, having conversations, whether they're writing, just looking out the window, contemplating life, what do when I leave here? (Academic 4)*

As the physical space is predominantly used by students, this means most library users share this common identity, and all have a common goal in their studies. I also noted communal activities, occasionally observed students helping each other, even when it was clear they did not know each other. This would often involve technological help with computers or directions. Indeed, Montgomery (2014) suggests that community is an essential aspect of learning within the academic library, and my observations support this. The idea of community represents more than learning. I would often see students come across friends without intention. On the first floor of the BJL, I would frequently see students suddenly stop on their way to the Reading Room or the

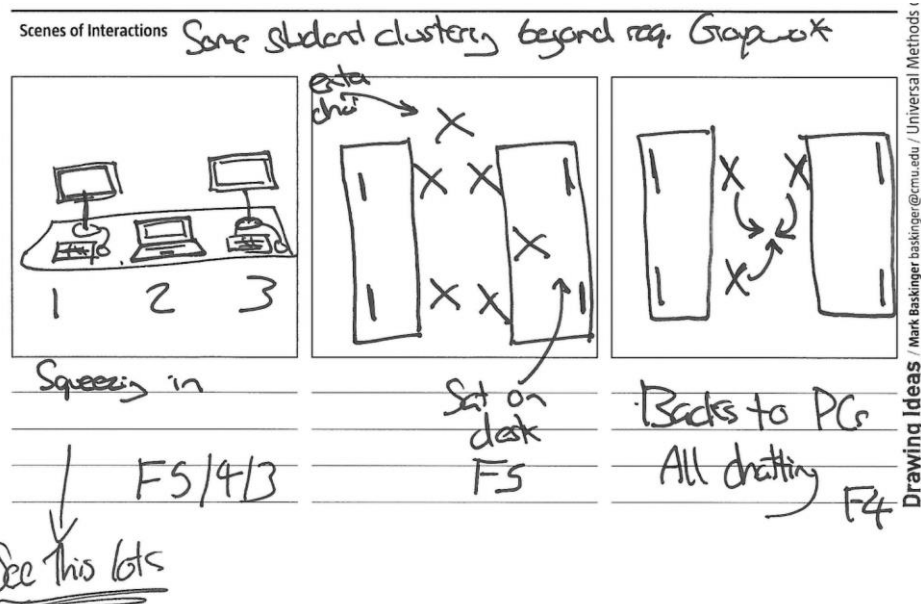
elevators when they spotted someone they knew, changing directions to sit and join them. These interactions suggest the kind of ‘communal activity’ and commonality that define a community (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019c). Considering social interaction was determined as an essential aspect of what the academic library means in Chapter 5, it is perhaps no surprise to find community framed as an essential aspect of experiencing the BJL. The previous chapter, however, does not hint at the broader implications of this, the associated rhythms, or how deeply this permeated the experience of the library.



**Figure 6-6 First floor observation notes**

Figure 6-6 (above) is typical of my first-floor observations, identifying groups of students studying together (indicated by circles). Even though this seems to be a space built for personal study due to the large individual spaces, in practice, it was a space people purposefully sat in groups. Groups would choose spaces far apart when the library is quiet, defining an area for their group. As the floor would get busier, the gaps in-between would fill. Figure 6-7 (below) shows similar patterns occur further up in the tower block, with students clustering together in a variety of ways. While there are specific areas conceived for group study, this mostly occurred around computer desks, reflecting the lack of computer-based group workspaces. For students, this did not seem to be a problem as the spacious desk sizes allow multiple people to work on the

same desk. As such, it was common for chairs to be rearranged to facilitate this. There were many times I would observe students more focused on talking to one another than focusing on their computer or the work in front of them. It is, however, equally important to acknowledge that this does not necessarily mean they were not working. After all, learning can necessitate conversation.



**Figure 6-7 Tower block observation (November [Study time] Morning)**

In considering the BJL as a place of community, it is crucial to acknowledge inclusion as an essential part of this. Inclusion was well documented in my observations, with diversity serving as something I noted across all spaces within the library. By this, I mean the BJL is well utilised by home and international; young and mature; and, male and female students. While these are crude categorisations, these are the only ones that can be observable with some reliability, while taking care not to conflate race, culture and/or religion with fee status (home, EU, international). While it is hard to say more than this in observation without making assumptions, this shows the BJL to be a multicultural, multi-aged and multi-gendered space, which makes working within the BJL feel like an inclusive environment. No groups of users stood out as looking uncomfortable, and there was no reference to any aspect of demographic exclusion within the focus groups. Inclusion also supports the above argument that the BJL is a safe space, with diversity and inclusion forming an essential part of students feelings of safety (ACRL, 2019).



**Figure 6-8 Different backgrounds, different cultures (Student 18)**

Surprisingly, inclusion was something addressed within the focus groups, cross-referencing this theme with the observations. Participants indicated inclusion was something that they appreciated, and LEGO® Minifigures were often used creatively to represent this diversity, well demonstrated in Figure 6-8 above which shows a strange ensemble of LEGO® Minifigures to reflect the broad range of library users in the BJL.

*many different cultures as you can see, there are students standing in a circle uh, handing together, uh showing their hands together, um uh and they represent different backgrounds, different cultures (Student 18)*

While the observations show the BJL to be a place of diversity, it also signifies something more substantial. The BJL is a place that all students felt they were included and welcome, and this was well represented in the focus groups. It is also important to acknowledge that my focus participants were diverse, representing several nationalities and they all referred to the BJL as a space they felt included. There was no discernible difference in the way the library was represented by race or gender.

There were some rhythms associated with demographic diversity, mainly linked to the academic year. There were, for example, notably more international students around holidays, which is when UK students would tend to go home. Similarly, late-night study tended to be used more by younger students as opposed to those classed as mature (over 21 when starting an undergraduate programme, or over 25 when starting a postgraduate programme).

While it may be an inclusive community space, the BJL is best represented as a closed community. The entry gates on the ground floor ensure only students and staff have access. As such, while the BJL is inclusive to the university community, the majority of the building is excluded to those outside of the university. This echoes the finding of Chapter 5, which framed the academic library as an exclusive space. While there was no mention of excluding certain people, all my observations were very much of students and academics of the University of Hull, with a few exceptions. Likewise, none of the participants suggested community extended much beyond the University of Hull when considering their experiences of the BJL. A defining aspect of the community experience in the BJL is perhaps one of safety.

Throughout all my observations, I saw no one counteract these barriers and crime in the BJL is always rare. Indeed, I was often shocked at the number of valuable items students would leave, unprotected as they took a break, used the toilet, or went to collect information resources. The feeling of safety was also raised in the focus groups, with the BJL firmly framed as a safe environment.

*it's a safe comfortable environment (Library Staff 16)*

*it's quiet a calm ... a safe place. (Student 13)*

Clearly, safety is an integral part of the BJL experience. This is also reflected in how the BJL is an inclusive space, with inclusivity serving as an essential part of making people feel safe. As the BJL is open 24-hours a day, it is fair to argue that safety is a fundamental feeling to engender. While it may seem strange to attribute this to community, it is fair to argue that if library users were to come to harm, it would most likely be from other people. Ravenwood et al. (2015) identify several factors as necessary when considering 24-hour opening. This includes staffing, security

personnel, the security of the site, design of the library, CCTV and many other factors. This is an essential concern for neoliberal academic libraries with 24% of universities offering some form of 24-hour opening in the UK, with the figure much higher in the USA (Ravenwood et al., 2015:54).



**Figure 6-9 A place to gather with other students (Student 1 & 2)**

The determination of the BJL as a place of community was cross-referenced with the focus groups. Hints of the social experiences that frame the BJL as a place of community were frequently referenced across the LEGO® models, suggesting the BJL as a space to ‘hang out’ (Student 2), ‘chill’ (Student 9), ‘meet friends’ (Student 17) and ‘chat’ (Student 14). Community was also represented in many focus groups with the use of LEGO® Minifigures sat studying, chatting, or drinking coffee (see Figure 6-9). Such activities were represented as an important aspect of the BJL, with most participant models alluding to social experiences within BJL.

*I put them both sat down facing each other to sort of represent a more social aspect of libraries that you can talk to each other. It's not just to quiet reserved space anymore. You do have that, but you can also have some social interaction and you can sit down and chill. Probably would have put a table there with some coffee on as well at some point and a computer. (Library Staff 16)*



This was something users value the BJL for, providing both the spaces and the facilities for this kind of activity. This was acknowledged by all participant groups. It is also important to note that while the previous chapter acknowledged social interactions, a lot of this focused on library staff and the support for library users. In experience, there is a much stronger focus on student-to-student peer interaction.

It is fair to argue that the BJL is a community destination for the campus. As part of my observations, I witnessed many student clubs and societies using library spaces and teaching rooms to meet up on matters unrelated to their studies. One late afternoon in January, I even observed a student playing an electric guitar on the seventh floor. I was surprised by the lack of reaction from other students, perhaps demonstrating that this floor is a truly social space. The library was even framed by some participants as a space to be enjoyed with friends.

*it's maybe space where it's not just like studying. It's just like a place enjoy, to pass time, to be with friends and everything. (Student 12)*

*These two people here represent the people inside of the libraries as often from experience libraries are a very social place to grab a coffee, go for a drink, have a chat meet friends, study with friends. (Student 14)*

This suggests that socialisation in academic libraries is not always study-related. The BJL is a social space and social destination. For participants of certain faiths, the BJL was referenced as a particularly safe space for them to meet, especially on evenings as the café is open until late and alcohol is not served. This reflects the 'commons approach' to library space (Storey, 2015:570) discussed in Chapter 2. Libraries are beginning to offer a broader range of spaces for social activities. Even academics openly acknowledged the importance of this offer and discussed using the library socially themselves, particularly the café. Trembach et al. (2019) have shown that this is an essential aspect of academic libraries, particularly for members of the public. This is the embodiment of Gove's (2016) article, *How campus libraries became the place to read, pray, learn*.

When considering the BJL as a place of community, it was possible to identify rhythms within this experience of library space. While the data and observations above show

social interaction in groups, each group is also situated in a specific library space. All communal and social activities do not occur in isolation, but form rhythms within the wider environment. The actions of and noise from each group member form the rhythms of that group. As multiple groups congregate, the noise they generate becomes less distinct and more background as the rhythms and noises from multiple groups occupy the space. While still working or socialising in smaller groups, the noise they produce all contributes to the wider environment. While some may find this noise distracting (see the next section on solitude), for others, this may be a preferable environment that supports their study preferences (Hunter & Cox, 2014). The critical thing to note is that these rhythms are very much part of the space. As such, parts of the library become very different spaces dependent on how quiet or busy they are.

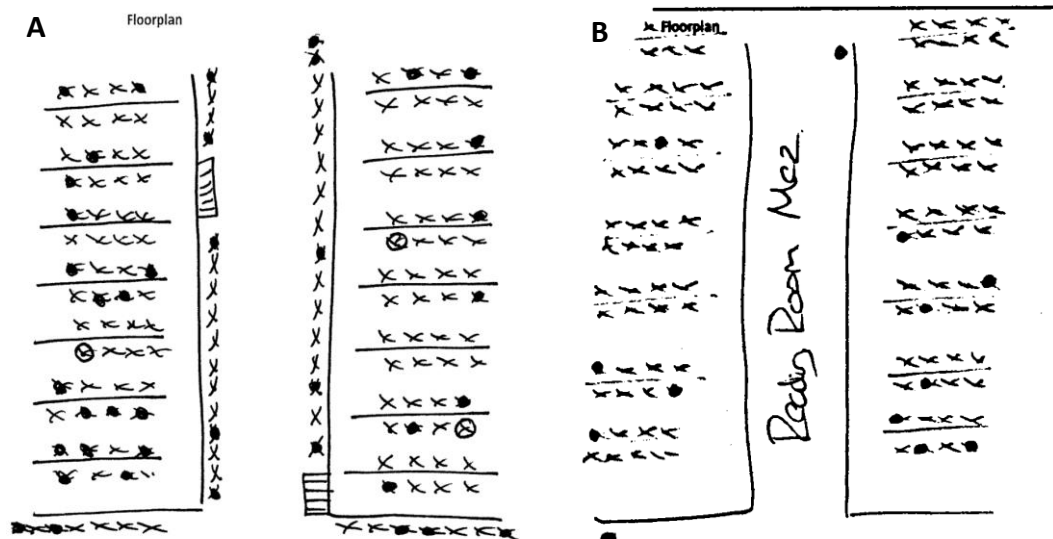
Considering the weight of literature on academic libraries and community (see examples: Oakfield, 2010; Closet-Crane, 2011; Doshi et al., 2014; Seal, 2015; Lewis, 2019), the emergence of the BJL as a community space is no surprise. The link between libraries and community is increasingly common, especially given the framing of library as commons (Storey, 2015; 2018; Guthro, 2019). This also echoed the findings of Chapter 5, which identified social interaction as an essential aspect of the meaning of academic library. While the experiences set out in this chapter are often based around small groups, it is their situation within the wider library environment that frames the BJL as a community space. Shared practices, goals and identities frame this experience. As argued above, the BJL is best thought of as a closed community, with the majority of the BJL spaces open only to students and staff at the University of Hull. While this is counter to some of the public aspects of the BJL's design, this echoes the idea of the academic library as an exclusive space as set out in Chapter 5. The study environments are exclusive spaces, arguably contributing to the feeling of safety that library users attributed to the BJL.

### 6.3 BJL as a place of solitude

Solitude is the state of being alone and is something that some library users chose to seek. In the context of this research, solitude is not to be confused with silence, social isolation or loneliness. While the BJL as a place of solitude may seem contradictory to it also being a place of community, the BJL was always going to be different things to

different people. In fact, the same observation notes from the previous section that identify social groups also identify many library users sat alone and far apart. In the same environment, I often observed some library users trying to work socially, while others were trying to seek the solitude of working alone. Framing the BJL as a place of solitude shows that as much as the library can be a space for people to get together, it can also be a space for people to get away from others. However, as this section will later demonstrate, solitude is not just a physical act of isolation. Solitude is more focused on the removal of distractions. It can also be a mental state, with some users finding they can seek solitude in even the busiest of library spaces.

Solitude was most noticeable in observations when users were physically isolating themselves from others. Indeed, I would often observe users sit as far away from others as possible, and this was observable in all locations in the BJL at some point. This is well demonstrated in Figure 6-10, showing library users spread out across the whole floor, with very few choosing to sit near anyone else. These drawings are perhaps more interesting for they are from observations of the Reading Room which is a silent study space anyway. Even when in a policed space, users still showed a preference for seeking solitude – or at least sitting alone.



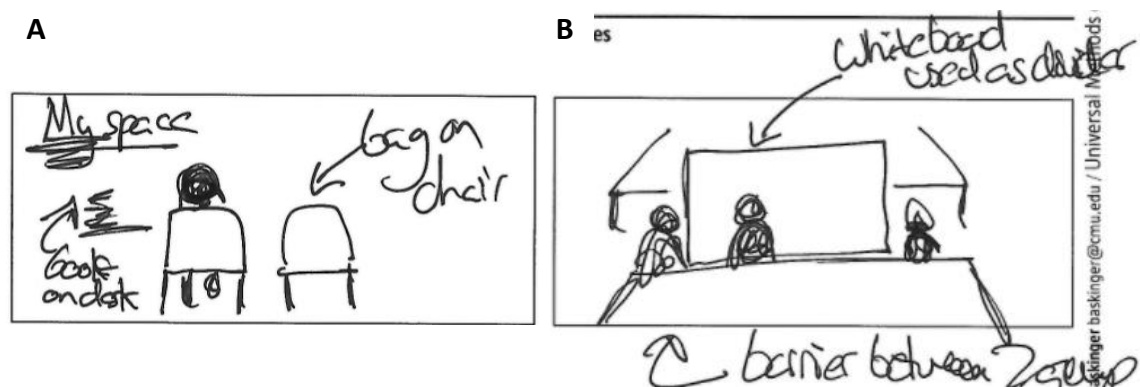
**A - January [Study time] Evening**

**B - September [Induction time] Evening**

X = seat • = seat occupied □ = items left, seat currently unoccupied

**Figure 6-10 Reading Room observation notes**

Library users would often rearrange the environment to create physical isolation, an aspect of solitude for many. This is despite the fact that, as introduced in Chapter 3, there are multiple spaces within the library designed for individual study. As the community section above showed, however, the spaces of the BJL are not always used in the way they were conceived. While carrels are popular in the tower blocks, students tended to create their own barriers where they did not exist. Figure 6-11 is a good example of this, demonstrating two common observations. In the first sketch (A), a student created defensible space by putting a large stack of books on the desk to build a wall between themselves and the next person. In the other direction, they put their bag on the chair, in effect reserving a space designed for two, just for themselves. In the second sketch (B), three students working on the seventh floor used one of the whiteboards on wheels to build a barrier between themselves and the rest of the floor. Both practices were frequently observed and show how students lightly manipulate the environment around them to shape their experience of library space. It also shows how solitude can be sought in even the busiest of spaces. While this may not reduce noise, many students were observed using earphones and headphones, which would mitigate the impact of any surrounding noise.



**Figure 6-11 Observations Reading Room (A) Floor 7 (B) (November [Study time] Evening).**

Out of all the spaces I observed, it was the Reading Room that perpetuated the feeling of solitude the most. As the BJL's only actively managed silent space, it is popular as this minimises many of the distractions. Amusingly, The Hull Tab (2015), an unofficial student newspaper framed the Reading Room as:

*the only quiet study area that actually stays quiet, most probably because the staff sat at the desk are judging everyone who breathes in their direction*

The Reading Room is very much a space designed to provide the opportunity to work alone, free of distractions and with limited background noise. This was something I noted in all my observations, that no matter the time of day, the room was full of people quietly reading, writing and typing. My observations often recorded the Reading Room as a busy space, particularly in study weeks and towards examinations where the room was nearing full, yet still relatively quiet. Although, as this section has so far demonstrated solitude does not necessarily need silence.

The idea of solitude as an aspect of experiencing the BJL was also a strong theme within the focus groups and was something participants drew attention to. Solitude was something all participant groups acknowledged, although there was a range of personal preferences expressed in favour of solitude or social study environments. Solitude was not something library users experienced by accident; it was intentionally sought. As Student 2 suggested:

*OK um, for me, a library is mainly about books and studying. Erm, I find coming to the library more of a private, personal experience. I do like that it can be a communal space but, for me personally, it's a place I can come to learn things and spend some time working on my own. (Student 2)*

Statements like this were framed as an opportunity to gain focus, away from other people, with study and reading serving as a personal experience. Participants did not suggest they were isolated, but that they were embracing the opportunity to be alone for study and research purposes. They decided to work like this.

*I'm not getting away from anything- it's just that I'm seeking solitude (Student 8)*

Roughly one-third of library staff and student participants referred to some aspect of their library experience as being about seeking space for themselves. Interestingly, all five academic participants referred to library space as offering the opportunity to get away and seek focus.

Solitude was generally framed as the removal of distractions by participants. Distractions are, however, intensely individualised and so interpretations of solitude also varied considerably. For student 12, noise, smells, and other people all served as potential distractions in the library space. When describing why they study in the tower block, they noted how the first floor was particularly distracting for them and so it was a space they avoided.

*Like during lunchtime it's always packed You can't find any computer in there so mostly I always avoid [first] floor... it's noisy, and people are like, sometimes like eating, so you can actually smell the food sometimes. Some people are like on a computer and on their laptop, they are doing two different things. So its kind of a little bit of a distracting environment so that's why I don't do that. (Student 12)*

For other library users, it was the noise that was the most common distraction.

*I usually study in the Reading Room because it's silent room (Student 5)*

*But as a user of a library personally, I actually feel I prefer the quiet spaces which are policed by a proper librarian who has got a proper librarian stare... The kind of structured environment of an old-fashioned research library or rare books reading room is precious to me. (Academic 5)*

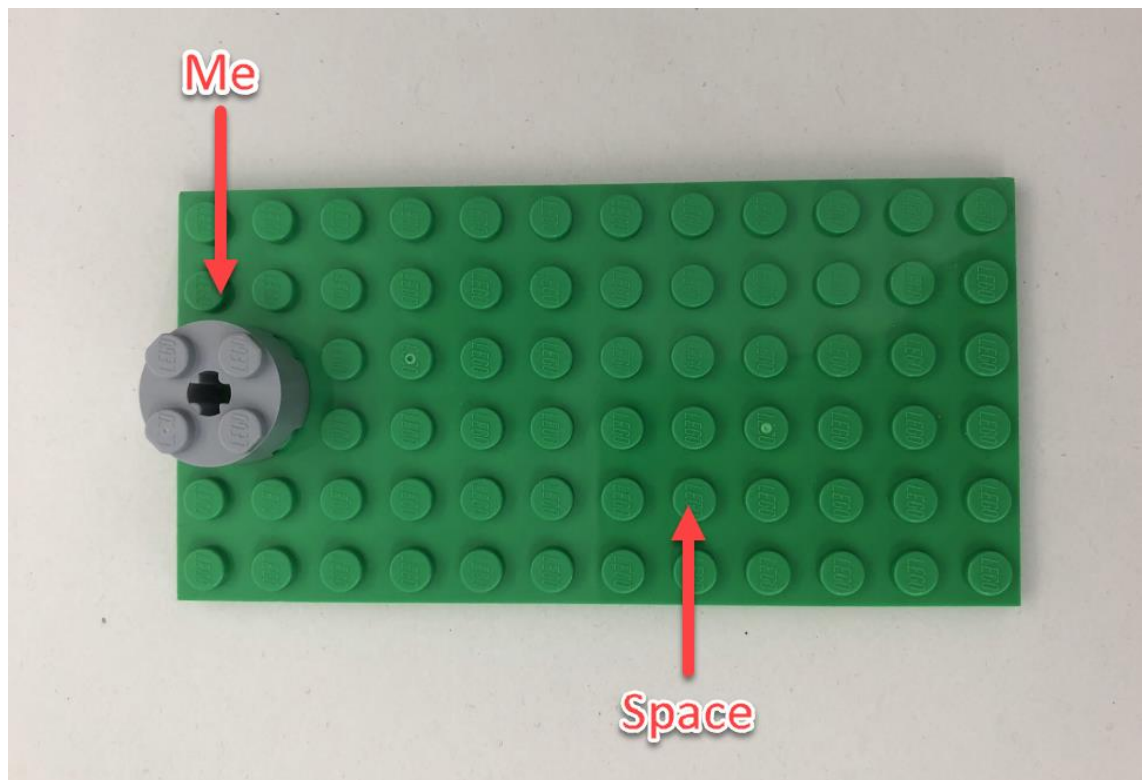
For such users, solitude requires less background noise or distractions. While quiet or silent study spaces may be a facilitator of this, it is also essential to consider how many library users are now reducing the impact of noise themselves. I frequently observed individuals wearing headphones and earphones. Classically, these could be used to drown out other noise. However, as technology has developed such devices can even include noise cancellation which, in effect, counter unwanted sounds with the inverse wave to produce silence. As such, library users can remove noise as a distraction in the busiest of spaces.

Solitude was an essential aspect of the library experience for some users. One student participant framed their whole experience of the library around it being a place to get away and find space just for themselves. This is demonstrated in their model (Figure 6-12), which highlights how important solitude is to the lived library experience for this student. Solitude is of particular importance to introverts (Choy & Goh, 2016), and

stands as one of the most valued functions for some users. This point was also raised by one of the academic participants:

*And the one thing I always say about consultations is, where do you put the introverts. Where do you allow people who are not neurotypical, who may find social situations stressful? (Academic 5)*

This expresses some concern that the BJL may focus too much on group, social, and informal learning as opposed to more 'traditional' quiet study spaces.



Handwritten annotations replaced to ensure anonymity

**Figure 6-12 Space to be alone (Student 8)**

In addition to the removal of distractions, solitude may be better represented as a state of mind.

*nearly a thousand people in the library and you all feel like you're there on your own. So it can be very intimate. It can be very individual- individualistic experience which is nice. (Student 13)*

For Student 12, their experience of solitude was powered by the fact that they were surrounded by others working. As their focus was on their individual project, they felt motivated by the others around them. This suggests solitude can be sought even in the

busier environments in the building, representing how people can still feel like they are working alone, even within a busy space. This experience was mirrored by many participants that framed the library as a 'prison'.

*I feel if I've gone into a library through this open door here, I can often feel a bit trapped that side with either deadlines or needing to do things. I think I have the keys for the jail cell so I can allow myself in and out but sometimes I feel as though I have to lock myself in a library to be able to do work properly or productively ... it's a mental lock... But obviously, I have the key. (Student 14)*

While prison has negative connotations, participants always made it clear it was a choice they embraced. They are not, of course, literally locked up. Student 4 used prison as an extended metaphor to liken their relationship with the BJL to that of prison (Figure 6-13). This was not to suggest they were held against their will, but that they needed to commit to (mentally) locking themselves away for their productivity. In effect, they had to commit to removing some of their free-will to focus on study. Student 4 suggested they needed that space and solitude to complete their work, and for them, the BJL provided that experience.



**Figure 6-13 The prison door (Student 4)**



While the experience of the BJL as a place of solitude is essential for many participants, it is not a preference everyone shares. Student 10's comments are an excellent example of this, negatively framing the Reading Room as too frantic for their use (Figure 6-14).

*I see them, they remind me of like soldiers, they are lined up in rows. Learning soldiers I've called them and then everybody's tapping. An orchestra of keyboard tappers, that's what it's like. And they're all frantic. Yeah, they come here to work frantically on the PCs. (Student 10)*

This shows that while the Reading Room may provide the opportunity for 'solitude' and quiet, focused work, this is not a preference for all users. Research shows that some students find this kind of environment too intense (Khoo et al., 2016). This is a good example of personal preferences and how the same conceived space can be seen and lived differently by people utilising the space.



**Figure 6-14 An army of tappers (Student 10)**

When considering the design of library spaces in the literature, there is often a focus on silent study spaces (Beard & Dale, 2010; Appleton et al., 2011) and quiet study spaces (Bruce, 2012; Andrews et al., 2016b; Khoo et al., 2016). Indeed, even HUU's (2011a) own campaign report focused on the need for silent study. This section has,

however, shown that it is a bit more complicated than that. It was rarely silence that library users wanted. They wanted their experience to be one of focus, without distraction or interruption. For some, it was the silence that brought them this experience. For others, it was isolation from distractions. Some users even suggested solitude was more a state of mind. No matter the individual preference, it was solitude that came to represent these experience of the BJL.

Surprisingly, solitude (or at least silence) did not emerge in Chapter 5, which focused on the meaning of academic library. As identified earlier, academic libraries were traditionally 'all about silent, concentrated, book-based study' (RIBAJ, 2015). While the book-based focus was realised in the way participants discussed academic libraries in Chapter 5, the idea of silence was absent. This chapter has shown, however, that noise levels are very important for some users, forming an essential part of their lived experience of the BJL.

This section has shown how the BJL can be experienced as a place of solitude and how important it was for specific users. This kind of activity is something that was conceived in the BJL's design, and there are spaces within the BJL designed for individual study. The idea of spending time alone was fundamental to some participants, echoing the need for 'sanctuary space' within libraries (Choy & Goh, 2016:20), serving as spaces to get away from the noise and conversation of the group or collaborative spaces. While the Reading Room is the only silent study space, considering solitude as a cognitive state allows it to be sought anywhere. Indeed, many participants acknowledged that even when in busy environments, they were able to be productive and feel focused.

#### 6.4 BJL as a place of perplexity

Before the redevelopment, it was widely acknowledged that the BJL was a confusing space that was hard to navigate. A core part of the brief was to address some of these challenges, particularly wayfinding and anything else that impeded users.

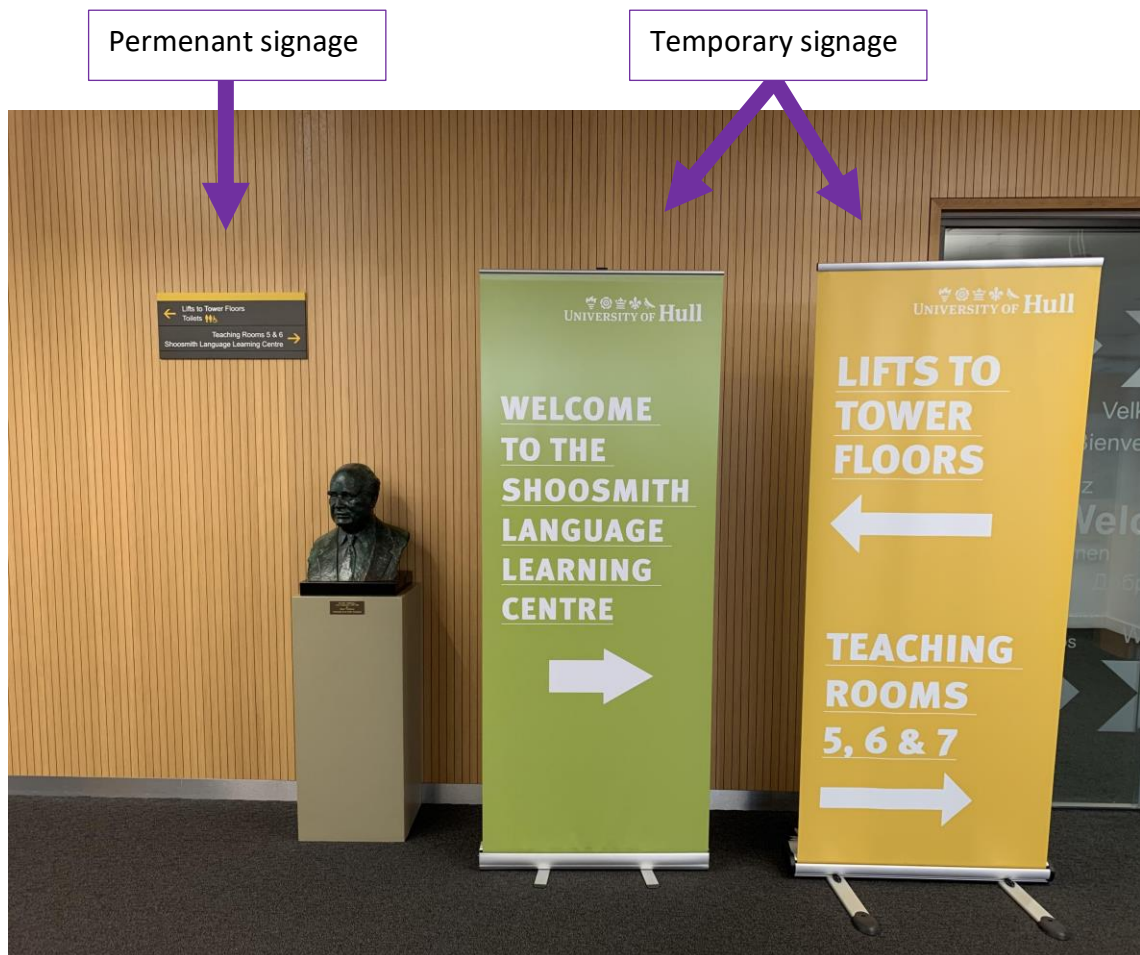
##### **Architect's view:**

The brief was to create a library for the 21st Century and move forward the agenda for university libraries, which had been through a period of rapid change over the last decade. This open brief was

supplemented by a rigorous audit of the university's requirements: this looked at the challenges of the existing space and how it impeded interaction between students and staff as well as how insensitive alterations to the fabric of the building hindered the previous wayfinding strategy. (Mark, 2015)

Despite the intention to address these issues in the redevelopment, some of them remain. In my observations, I would see queues of students at the Welcome Desk asking for directions. This was a common sight in the induction period. Sometimes students needed to get directions around the broader campus, but most often it related to the BJL, mainly how to find teaching rooms and the Reading Room. Indeed, across all my observations, it was commonplace to see library users seeking directions from library staff on the ground floor. However, this is not surprising as the Welcome Desk is the most accessible staffed point in the building. While this volume of enquires may be expected for the induction period, they continued for long enough to suggest the building may not be as intuitive as it was conceived.

While the requests have lessened dramatically compared to pre-redevelopment, as the observations mentioned above suggest the BJL may still not be the most intuitive building. Indeed, extra staff are needed to signpost students on the first floor throughout the first weeks of trimester because many students get lost. This is also not aided by the building's permanent signage which uses small text to detail important information like where the teaching spaces, toilets, lifts and stairs are (see Figure 6-15). For this reason, temporary signage is needed at the start of the welcome period in trimester one. Even so, well into November, I would still see students wandering around the first floor looking lost in my observations. Sometimes students would be looking for the Reading Room, eventually being pointed in the correct direction by a member of staff or another student. Often, I would see people walk into the wrong lift and then straight back out into the other set. This is because one set of lifts covers the ground floor through to floor two and the other set covers floor one through to floor seven. This often confuses library users. Library users looking lost (looking at walls for signage, asking for directions, reading signage, using maps) was a common feature, particularly in observations during the Welcome Weeks at the beginning of trimester one. This all suggests the building is not as intuitive as intended.



**Figure 6-15 Building signage**

Student participants highlighted distinct issues with the physical library space including poor building signage; challenging navigability and movement around the building; difficulty locating services and resources; and, confusion around which floors each of the elevators service. While improved wayfinding was something incorporated into the design brief (Mark, 2015), it is clearly not working for all users. Difficulties in navigating the building were a significant barrier for Student 10 (Figure 6-16 A & B).

*It's disorientating. It disorients me- this is disorientation. Erm, so this is, this is when I try and find a book that I want. So what happens is. I come in here and I get really hot. I go up in that annoying lift that takes you up one way and then opens the doors the other way. And then you have to walk across to go in another lift to go up. Yeah. Then I try and find the book on my own at first. This is me. Lost amongst all the books. So I end up having to- I should have put a person on here because I end up having to ask somebody, I can't find what I want. So that represents that. (Student 10)*

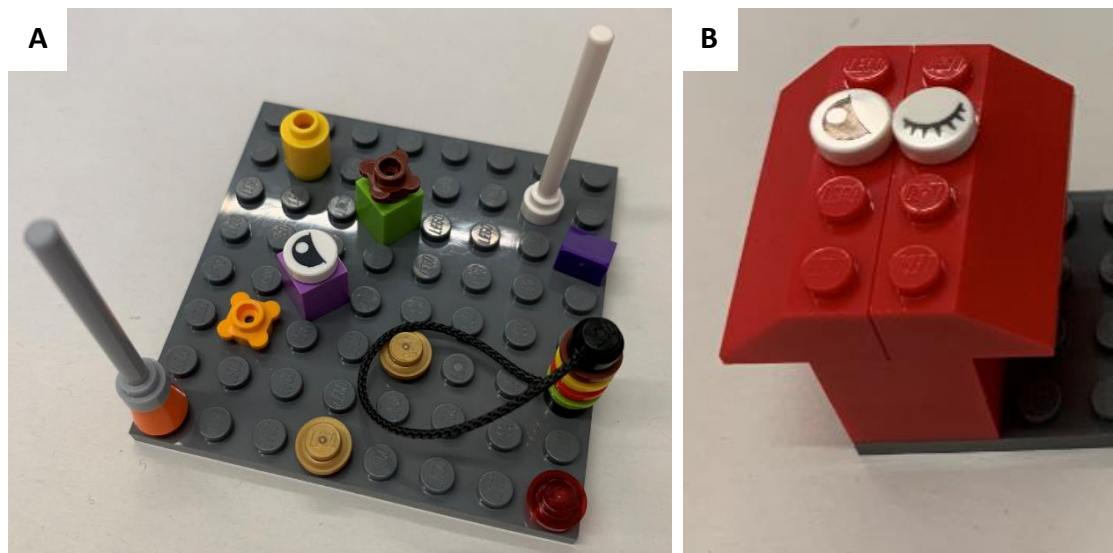
There was also concern over how some students may struggle with the technology in the BJL and how it is required to access library resources.

*It could be a fear of using technology, you know, because everything has- it's not just simply a case of looking for books it's actually how to find those books, and then they could feel slightly intimidated by that. (Student 19)*

Comments like this suggest there are problems with physical library space that are impacting on the user experience. While the BJL was designed to be easy to use and navigate (Mark, 2015), for some users, this is not the case. This demonstrates the way in which library space was conceived does not always deliver in reality as reflected in the way it is experienced and lived by users. Such issues with the physical library space were also acknowledged by library staff.

*Yeah, because it is overwhelming when you first come in, especially if it's such a big building because you don't know what direction you're supposed to go in- you don't know where to find the books. (Library Staff 13)*

This ultimately acknowledges that for some, the experience of the BJL can be disorientating, overwhelming and/or confusing.



**Figure 6-16 Too confusing. Too hot. (Student 10)**

Another specific example of the *BJL as a place of perplexity* comes from the entry gates (Figure 6-17). For the first three weeks of trimester one, my ground floor observations were dominated by the issues and problems associated with the entry gates. For the

full length of each observation, I would witness student after student having difficulty with the system before eventually seeking help from library staff. The entry gates beep and display an error every time someone stands too close, when it detects a new student card not yet on the system or when two people try to go through at once. The result was a constant stream of warning beeps from the gates and confused looks from library users – most likely wondering why they could not get in. What should have been a seamless rhythm of people smoothly entering and exiting the library was a constant arrhythmia perpetuated by warning sounds. This did not make the library look welcoming, and it was clearly disruptive to the library staff working at the Welcome Desk.

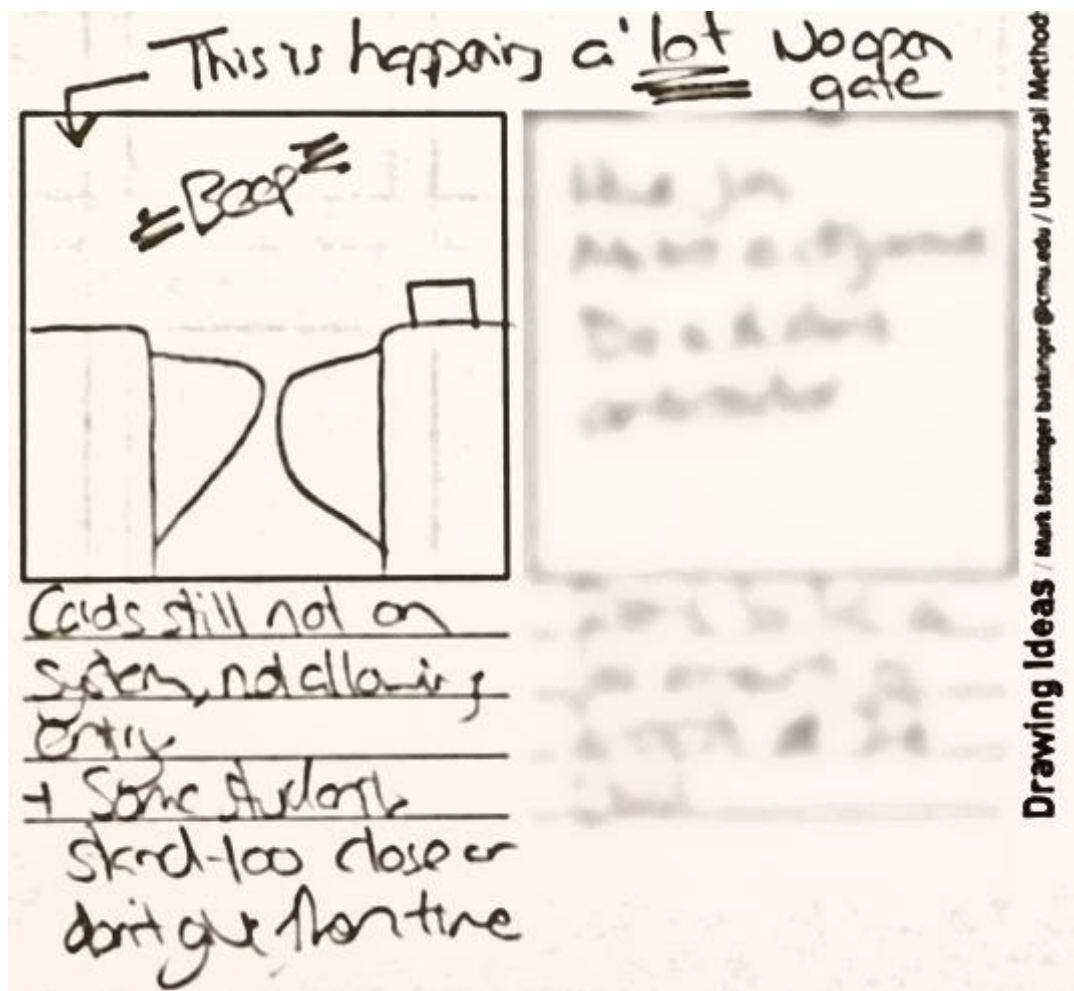


Figure 6-17 Ground floor observation one morning in Welcome Week

There are several consequences of the BJL being an awkward space to navigate and use. This is one of the reasons why it is a source of perplexity and occasionally stress for some users. The BJL is likely to be vastly different from the libraries used by students before, particularly those undertaking their first degree.

*You go in and you're like, this is a place for storing and consuming and learning, erm, of just knowledge and that can be quite daunting (Student 13)*

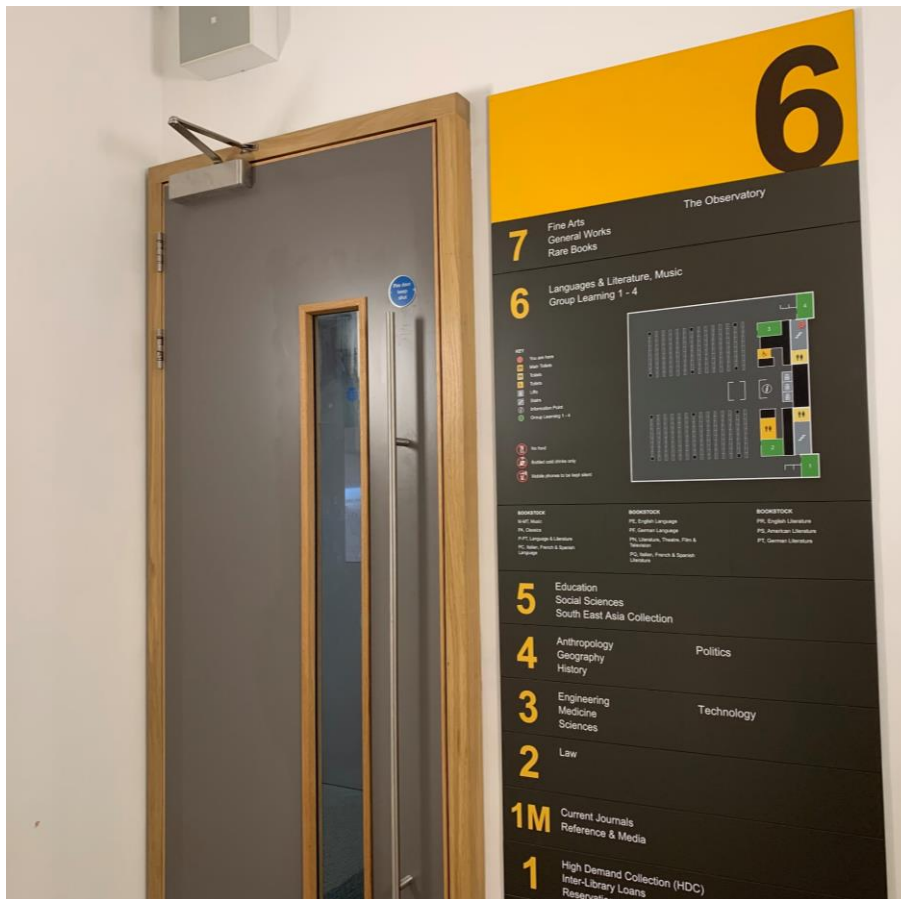
This means users will be unfamiliar with how to use and navigate such a potentially daunting space. This was also acknowledged by library staff, who noted how the physical library space could sometimes be a barrier to those who are unfamiliar with the space.

*I feel like if you were a student coming in you can be confronted by these wide-open spaces, [...] there is very little signage, very little explanation of the spaces in the library so, you come in and you just see things and you're not necessarily sure what, what you're going to do with them, or what's appropriate, or whatever. (Library Staff 12)*

Library Staff 12's comment is particularly pertinent as it suggests there is no instruction (literal or suggested) in the physical environment that states (or hints) how users should behave in specific library spaces. While the signage in the building indicates, for example, if a space is for quiet, silent or group study, these notices are inconspicuous (see Figure 6-18). Some students suggested that the most significant barriers to library use are often mental. It could be that their fellow students are not aware of what the library provides and how it can support their studies.

*I think it's a small group of people, that don't really realize the benefits of the library and don't really use it and utilize the different things that can be helpful in here (Student 1)*

This is always a perennial problem for libraries, and it remains challenging to try and increase engagement with students.



**Figure 6-18 Floor signage (door left for scale)**

Arrhythmia is perhaps the better recognition of the rhythms that define this experience of the BJL. It is a representation of when things do not quite go right. Lefebvre (2013) suggests such arrhythmias disorient users, disrupt activities, and disturb the everydayness of a space. This is seen in the BJL with users getting lost, not being able to find what they need or not even being able to get into the building. This was also well demonstrated in the above overview of the entry gates. Nevertheless, these small disruptions also work to define the space. Considering the importance of library staff support, as acknowledged in Chapter 5, there is also plenty of help available for those that need it. Staff time could, however, be better spent than standing in for poor signage.

As shown in Chapter 4, neoliberalism places focus on customer experience (Buschman, 2017) and in higher education, this focuses on student success and support. While the recognition of any library space as perplexing may seem an affront to this, it is essential to consider how this is dealt with. As this section has shown, arrhythmias in the use of library space can be disruptive for users. The vital thing to



note, however, is that users were supported through this. This research identified perplexity through the observation of staff helping students more than it did through the observation of students acting lost or confused. This still does happen, but it shows that while the BJL is a place of perplexity for some, it is mostly compensated by the support from library staff. As Chapter 5 identified, library staff and the support they offer is an essential aspect of the academic library.

This section has also echoed some of the findings on the BJL as a place of learning. As shown above, as learning can be problematic, there will be times that library users are anxious or stressed about their studies or work. Interestingly, these more negative aspects were not related to the meaning of the academic library, as discussed in Chapter 5. This suggests that the more problematic elements of the library experience are more realised in context when discussing a particular place.

### 6.5 BJL as a place of technology

*Actually, as much as I like books, I don't think I could do it without a computer to write (Academic 1)*

Technology is a core component of the library experience. Observations identified computers, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and other electronic devices were often the centre of users' activity (see Figure 6-19). Furthermore, the use of technology featured in every single observation, in every space and at every time of day. Even where users were reading or writing, most of the time, they were also using some form of an electronic device. In short, technology was ubiquitous and pervasive.

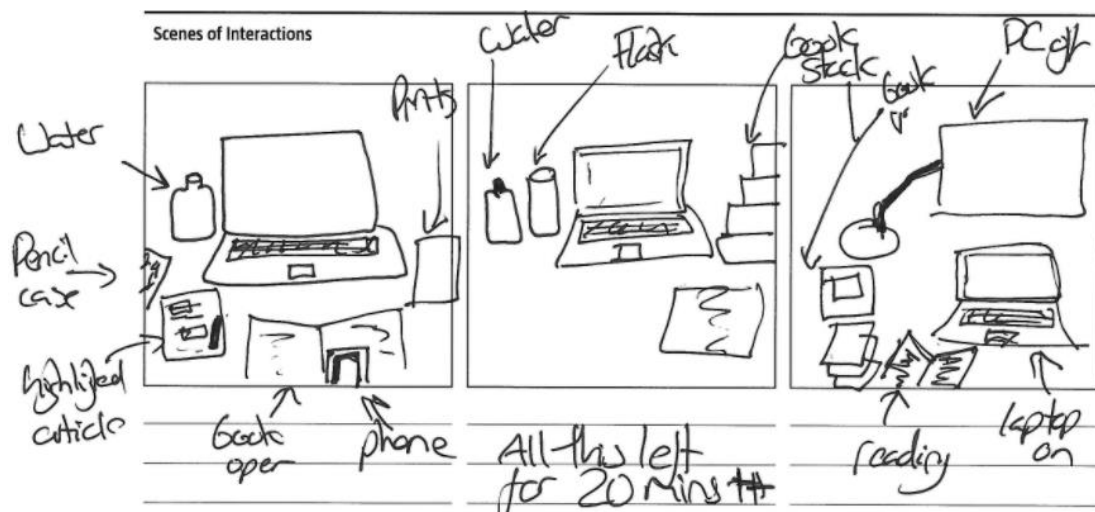
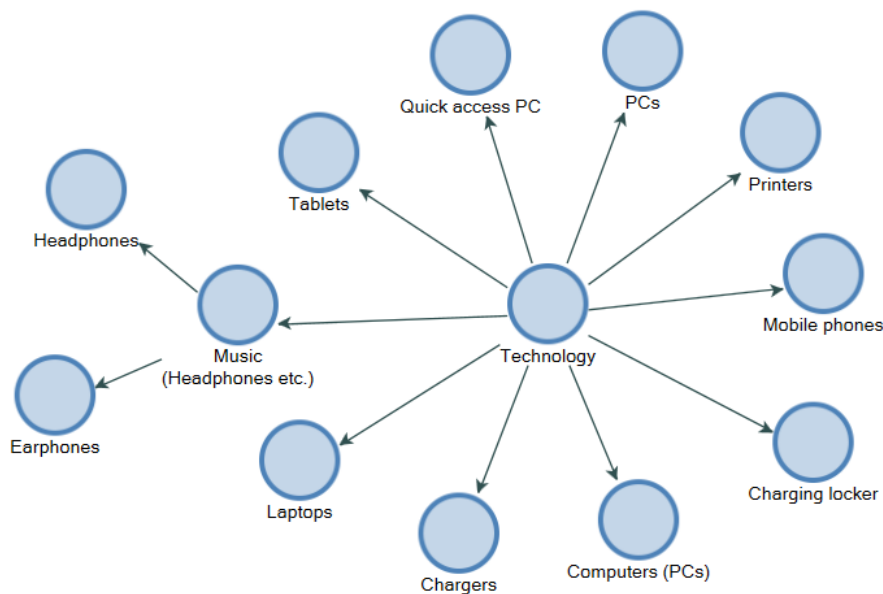


Figure 6-19 Reading Room observation an evening in November

Personal electronic devices, alongside those provided by the BJL (desktop computers, printers and free-hire laptops) were integrated into the practices and the rhythms of library users. For many users I observed arriving into a space within the BJL, their destination was a desktop computer or a free desk for the use of their own laptop. Logging into the computer or setting up the laptop was often one of the first interactions when users settled into a space. Sometimes a slow or broken computer may prompt a user to move to another desk, creating a minor disruption to a library user's flow. As the section above showed with the example of the entry gates, various other forms of technology can also be a source of disruption to the rhythms. As Lefebvre (2013) would identify, an arrhythmia. While problems with technology are usually small, there were some significant events like power cuts or Wi-Fi problems were experienced over the course of this research. These were significant sources of interference, even leading to the closure of the BJL in the case of the power cut showing how significant the disruption can be.



**Figure 6-20 Observation artefacts - Technology**

As already suggested, technology was one of the most prominent and observable aspects of the BJL. It was something all library users were engaging with and represented a sizable portion of all the artefacts library users were observed using (Figure 6-20). This is particularly the case with computers and laptops which were

observed in heavy use. Student 10 even drew attention to this, finding it strange that so many people came to the library to use computers and laptops:

*So from my perspective, this confuses me, because of the accessibility of technology now. So when I do see [other students], I think, why are they here. Don't they have PCs wherever they live? Laptops or devices?*

Even though device ownership may be widespread, library users still wanted to come and use the BJL and the technology it offered. This may be for many reasons, including access to specialised software, faster access to the internet, better processing power, or location of them within the library building. This may also explain why many observations identified students using their own laptops at the same time as desktop computers in the library. For whatever reason, library users still value access to computers in the BJL. It must also be acknowledged that some library users do not have home computers or internet access, making the BJL an even more valuable resource.

In the context of academic libraries, technology traditionally refers to computer access, Wi-Fi provision, sockets to charge laptops, printers, electronic catalogues, electronic resources, and the support of mobile devices. The literature, however, also considers makerspaces (Curry, 2017; Lee, 2017; Letnikova & Xu, 2017; Lotts, 2017), 3D printers (Moorefield-Lang, 2014; Letnikova & Xu, 2017), cloud/big data (Noh, 2015), and the associated user support (Curry, 2017; Schuck et al., 2017) as a growing element of the technology offered by academic libraries. Currently, the BJL does not offer such technology or support the affordances for it. While no participants drew attention to this, it is essential to make the distinction that when considering the BJL as a place of technology, it is very much well-established technologies that form part of this. Arguably, the absence of novel or innovative technologies may be the reason that technology is not acknowledged more in the context of the BJL. Indeed, the technological focus of the BJL is that of everyday items like computers and Wi-Fi, which are too ubiquitous to stand out.

Although rarely referenced directly, the use of technology was heavily implied by participants in the focus group discussions. When participants discussed searching,

their use of electronic resources, writing and/or studying, it is fair to assume this would need technology at some point as most of these activities require the use of computers. It is for this reason that the BJL was conceived to be a technologically enabled space (see Chapter 3). This also mirrors the focus on technology in the literature, which frames it as essential for learning (Bennett, 2003; Noh, 2015; Seal, 2015). Despite this, it is clear that library users do not necessarily see technology as an essential aspect of the BJL. Technology was also backgrounded in the LEGO® models participants built other than the occasional computer. There was almost no acknowledgement of the self-service machines or entry gates, despite the latter being identified as a potential barrier in the section above. Although technology was not regularly referenced by participants, through observation, it was possible to identify it as an integral aspect of the BJL's experience.

When considering how technology is experienced in the BJL, it is possible to identify how physical library spaces have influenced the use of technology. For example, the seventh-floor observatory has no wired desktop computers, making it no surprise that this space was the environment in which laptop use was most observed. This is a contrast to the ground floor where observations identified little use of laptops. Considering every desk on the ground floor has a wired desktop computer, there is little requirement for laptop use. Furthermore, as students were often observed leaving their laptops in the library tower block and Reading Room while taking a break or looking for resources, it makes sense that they are not left on the publicly accessible ground floor. These examples not only show how library use practices varied by space, but it shows how the conceived spaces influence such practices.

Technology does not just refer to the direct provision of computers, but also the support for people to use their own devices. As Hunter and Cox (2014) suggests, the environment's affordances have a significant impact, such as the provision adequate desk space for laptop use with the inclusion of accessible electric sockets for laptop chargers. As identified in Chapter 3, there are multiple spaces designed to enable the use of laptops and other personal devices, including large amounts of power socket availability and the inclusion of wall to wall Wi-Fi. Observations identified that these facilities are well used, with many students bringing their own devices and power

cables. Interestingly, the affordances for mobile devices have continued to shift since the opening of the re-developed library, requiring new connection cables for each of the Group Learning Rooms, allowing students to use the large screens with their own devices. Since opening, two free charging lockers have also been introduced, offering students the ability to charge mobile phones. These were installed on the ground and first floor and were often observed in use. Alongside the observed use of BYOD, this demonstrates the library as a facilitator of technology use is just as important, if not more important than the library as a direct provider of technology.

As both Chapter 5 and this section have shown, technology was rarely discussed concerning the meaning of the library. The lack of attention drawn to technology was reflected across all participant groups. This illustrated one of the prime differences between how the library is used and practised versus how it is discussed. In short, technology was rarely referenced in the perceptions of participants. Across all focus group questions, attention was rarely drawn to technology. Where present, it was usually only represented by a few bricks representing laptops and/or computers. While these featured regularly, they tended to be peripheral features of the models. This shows that technology is rarely conceived as important to participants, despite it being the centre of most practices within the BJL. This is an interesting finding as it shows how not all practices within library spaces are even recognised and acknowledged by those engaging in them. This is an excellent example of the difference between the meaning of the academic library and the experience of it.

It is fair to argue that technology was the most pervasive practice within the BJL, although it was also the one least acknowledged. This is a contrast to how technology was conceived within the building, with Heseltine (2016:2) suggesting the redevelopment transformed the library into:

a modern, flexible, **technology-enhanced** building that meets the many different ways in which students want to study in the **21<sup>st</sup> century** – from the social to the very formal, from the individual to the group, from the silent to the conversational. With **cutting-edge technology throughout**, the redeveloped Library has transformed the student experience

(emphasis added)

While this research shows that technology has transformed the experience, this is not acknowledged by students. This is problematic for the neoliberal academic library because technology represents a significant investment. While the technology may be an essential aspect of the experience of the BJL, it is not acknowledged as such. This may be detrimental to the ways in which students evaluate the BJL. As innovative technologies like makerspaces and 3D printers continue to develop within academic libraries, there is also the possibility that the BJL will compare unfavourably to others in the sector. To what extent students will be aware of this is uncertain.

## 6.6 Place as BJL (BJL as the place users are)

This section focuses on the use of electronic library resources, mainly eBooks and eJournals. As these resources are available online, it allows library users to work from any location. This was something that was mentioned in several of the focus groups. This section is called *Place as BJL* as it reflects Davenport's (2006:12) 'place as library'. This suggests that when used online, the BJL is not a specific geographic space, but is essentially the space in which the user is based at that time. In effect, the BJL is the place the user happens to be. As electronic use of resources is an impossible phenomenon to observe within the physical spaces of the BJL, this section is heavily reliant on the focus group data as opposed to observations.

While all participant groups discussed electronic access in some way, it was particularly important for academics, all of whom referenced electronic access to journal articles as one of their primary engagements with the BJL.

*I don't need to go to the library ever. It's all online (Academic 2)*

Although some students acknowledged the importance of electronic resources, there was a distinction in how this was discussed. For academics, electronic resources were clearly linked to and provided by the library. For students, however, this was not always recognised, as presented in Chapter 5.

*For me personally, [electronic resources] are always resources that I'd access at home. So, it was never really a thing that was linked, in my mind, to the library. (Student 1)*

While this student is experiencing a service directly provided by the BJL, they do not acknowledge it as such. Another student was insistent that electronic resources were nothing to do with the BJL as it was the University of Hull account they used to log in with. These examples present a strange situation as objectively; the student is experiencing the BJL electronically without realising it. However, in these cases, it is arguable that the student(s) are not experiencing the BJL – at least, to their mind. Either way, it is something they are not attributing to the BJL. This is highly problematic for any neoliberal academic library. As discussed earlier, 85% of the BJL's collections budget is spent on electronic resources (Sarjantson, 2020). It is not tenable to have the most significant cost base go underacknowledged by library users (perhaps best read as 'library customers'). This is also problematic for the idea of *place as BJL*, as in these cases, the students are not associating their experience to the BJL.

When library users did acknowledge the role of the BJL in electronic resource provision, the idea of *place as BJL* can be problematic for the sustainability of the physical library. For example, while Student 17 acknowledged electronic resources as a service provided by the BJL, they portrayed journals as something they more related to reading at home than in the library.

*I can read the journals at home. (Student 17)*

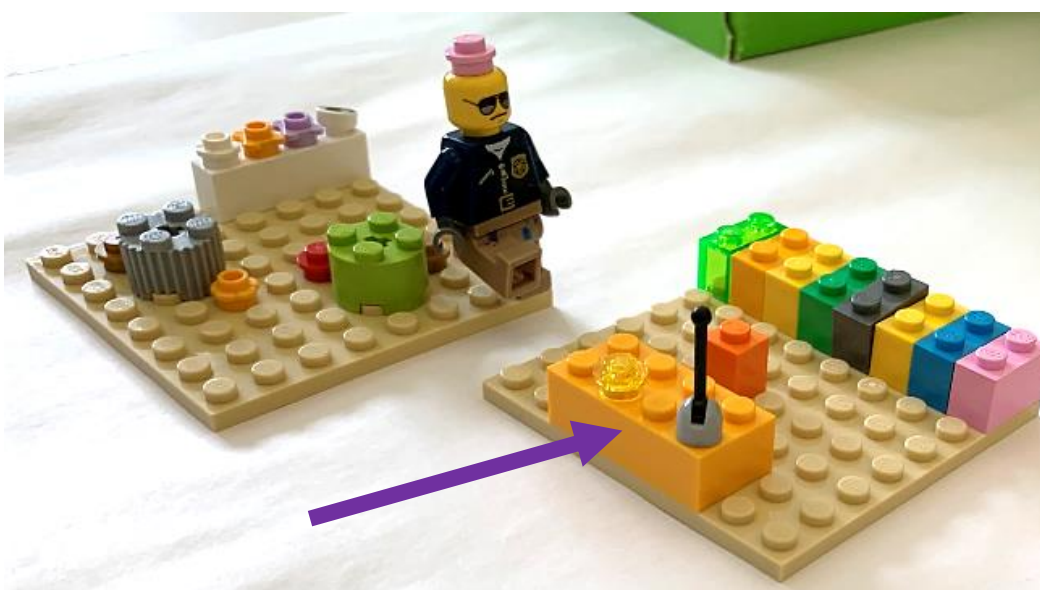
This is like the experience of academics, most of whom focused on remote access. While this raises the question about the importance of physical library space, the experiences of the BJL exposed in this chapter show it to be far more than just a collection of resources.

Digital access to electronic resources was recognised by participants as an enabler of their remote working, either at home or from their offices elsewhere on campus.

*...access it from my desk erm, to yeah, to erm access the knowledge access the big debates, I am at where it's at. (Library Staff 9)*

Electronic access was an essential aspect of work for many participants. Academic 3 built their model to demonstrate this. The colourful bricks on the right represent different electronic resources (like journals), and the antenna represents how

Academic 3 accesses them electronically (see Figure 6-21). As suggested above, this very much represents 'place as library' (Davenport, 2006:12). Whether at home, in an office on campus or even within the library itself, electronic access to library collections allows the BJL to be the place that users are. This also highlights the flows of information associated with the BJL, connecting library users globally to the resources provided by the library. This is, however, more of an ideological connection than a physical one. While the electronic resources library users are accessing are paid for and made accessible by the BJL, they are mostly hosted in off-campus cloud-based data centres.



**Figure 6-21 Books and journals - online (Academic 3)**

Working remotely was particularly beneficial to specific groups of students. Digital access was essential for students on distance programmes, with Student 3 representing their relationship as primarily a digital one. Their LEGO® model frames their connection to the BJL as one at distance, represented by a string of bricks between their home office and the library building (Figure 6-22).

*I'm now doing a part-time EdD which mostly is done at a distance, so we have me at home with my computer looking out my window and very often, erm, digitally contacting the library and the stream of knowledge is flowing from the library to my computer. (Student 3)*

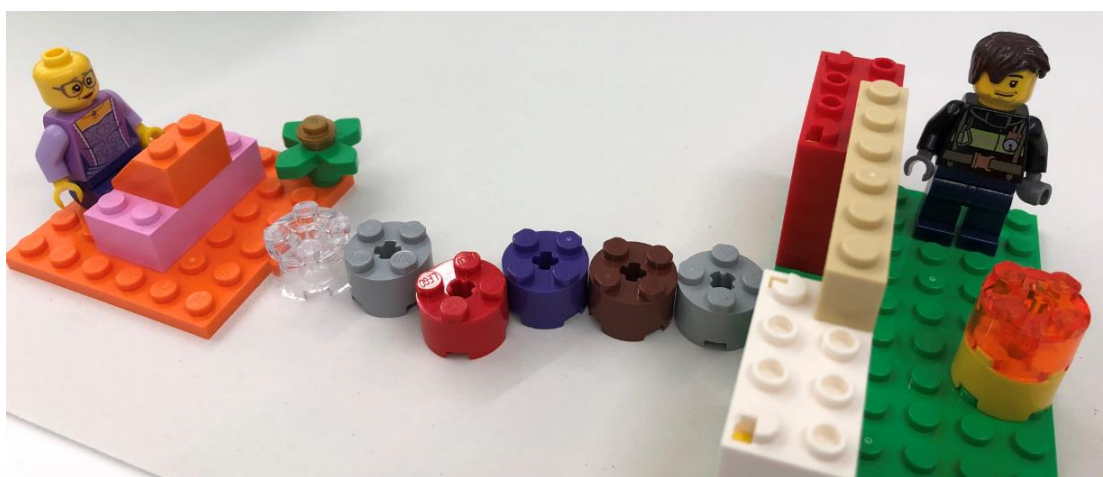
For Student 3 and other distance learners, the digital library is the central frame of reference they have to the BJL.



Another group of students who particularly benefitted from working remotely were those who found the physical library space difficult or daunting to use.

*Brynmor Jones Library is a barrier to me in my work and as a student- so I would rather find books online than come in here and actually try and find a book because it's too hot and scary. (Student 10)*

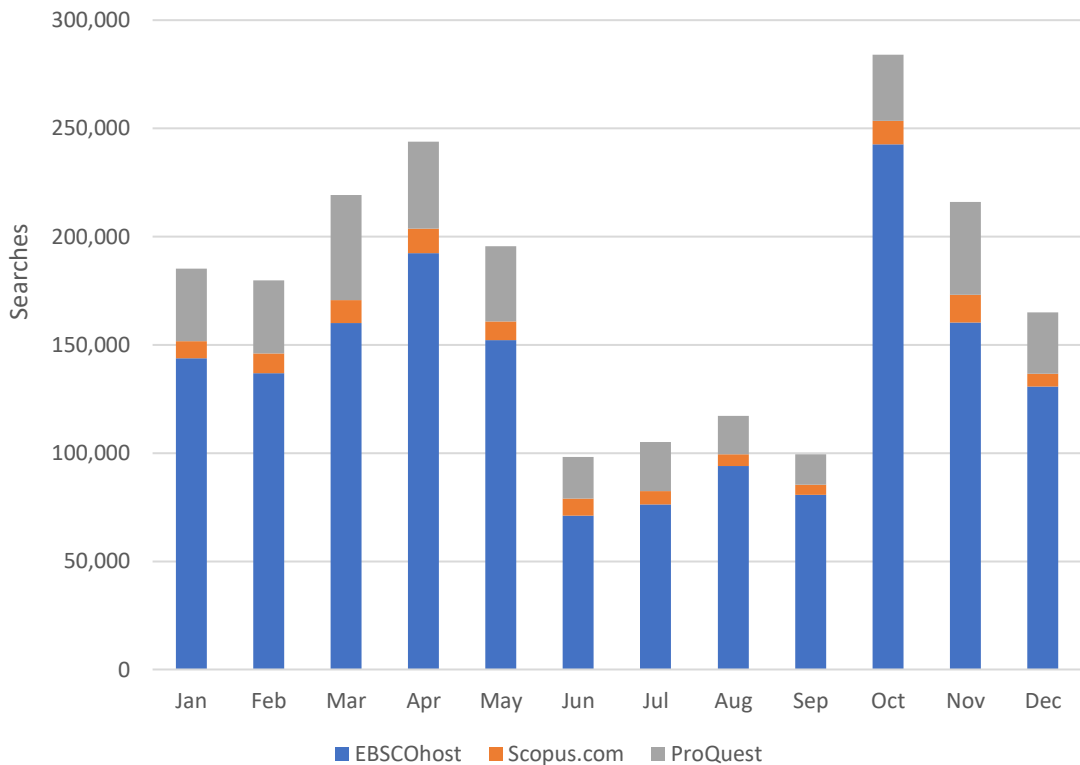
As such, their preference (or need) pushed them to work from home. The fact that they could still access resources digitally was the primary facilitator of their ability to work remotely.



**Figure 6-22 Stream of knowledge (Student 3)**

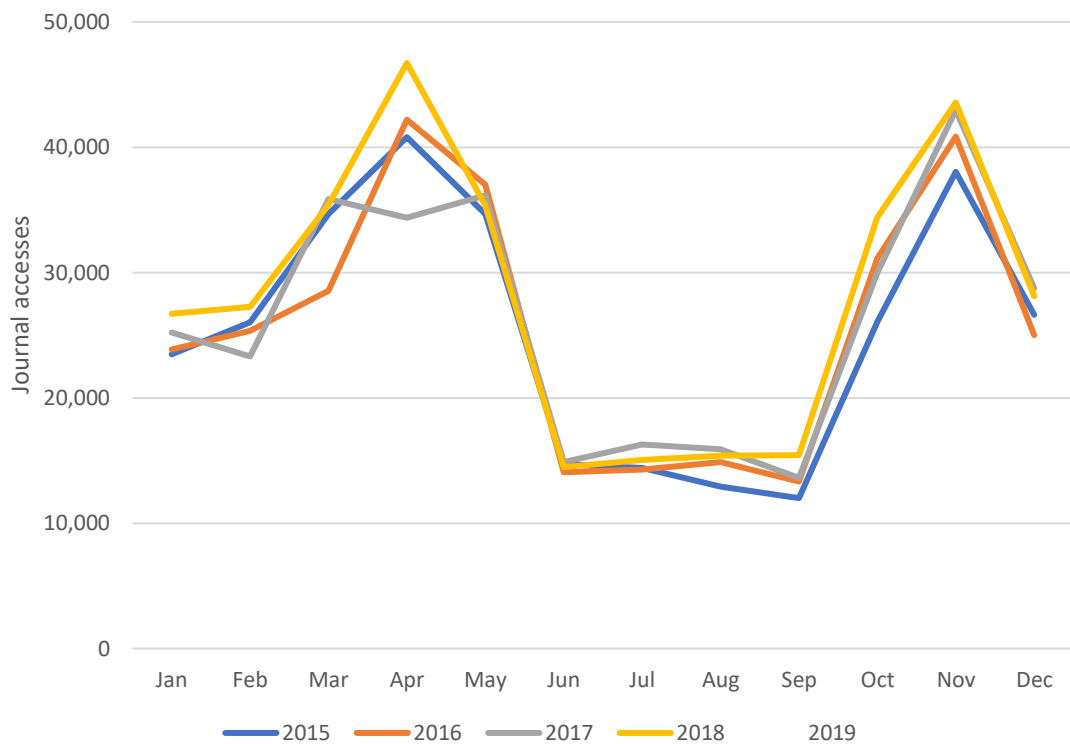
While electronic resources are digital, there are still rhythms of usage in this space, and it is possible to visualise these 'streams of knowledge'. Using library data records, it is possible to identify patterns of usage across the academic year. Figure 6-23 shows the total number of searches for three of the leading platforms used by the BJL (EBSCOhost, Scopus and ProQuest). These platforms are the 'search engines' library users need to engage with to access the majority of the BJL's online journals collection. From this graph, it is possible to identify a trimester one peak of usage in October. This is earlier than the November peak in the usage of the physical library space, as seen in Figure 6-3 earlier in the chapter (page 147). This also suggests that students are digitally accessing library resources earlier in trimester one than they are using the physical library spaces. For trimester 2, the peak fluctuates annually depending on where Easter falls, but on aggregate usage builds towards a peak in April. Trimester 3,

where only nursing and postgraduate students are still studying, has low usage, encompassing July, August, and September.



**Figure 6-23 Individual searches by platform for BJL users, 2015 – 2019 (aggregated)**

A similar pattern across all three trimesters can be observed in the journal accesses, shown in Figure 6-24. Whereas Figure 6-23 shows searches, the accesses represented in Figure 6-24 are more likely to represent reading and other forms of direct engagement with the literature. The main difference in journal usage is that the trimester one peak definitively falls in November. These patterns demonstrate how usage of online resources varies across the year aligned to the rhythms within the building. This is also a concrete representation of the flows of information associated with the BJL as an academic library. These figures represent hundreds of thousands of searches a year and tens of thousands of journal article accesses a month.



**Figure 6-24 Journal accesses by BJL users for top seven publishers 2015 – 2019**

While there is no observational data to cross-reference this section on, the focus groups have shown the importance of remote access to electronic resources for many participants, particularly academics. When using electronic resources, it is arguable that the BJL is the place the user is situated. Another way of looking at this is that the BJL has come to where they are. This echoes the space-time compression of neoliberal globalisation (Harvey, 1990b; Sheppard, 2002), as introduced in Chapter 3. However, for the library users that do not acknowledge electronic resources as a library service, this is problematic. Neoliberalism places a focus on financial efficiency in a challenging market (Seale, 2013; Dear, 2019). As electronic resources are one of the most significant expenses for most academic libraries (Rossiter, 2016), this may not be sustainable, especially if they are potentially under-valued by library users. While an interesting issue, further research is needed in this area.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Whereas Chapter 5 hinted at the importance of physical library space, this chapter has shown how this is realised in the context of the BJL. This has shown the importance of exploring the library as a socially produced space. There was a significant difference between the way participants discussed what the academic library means versus their lived experience of it. As Chapter 5 showed, in words alone, the academic library means collections, social interactions, physical spaces and exclusivity of access.

In contrast, in experience, it means learning, community, solitude, perplexity, technology, and place. This chapter has shown numerous examples of this contrast. For example, in meaning, the academic library was about collections. In experience, it was about learning. This forms an essential distinction from the definitions of the library presented in the literature review. The definitions focused on books, collections, and librarians suggesting the library was a space more focused on the provision of information than its use (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d; 2019e). All the above experiences relate to the use of the BJL far beyond just a collection. Except for the *BJL as a place of learning* and *place as BJL*, the experiences of the library had little to do with the collection.

While this thesis has so far shown, the BJL is more than just collections if this is not more widely acknowledged the focus on electronic resources can raise the question echoed in literature. Is a physical library needed if resources are all electronic (Ross & Sennyey, 2008)? It is for this reason that this chapter is important as it shows, through the case of the BJL, that the academic library is experienced as much more than a collection. This was, however, also an example that shows that not all practices within library spaces are even recognised and acknowledged by those engaging in them. As this chapter has shown the sometimes-inaccurate viewpoints held by those regularly engaging with library space, the implications this has for the perceptions of those not regularly engaging with academic libraries is concerning. It could be that such misconceptions are stopping them from engaging with the library.

Bennett's (2003; 2009) learner-centred paradigm of the library, Storey's 'commons approach' (2015:570) and Davenport's (2006:12) 'place as library' are just some of the conceptualisations of the academic library that were represented within the BJL. None

of these conceptualisations, however, represented the totality of the neoliberal academic library as represented by the BJL. While this chapter may have shown these conceptualisations as useful at exposing certain activities and environments associated with the neoliberal academic library, there is a need for a new understanding to consider the totality. As such, these findings feed-forward to address this as part of the MQ in the following chapter. While this has so far focused on the BJL, in answering the MQ it is possible to abstract these findings to the context of neoliberal HE in the following chapter.

## Chapter 7 – The five spaces of the neoliberal academic library

Built on the findings presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, this chapter revisits what the academic library means and how the BJL is experienced to address the MQ of the thesis: How do library users experience library space(s) in the neoliberal university? By combining the findings from the previous two chapters, it is possible to develop a new conceptual framework for the neoliberal academic library. In this, learning from the BJL as a case study can be generalised to answer the MQ. The focus here is on the five spaces that emerge from this analysis, which frame the neoliberal academic library as physical space, imagined space, social space, engagement space and discovery space.

The five spaces presented in this chapter are more inclusive than the other models, as outlined in Chapter 2. This is not to suggest there is no validity in the existing approaches, but to suggest each focuses only on certain aspects of the academic library. If anything, these five spaces of the neoliberal academic library weave many of the attributes of the existing approaches and paradigms. This chapter, however, goes further than this. Based on empirical evidence, it argues that these five spaces represent the changing landscape of library spaces within the context of the neoliberal university. This represents the neoliberal academic library as a complicated and multi-faceted space that is open to interpretation.

### 7.1 Physical space

Physical space is still an essential aspect of the neoliberal academic library. This is not an obvious finding by any means. Given the concerns over the ‘death’ of physical library space (Ross & Sennyey, 2008), this thesis’ findings emphasise the need for asserting the importance of physical academic library space. This is because electronic access to library collections has long threatened the importance of academic library space. As discussed in Chapter 3, the world is shrinking – at least perceptively (Sheppard, 2002). The internet, the growth in digitised information, growing global interconnectedness and development of new communication technologies that are associated with globalisation and neoliberalisation (Harvey, 1990b; Sheppard, 2002; Guttal, 2007). These developments suggest the significance of academic libraries as physical spaces or places will diminish. Indeed, in a world full of electronic resources, it

is conceivable for library users to access materials without physically accessing any library building. This has yet to happen.

Despite the 'threat' posed by electronic resources, this research shows that physical space and place are still significant in the context of the neoliberal academic library. The library as a building was foremost in the way many participants presented the academic library.

*when you say library to me, I think of, I think of a tower because this is probably my most familiar building (Student 3)*

*a very sort of visual aspect of being in the library there's a lot to take in, but as well it's, as much as your taking stuff in (Student 13)*

These comments show how the library as a physical building is still a valuable space, particularly students. Both the meaning of the academic library (Chapter 5) and the experience of it (Chapter 6) identify physical space as important.

While it may be threatened, the importance of physical space is by no means diminishing. If anything, space is of growing importance. As shrinking physical collections free up space, academic libraries are creating more space for student and academic use (Becker, 2015; Pinfield et al., 2017). The redevelopment of the BJL is a prime example of this, creating significantly more space for library users by moving a large part of the collection into the basement (see: Chapter 3). The redevelopment also transformed the BJL into an attractive learning space – an essential component of any university wanting to remain competitive in a challenging market.

The neoliberal academic library is not just a place that students and staff go. It is an essential component of the university campus. The BJL is an excellent example of this:

*But at the centre of everything is Brynmor Jones - is a space where I send students, where I teach. I send students to come here to get journals, books, talk to Skills, get a drink, come and teach, book rooms. I can't imagine, thinking about it, the university functioning without this building, and it's changed over the years I've been here for the better. (Academic 4)*

This illustrates how academics acknowledge library space as an essential aspect of not only the campus experience but of student learning. Furthermore, state-of-the-art academic library spaces are required to support innovative approaches to teaching and learning (Pinfield et al., 2017; ACRL, 2019). This also shows how the physical library space is vital for the wider university and its educational goals (Jamieson, 2009:19).

In the neoliberal academic library, space is an investment. As Academic 5 argues:

*libraries are like all big public buildings - are built for a fairly long period, so you build a shell which is meant to stay in place for a long long time. And the idea in there is that you are able to configure the spaces internally differently (Academic 5)*

Indeed, most academic libraries are prime real estate, and there is often pressure to ensure such spaces is used to its fullest potential (Cox, 2018). Often located centrally, library spaces are also symbolically placed within universities, representing knowledge, learning and scholarship (Shoham & Klain-Gabbay, 2019).

The importance of physical space is also something that can be quite literally interpreted for this thesis' data. Indeed, most participants represented physical, built library spaces (walls, windows, doors, furniture and objects) in their answer to questions. It can, therefore, be argued that it was through the physical space that most findings of this thesis had been represented. This has been pictured throughout this thesis in most of the figures that depict LEGO® models. While all participants were shown how to use LEGO® metaphorically in preparation for the focus groups, it was still physical environments that they chose to represent.

Academic library space also serves as the container for much of the technology provided by academic libraries. In academic libraries, technology is ever-present and continually used (Khoo et al., 2016). This was reflected in the observations of this thesis (Chapter 6). Whether using a laptop or desktop computer for their work or using the many self-service devices within the library, every user engaged with technology in some way. To some extent, this reflected the redevelopment brief for the BJL, which stated that the building should be a 'technology-enabled environment' (Heseltine, 2016:2). However, despite the high use of technology and the fact it is now an essential part of learning (Bennett, 2003; Noh, 2015; Seal, 2015), it was barely



acknowledged by users. As noted in Chapter 6, this may be due to the ubiquity of technology within both the academic library and life. Things like computers and Wi-Fi are not even worth acknowledging, especially given most people have these at home. Had the BJL hosted innovative technologies like makerspaces and 3D printers, this may have been more noted by participants. While library users may not always recognise the value of academic library technology, it is still something of importance to libraries. Technology is enabling most of the innovative developments across academic libraries (ACRL, 2015; Noh, 2015; ACRL, 2017; 2019). While library users may not notice it, it is fair to argue that they would notice any library space without it.

The assertion of space as an aspect of the academic library is not in ignorance of distance teaching, online universities or alternative approaches to campus space management. As Chapter 6 has shown, even the online experience of an academic library has a physical component, even if this is the place that library users happen to be as opposed to a defined space on campus. The most significant challenge for academic libraries is to engender the library experience where their users are, even if this is outside the building. While 'place as library' (Davenport, 2006:12) or library as a platform (Bennett, 2003; Andrews et al., 2016a) are established paradigms, more attention is needed on building the acknowledgement that it is still the library users are experiencing, even if they are not physically there. Digital interactions are just as 'real' as those that take place in the building. The main area of concern, as Chapter 6 demonstrates, is that many library users, particularly students, were not always aware of the link between the library and the online resources they were using. There is a severe risk that the financial investment in electronic resources is undervalued as users are not aware they are privileged in their access to many resources they use.

This section has made the case to assert the importance of physical space in the neoliberal academic library. However, it feels more like a reassertion of space in the face of literature that challenges it. The argument that physical space is irrelevant to libraries is based entirely on the assumption that academic libraries are collections alone. As the other spaces presented throughout this chapter show, academic libraries are more. The physical spaces of neoliberal academic libraries are designed as

destinations. They are somewhere students and academics want to go. As a case study, the BJL has shown how crucial physical space is to library users.

## 7.2 Imagined space

The neoliberal academic library is not just a physical space but is an imagined space. As discussed in Chapter 4, the idea of imagined spaces focusses on the mental concepts or images that people hold of a particular space, in this case, the neoliberal academic library. For example, a library may be framed as nerdy, geeky or spooky. Such ideas are better seen as imaginaries than a literal representation of space. In the case of this study, Chapter 6 represents many of the feelings and experiences that of academic library space. Ideas like the BJL as a place of solitude, a prison, a place of learning, a community were all very much imaginaries that participants assigned to the BJL.

Prison is a particularly good example of the academic library as an imagined space. In the case of the BJL, it is far from being like a prison. The BJL is an open space and users are free to come and go. Nevertheless, when considering the mental experience of the BJL, it is easy to identify how the BJL has qualities of a prison.

*sometimes it also it turns like a prison because I trapped here and I can't go outside to have free time. (Student 4)*

Students felt 'trapped' by their study responsibilities, and it was the library that was the site of this feeling. When combined with the very meaning of the academic library being linked to ideas of authoritarian librarians and their surveillance (see Chapter 5), it is possible to see how imaginations of the library as prison builds. While this finding arises from a case study, it is easy to see how this can be abstracted to neoliberal academic libraries more broadly. This is not to necessarily suggest all such libraries will be seen as prisons, but there will be equally valid imaginaries that emerge in different contexts.

Framing this space of the neoliberal academic library as imagined does not mean this space is unreal or untrue (Said, 2014). The imagined space acknowledges how the academic library is perceived and lived by individuals. Taking the experience of the BJL as a prison, this is no less real to those individuals that feel that way. As Chapter 4 introduced, space is intellectually worked through a range of signs, codes, ideologies

(Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). These processes are both individualistic and socially communicated, which builds shared imaginaries of space. For libraries, this is furthered in the representations of libraries through media and popular culture (Crawford, 2015b; Marcus, 2015; Warner, 2015). Massey (2005) demonstrates the significance of the imagination of space. A range of the themes from this research shows that this is definitively the case with academic library space. The academic library as an imagined space emerged in how participants referred to the BJL throughout the findings of this thesis.

While 'imagined' representations, Chapter 6 has shown they are nevertheless still reflections of the 'real' experiences participants associated with library space(s). It can be argued that these imaginaries are all realised in Lefebvre's (1991) perceived space, for they impact the everyday interactions and uses of space. For example, the way Student 10 framed the BJL as disorienting was a central aspect of their experience (see Chapter 6). The BJL was a space of disorientation. This imaginary of the BJL was something that framed all participants' interactions with the BJL. Ultimately, this led to their preference for online resources as an aid in avoiding the building. As such, they had little recent experience of the BJL, yet this imaginary still overwhelmed their perceptions of the space. This is an example of how dominant these imaginaries can be. This also shows that the imagined space can be a core component of how the neoliberal academic library is experienced by individual users.

Said (2014) has demonstrated how powerful these geographic imaginaries can be, not just serving as individual constructs but something that can be widely shared and believed. In the case of the BJL, these imaginaries were equally influential. For participants, these imaginaries were 'real', shaping their experience of the academic library. The conversations that formed the empirical component of this thesis are symbolic of how these conceptualisations of the neoliberal academic library may perpetuate. Just as the anecdote in the introduction of this thesis showed, people will talk about the library. In the same way that Anderson (2006) argues the media support the creation of imaginaries by propagating ideas, it is possible to see how student press, social media and conversation can do this on campus. The earlier example of The Hull Tab (2015) is an excellent example of this. Ultimately, these processes allow

the imaginaries associated with the neoliberal academic library to be constructed, adapted and propagated socially. As suggested above, this can happen through how the academic library is talked about, or through popular culture and media. This research project is even an example of this in action, creating and sharing knowledge about library space.

The academic library as a community also falls into the imagined space to some extent. As Chapter 6 demonstrated, the students working within the BJL shared a collective identity, and broadly, all have a common goal in their studies. While there will inevitably be variation in this, observations identified that users were mostly participating in some form of study-related activity, indicating the presence of shared practices. This very much represents what Anderson (2006) calls as an 'imagined community', as individuals cannot all know each other or know all aspects of the community. While Anderson (2006) focuses on nationalism in his work, this is easily applied to the neoliberal academic library. In even the smallest institution, it is unlikely that all library users would know each other. They also will not be aware of all the features and functions of the library. Yet, as this research has shown, there are common imaginaries and experiences that tie library users together. In some way, they form a community linked to that specific library space.

*I think there is quite broad definition of the student community there . Me personally, I do, I tend not to meet them here, I tend to meet them elsewhere. The sort of conversation over a cup of coffee type thing. They're probably peers, but they can peer groups of students, peer groups of staff, peer groups of postgraduates but there's not, probably not across levels group. (Academic 2)*

This was very much seen in the variety of perceptions users shared on the BJL, and it is fair to assume this will be the case with many other academic libraries given the diverse representations presented in the literature review. This is also not to suggest that all areas of the library community are imagined. Speaking to library staff and volunteers through the case study of the BJL demonstrated there are areas of real community within this. Likewise, the observed societies and community groups using the library may well have represented functioning communities.

The imagined space of the academic library is quite different from the conceptualisations of the academic library presented in the literature review (Chapter 2). These focused on the tangible elements of the academic library, framing it as learner-centred (Bennett, 2003; 2009), as commons (Storey, 2015), or in the case of Wilkin (2015), a combination of curation, engagement, publishing, and spaces. Often there was a focus on physical and tangible services and spaces. The academic library as a platform (Andrews et al., 2016a) or 'place as library' (Davenport, 2006:12) may be the closest examples to a form of imaginary for they are conceptual. Even then, there is little consideration for how this is interpreted by individuals, as shown in this section.

The imaged aspect of the neoliberal academic library is an interesting prospect. Neoliberalism focuses on the individual consumer and tangible products the market can offer them. In the context of HE, the degree is the commodity or product (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011), with the campus experience as a large part of this. The physical library space (above) is a more literal, and marketable aspect of this. The imagined space, however, is much harder to frame. Nevertheless, it is still an essential aspect of neoliberal academic library space and something that needs to be understood alongside the more tangible aspects of library space.

### 7.3 Social space

Fundamentally, the social space is about people (library users) and the interactions between them.

*I feel like the people are really at the heart of the library and that without them that it, that the library wouldn't be what it was. It wouldn't be a place of learning because there would be no one here to learn. (Library staff 10)*

This was something acknowledged by all participant groups, suggesting this is something that may be generalised to all academic libraries. Many LEGO® models built by participants placed a strong focus on people, often through the use of Minifigures. While 'people' can refer to all library users, in the case of the BJL, the focus groups and observations of this thesis notably identified students and library staff. While library staff are inevitably part of the social space, the aspects of user-support identified in

Chapter 5 are distinct. They form part of the engagement space covered in the next section.

The focus on students is unsurprising, given that the BJL was primarily designed as a space for them (Chapter 3; Heseltine, 2016). The BJL was designed for people.

*They've really thought of design with people in mind, people who will use the library. (Academic 3)*

This is also likely to extend to most other academic libraries as the neoliberal paradigm focuses on developing attractive academic library spaces to entice prospective students. The people-centric design of academic libraries is a broader trend, with Bennett (2003; 2009) suggesting a move from the book and reader-focused libraries to learner-focused libraries. Similarly, Matthews (2009) suggests that libraries are now 'customer-centred'. This is also supported by the broader literature which showcases how new academic library designs and refurbishments are increasingly user-focused (Chan & Spodick, 2014; Hunter & Cox, 2014). This is undoubtedly no better represented than with the User Experience (UX) in Libraries (UXLibs, 2019) group introduced in Chapter 3. The scholarly output from this group (Priestner & Borg, 2016; Priestner, 2017; 2018; 2019), and its associated conferences (UXLibs, 2019) also demonstrate the importance libraries are placing on user-centric designs.

It may seem obvious to state that academic libraries are designed for people, especially in the context of neoliberalism, where universities are trying to build attractive spaces to entice prospective students (Chapter 3). It is, however, essential to acknowledge that for centuries the primary purpose of the library was the protection, storage and retrieval of knowledge. As such, libraries were built for tablets, scrolls or books (Murray, 2013; Crawford, 2015a). Not people (Matthews, 2009). While this was clear in the literature, it is essential to clarify this as an aspect of the neoliberal academic library. What it is to build a library space for people, however, has also changed, with a renewed focus on social and conversational study areas. Inclusivity is also an essential part of this, with Chapter 6 demonstrating how participants felt the BJL was an inclusive space. This was also supported by observations, demonstrating the BJL was a space with an appeal to a broad range of students. Diversity and

inclusion were identified by the ACRL (2019) as necessary for student feelings of safety.

The move to user-centric designs has been essential due to the changing practices in teaching, learning and assessment. In particular, the increase of social activities (group work) as part of studying for a degree requires more spaces where students can get together and work (Appleton et al., 2011; Pinfield et al., 2017) and independent projects require students to be more self-directed with some assessments (Andrews et al., 2016a). As Academic 4 argues:

*it's difficult to distinguish learning from social socialization*

Demographic and technological changes have also led to new demands for users, especially in their preferences for study environments (ACRL, 2019; Castro et al., 2019). User preferences are also more diverse, and academic libraries are better at providing a more comprehensive range of affordances to support a broader range of users (Hunter & Cox, 2014). As Chapter 6 has shown, the library is also no longer just associated with studying and is also a place to 'hang out' (Student 2), 'chill' (Student 9), 'meet friends' (Student 17) and 'chat' (Student 14). When considering these changes together, these developments have led to significant changes in the design of academic library spaces. No longer are academic libraries full of hard desks and silent study spaces. This is well demonstrated in the BJL, with the building plans in Chapter 3 showing a dramatic increase in social study spaces, to the deficit of storage space for books and other resources.

The social space represents more than just spaces designed for people. As the last two chapters have shown, the 'people' that participants presented in their models were rarely static parts of the environment. They did not just 'use' space. Social interaction was strongly associated with the meaning of the academic library (Chapter 5), and community emerged as a core part of the academic library experience (Chapter 6). This social interaction is fundamental to defining the social space of the neoliberal academic library. While the above section on the imagined space incorporated community, this does not lessen the significance of the neoliberal academic library as a social space. The social space still encapsulates much of this activity.

Other library users and their use of the BJL very much formed a vital part of the library experience. People, to some extent, defined the BJL and its space. This is no surprise as Chapter 5 identified this as a core element of what academic library means. In practice, the experience was a bit more complicated, however. Sometimes other library users were portrayed as a positive element of library spaces, and something that made library space attractive for individuals. This was not, however, always the case and sometimes other library users were problematic because of noise, mess, distractions, and other unwanted behaviours. This varied by the user, what they needed to achieve, and by time. For example, while Student 9 found it positive for their focus to be surrounded by ‘thousands’ of other people studying, Academic 5 found it ‘upsetting’ and distracting. This represents well the diverse – and sometimes contradictory needs of library users. It may be that this presents a challenge for libraries to manage as it involves the behaviour of individuals.

The re-framing of academic libraries towards people has potentially contributed to the change of naming conventions. As already discussed there are a rise academic commons (Blummer & Kenton, 2017), learning commons (Bruce, 2010; Hussong-Christian et al., 2010; Stark & Samson, 2010; EDUCAUSE, 2011) and information commons (Church, 2005; Halbert, 2010). These naming conversions deviate from the word library, focusing on ‘common’ instead which is inherently linked to people, social and community. As the literature review noted (Chapter 2), this change is not wholesale. Such spaces are also not necessarily synonymous with the academic library. Sometimes commons are built within a library, sometimes they are libraries with a different name and sometimes they are different spaces altogether. While commons signify a change, the nature of this change is fundamentally unclear.

The academic library is ultimately a product, sold on open days as part of the university experience. While the physical space is the foremost part of this, the social space is an essential aspect of how the library is experienced. It is also the space that may attract the most complaints if users behave in undesirable ways. The social space arguably represents one of the most changed aspects of the academic library and something distinct to the paradigms before. Libraries have always (to some extent) managed a collection, provided space and supported users (Wilkin, 2015). Libraries as



inherently social spaces are something new, and almost in opposition to previous designs that focused on books alone (Bennett, 2003; 2009; Murray, 2013).

#### 7.4 Engagement space

Engagement space encompasses anything to do with user support.

*I went for the idea of a cross because it's like the first aid symbol and I wanted the idea of help and support that a library can offer people.  
(Library Staff 15)*

User support and engagement has been a reoccurring concept throughout this thesis. It emerged in the literature review (Chapter 2) with Synnyey et al.'s (2009) acknowledgement of the library as librarian, the two solidly intertwined. Considering the academic library more specifically, Wilkin's (2015) four pillars also identified engagement with teaching and research as one of the elements of the library, something influential in the naming of this space. In Chapter 3, the importance of user support, especially information and digital literacy, was highlighted in the introduction to the neoliberal academic library. That chapter also highlighted how the BJL is a space conceived to develop user support and engagement. Chapter 5's consideration of social interaction also highlighted library staff as a critical element of the meaning of academic library, and Chapter 6's introduction to the BJL as a place of learning showed how library staff were part of this. It is fair to argue that engagement is a central aspect of the neoliberal academic library.

Support is not limited to students and also includes support for university staff, especially academics. Increasingly, academic libraries are also responsible for learning, teaching and research support, helping academic colleagues with curriculum development (ACRL, 2019) and scholarly communication (Pinfield et al., 2017; ACRL, 2019). While this research did include academics, questions were more targeted to the BJL, what it means, and how it is experienced. For this reason, this aspect of support did not arise in the data. There is, however, enough evidence in the literature to also place this kind of academic support within engagement space.

As shown in Chapter 3, the academic library as a space of support was a core aspect of the neoliberal library. While this was most often focused on information and digital

literacy support (Pinfield et al., 2017; Skoyles, 2017; CILIP Information Literacy Group, 2018; ACRL, 2019), much broader aspects of support are reflected in this data. This can perhaps be attributed to the inclusion of the Skills Team as part of the BJL, although as shown in Chapter 3, this arrangement is far from atypical. The Skills Team was mentioned by over a third of students, and it was something they valued as part of the BJL's services.

*there are times when people struggle at the library which you have Skills Team and other teams which can help people with uh, with things they have (Student 16)*

This may be part of the reason that self-development and growth emerged as a core aspect of the library as an engagement space.

*I am- the library make me flying, and er, it's helped me to er, go in the right direction, whatever I need. Uh skills or er., studying I just came here (Student 5)*

Throughout the data, there was a strong reflection of the BJL as a place of personal development. This is certainly one way in which the neoliberal academic library may be able to demonstrate value to the wider university

While outlining the engagement space of the academic library, it is also essential to consider that this identifies academic libraries as spaces that users need help. Participants often related to the challenge of finding items in the library collection. After all, to be able to use any resource within the library collection, a user must first be able to find it. This can be defined as an essential part of information literacy which not only includes the requirement to think critically about information but also to find and use it (CILIP Information Literacy Group, 2018). In any library, this can be a difficult undertaking, especially in a library the size of the BJL. For students that struggled with this, particularly finding online materials, it was incredibly frustrating.

*If this had been my tower of online knowledge, I would have put a series of hurdles on the way to getting it, because I do find the online, quite frustrating with the- keep logging into different areas of store. So sometimes if you're doing a, er, a journal search, you can end up logging into 10 different areas in the- and it's just like you have to jump another hurdle, and another hurdle, and another hurdle. Apart*

*from that, it's wonderful. But it is quite frustrating when you've really got a thought go and you think that sounds perfect. I'll just look at that and then you try to log in and it rejects it the first time for some reason and so on. Yes. (Student 3)*

This is undoubtedly a significant barrier for students trying to access the BJL and something that is likely reflected across other academic libraries.

One of the most critical aspects of the engagement space is library staff. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), most representations of librarians are negative (Cullen, 2000; Peresie & Alexander, 2005) or stereotypical (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014). Amusingly this was only raised in detail by library staff who were aware they are often portrayed as authoritarian, watching users for any infraction. While this was not discussed by any participants in length, I did frequently observe students breaking the rules while staff were not around, changing their behaviour as the staff walked past. There was also The *Hull Tab* (2015) article which referred to staff as the 'library eating patrol'. This suggests that while generally seen positively, there are negative perceptions of library staff. It also may be my position as someone working within the building that discouraged more honesty from student participants in this area.

The engagement space is not just about library staff-led support. There were frequent references to peer-support, or students helping each other throughout the data. This formed part of the community aspect of the BJL discussed both above (*imagined space* and *social space*) and in Chapter 5. Most often, such peer-support arises between known individuals, and this was something frequently seen in the observations. The vast majority of references to peer-support within the data was associated with informal support from friends. It is, however, also important to note that the BJL explicitly encourages peer-support through some volunteer schemes. Four volunteers even contributed to this study, engaging as focus group participants. Volunteers in academic libraries are not uncommon and have been developed by many universities (Tikam, 2011; Broady-Preston, 2014; Skulan, 2018). This provides a structured approach to facilitating peer-support while also helping to develop library services.

The engagement space echoes the traditional association between libraries and librarians (Radford & Radford, 2001; Sennyey et al., 2009) – or library staff more

generally. It also, however, recognises the growth in the use of social study and peer support. Academic libraries have invested heavily in the development of space to support this. This is a significant contrast to the traditional conceptualisations of the library as a space for silent book-focused study (RIBA, 2015). The most significant aspect of the engagement space is, however, the focus on customer service. This was recognised by Matthews (2009) as the 'customer-centred' library paradigm. In the context of neoliberalism, customer service and quality are imperative given the focus on customer satisfaction and performance metrics (Pinfield et al., 2017). It is for this reason that engagement forms a distinct space in the neoliberal academic library.

### 7.5 Discovery space

The most discussed ideas that participants associated with what they considered to be the meaning of the academic library were those related to the library collection, its knowledge, information and resources.

*Knowledge is at the centre of learning (Library Staff 10)*

As Chapter 5 showed, the foremost meaning of the academic library is that of a collection. This is certainly no surprise, mirroring the literature review (Chapter 2) where it was argued that collections are both a core component of the history (Murray, 2013; Crawford, 2015a) and present (ACRL, 2015; Delaney & Bates, 2015) of libraries. It could be argued that the collection is the most distinctive feature of a library, for if a library does nothing else, it must provide access to some form of a collection. This too, was reflected in the meanings participants attributed to the academic library. This research has, however, shown that the focus of the neoliberal academic library is more associated with the use of library materials than their storage and retrieval, particularly with the growth of electronic resources. This supports Bennett's (2003; 2009) argument that libraries have moved from a book-focused paradigm to one that is more learner-centred. Technology is also an essential part of this (Khoo et al., 2016), particularly with advancements in how resources are accessed through electronic catalogues.

Digital, online and/or electronic resources are an essential aspect of the discovery space. Participants drew particular attention to how electronic resources enabled

them to work from their office or home, which was particularly beneficial to academics and distance students.

*We have two kinds of library like online library, and uh, like yeah building. (Student 7)*

As discussed previously, this can frame the academic library as a platform (Andrews et al., 2016a), accessible from wherever a user happens to be, framing 'place as library' (Davenport, 2006:12). However, these paradigms are based on users being aware they are experiencing the library. As this thesis has shown, the consideration of how electronic resources are linked to the academic library was mixed.

In some cases, students did not associate the electronic collection with the academic library at all. Given that most electronic resources are accessed via publishers and other third-party suppliers, it is fair to assume other academic libraries will experience similar issues. Further research is, however, needed to understand how widespread this issue is. As discussed in Chapter 6, this is highly problematic for the neoliberal academic library as it can mean the most significant library expenditure is not acknowledged or appreciated by library users. This is not to suggest spending in this area should reduce. However, it signifies much work is required in promoting the link between academic libraries and their electronic collections.

There were other ways in which the BJL's collection was misunderstood. While many participants acknowledged the library's collection as diverse in format and scope, the perspective of the BJL as a book space was just as common.

*I think it's what people think if you say to someone what a library. I just think of books. (Library staff 4)*

While the discovery space may include books, it is far more complicated than that. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, academic library collections may include a whole range of items from books, journals and newspapers, to CDs, DVDs and electronic resources. Academic libraries are more than just books.

*it's all kind of knowledge. Erm, so it's not just you know books published and have been stored. It's journals. It's visual aids. It's audio. There's just this massive variety of things, you know you can*

*go op and just look at DVD or movies. Erm, just so you- it's just a bundle of knowledge and completely diverse. (Student 13)*

While most participants acknowledged this, the symbolism of books is strongly associated with libraries. This is a significant issue for neoliberal academic libraries as the book overshadows all other services and functions. Significant work is still needed to reframe the library as more than a space for books.

It was possible to give this space many names. 'Knowledge' was a distinct possibility, as were 'collections' and 'information resources'. These terms, however, still place focus on the collection. While the collection is still important, this research has demonstrated that in the neoliberal academic library, more focus is given to how resources are made accessible and how they are used. Discovery conveys this well. The use of discovery also mirrors the trends of commercial library system vendors to move away from just providing searchable catalogues towards providing 'discovery services'. Discovery services go beyond providing a searchable index of books and journals from a library's catalogue, allowing the advanced search of items across multiple databases. In essence, they aim to allow the searching of all resources a library has access to from within a single interface. The BJL uses *Summon* as its discovery service, but this is currently offered separately to the library catalogue. There are plans, however, to fully integrate the catalogue into Hull's implementation of the *Summon* discovery service. Other examples of discovery services include the *EBSCO Discovery Service* from EBSCO (2019), *Primo* (and *Summon*) from ExLibris/ProQuest (2019), and *Prism* from Capita (2019). It is common for most academic libraries to offer one of these services, sometimes alongside or in place of their catalogue. This also shows how essential technology is to the provision of discovery services.

Despite the focus on resource use, it is essential to remember that academic libraries are still curators and collectors of knowledge, as discussed in Chapter 2 (ACRL, 2015; Delaney & Bates, 2015). Library collections are likely to be the most challenging development area for academic libraries, mainly due to changing market forces (ACRL, 2017; 2019), raising costs (Rossiter, 2016) and concerns around the inclusivity of collections (Parker, 2019). As this section has shown, there are also serious issues around how the collection is understood by library users and to what extent it is

acknowledged as part of library provision. Libraries are also often seen as book collections, with little recognition for the substantial electronic collections. In the case of the BJL, electronic resources are the most significant aspect of resource spending (Sarjantson, 2020), and this is typical for most academic libraries (Rossiter, 2016). There is also growing competition from companies like Amazon, Google, Microsoft and Apple as they move into the information space.

*I Google a PDF... I'll see what the book looks like and research everything online, it's efficient, free, forever, bookmarks, control F-search. (Student 9)*

Due to a combination of above-inflation price rises and library budget cuts (Rossiter, 2016), it is arguable that much more focus needs to be placed on maximising the use of the existing collections. Furthermore, there is a focus on opening out collections, or as Lewis (2019:1) calls for an 'open scholarly commons'. A large part of this involves OA publishing (JISC, 2016; 2017), and while libraries are often not publishers, they do need to provide access to such materials, signifying a significant shift in how knowledge is purchased, provided and made discoverable (Lewis, 2019). While most of this may not have gained the attention of participants, the literature suggests this will continue to shape their experience of future academic library developments.

The discovery space is the most founded of all the library spaces. When the world's very first libraries were developed, their primary focus was the curation and preservation of the collection (Bennett, 2003; 2009; Murray, 2013). While this is still an essential function of a library, this section has shown how the accessibility of the collection and the support in its use is of equal importance. More significantly, libraries now offer more services and do more than they ever have before. The collection and associated services compete with the library as a physical, imagined, social and engagement space. The placement of this space at the end of the list is symbolic. The literature review (Chapter 2) and consideration of what an academic library means (Chapter 5) show library collections are often the most prominent and enduring aspect of what a library or academic library means to people. The analysis of how the library is experienced (Chapter 6) alongside this chapter, however, show that the library is much more. This is not to say that the collection does not matter. It does, and still is the most distinctive element of the library. It is, however, not the sum of the academic

library. Academic libraries do more than just provide resources. As this chapter has shown, they add significant value beyond.

## 7.6 Summary

This chapter has argued that physical space, imagined space, social space, engagement space and discovery space represent the user experience of the neoliberal academic library.

### **Physical space**

This space encapsulates the physical and digital experiences of the neoliberal academic library. Of particular importance are the physical building(s), room(s) and spaces that library users engage with. There is also an acknowledgement that through electronic resources, the library can also be experienced wherever the user is based.

### **Imagined space**

This space is the site of stories, shared practices and feelings about library space. It is the mental space that users experience when accessing the library, something which is highly individualistic and so varies from person to person. The imagined space also encapsulates the library community and the commonality of shared space.

### **Social space**

Social space is many things. It represents the people using academic library spaces and the communal activities they engage with. This space stands as a representation of libraries designed for people – not books. It is an inclusive and diverse space, open to members of the university community, and often the community beyond.

### **Engagement space**

All forms of user support that are associated with the academic library are represented in this space. This includes the support of users in the building but also reflects wider engagements on campus with the support of teaching and scholarly communication. Support is not always staff-led, and peer-support often forms in this space. The personal and professional development of library users is an important aspect of this space.

### **Discovery space**

The library collection is represented by discovery space. This is not to discount the role of the academic library as a curator and provider of knowledge, but to acknowledge the greater focus on the use and discoverability of these resources. This space is not only physical, and represents the thousands of electronic resources most academic libraries also provide.



## Chapter 8 – Conclusion

The government-led neoliberalisation of the HE sector in the UK is having a significant impact on universities. As highlighted in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, neoliberalisation is also having a substantial impact on academic libraries, particularly in performance metrics (Baker, 2018), developments in publishing (Rossiter, 2016), and research output through scholarly communication. This is alongside the introduction of new technologies (Pinfield et al., 2017) and evolving pedagogies (Pinfield et al., 2017; ACRL, 2019). As demonstrated throughout the start of the thesis, academic libraries are under immense budgetary pressure through a combination of cuts to university funding and rising costs, particularly from the publishing industry. Furthermore, digital working practices and alternative providers of information resources are threatening the importance of the academic library within HE. Collectively, this all raises the question of whether universities need a library, and therefore, as established in Chapter 1, the academic library is under threat. However, this threat only stands as true if academic libraries are seen as book repositories or collections. This thesis has shown that they are much more.

In response to the threats and challenges of neoliberalisation, academic libraries have undergone dramatic changes. They have invested in their spaces to offer new technology and social opportunities for students. They have made spaces people want to visit, not just for the collection, but for learning, socialisation and support. As this thesis has argued, this has made libraries attractive spaces, framing them as an essential aspect of any university and its relative competitiveness with other institutions. Academic libraries have also developed their support to help users with their information and digital literacy, equipping them to deal with the information-rich world they are living within. All of these changes are on top of decades of serious investment in academic libraries, particularly in the introduction of new technology. Libraries are different spaces to the book warehouses they are often perceived to be. This was well established throughout the literature presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

The BJL served as an excellent example of a neoliberal academic library. Taking place between 2012 and 2015, the BJL redevelopment began at the start of the

government's main drive towards neoliberal HE. Driven by the University Librarian alongside the Sheppard Robson the architects and design team, the BJL redevelopment was designed to highlight what a 21<sup>st</sup>-century library looks like (Heseltine, 2016). Quality, high-specification and technologically enabled spaces have made the BJL one of the selling points of the University of Hull (Mark, 2015; Heseltine, 2016). Alongside a customer-centric model of service provision, the BJL is the epitome of the neoliberal academic library.

Logically, the developments within academic libraries and their responses to the neoliberal agenda should begin to confirm their place in the future of HE. However, reality rarely matters. As the empirical research of this thesis demonstrated, there is significant complexity in how academic libraries are understood and experienced by users. The first section of this chapter will review the answers to each SQ of this thesis. This demonstrates that the fight to reframe libraries within HE is far from over. While there are significant changes taking place, these are not always acknowledged or understood by library users.

## 8.1 Reviewing the sub-questions

### 8.1.1 Defining 'library' and 'academic library' (SQ1)

The literature review of this thesis identified a range of definitions, concepts and paradigms used to describe the meaning of 'library' and 'academic library'. For the word 'library', there was a strong association with books, with the literal meaning of the word being 'book building' (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2019d; 2019e). There was also an acknowledgement here that libraries have changed. While the collection has always been important, through time they have developed to also focus on people too. Where the sole focus was on the preservation of information, libraries have developed to be comfortable places for those accessing the information (Wilkin, 2015). There was also a strong association between the library and the staff that work there – the librarians (Sennyey et al., 2009). However, this often focused on stereotypes of library staff and was not always positive (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014).

Having defined 'library', it was possible to consider how the concept of the 'academic library' is framed. As the definitions and principles of 'library' often transferred, at

least in part to the 'academic library', there have been several attempts to define the academic library. This is because 'library' does not necessarily reflect the reality of academic library provision. Some authors have very much focused on the academic library as a physical space, an aspect of real estate on university campuses (Saunders, 2015; Shoham & Klain-Gabbay, 2019). There is often an awareness of the library building as a valuable physical resource. The other approaches are much more focused more on service provision.

Bennett (2003; 2009) framed the academic library through three paradigms: reader-centred paradigm, book-centred paradigm and, learner-centred paradigm. Bennett (2003; 2009) suggests that the current paradigm is learner-centred. Similarly, Matthews (2009) developed a 'customer-centred' approach. Considering the importance of digital library resources, there has also been consideration of how the academic library is now a platform (Andrews et al., 2016a), this frames the library as more of an infrastructure for developing connections between users and knowledge. This has allowed consideration of how library resources are accessed beyond the physical library. Davenport (2006:12) argues this frames 'place as library'; essentially, the library is wherever a user is physically located. For example, if a student is accessing library materials digitally from home, this makes their home the library. In the same way, this could be a coffee shop, a train or other buildings on campus. The final approach considered was Wilkin's four pillars: curation; engagement with teaching and research; publishing, and finally, creating and managing spaces (Wilkin, 2015:237). This recognised the diverse range of activities undertaken.

Alongside attempts to redefine the academic library, others have taken an alternative approach and considered the possibility of renaming it. The commons approach (Storey, 2015) has seen many library-like spaces under a different name. This includes *academic commons* (Blummer & Kenton, 2017), *learning commons* (Bruce, 2010; Hussong-Christian et al., 2010; Stark & Samson, 2010; EDUCAUSE, 2011) and *information commons* (Church, 2005; Halbert, 2010).

As the literature review demonstrated, there are many approaches to defining both the library and the academic library. This included a broad acknowledgement in the literature that the association between the books and the library is too strong. The

definitions of 'library' are problematic as they do not reflect modern library provision. The focus on books, collections and librarians perpetuates stereotypical views of library provision which, at least in part transfer to the academic library. At this overview of SQ1 has demonstrated, there are multiple competing approaches to defining or theorising 'academic library'. Often these are narrow in focus and scope, and through SQ2 and SQ3, this thesis produced an alternative model.

### 8.1.2 The meaning of 'academic library' (SQ2)

The empirical research of this thesis re-approached the question of what an academic library is. Putting the literature aside, it engaged with students, volunteers, academics and library staff to build a model that reflected their view of what 'academic library' means. This identified the four meanings for the academic library: collections, social interaction (including support), physical space and exclusivity (Chapter 5).

Based on SQ1, the academic library as a collection was an expected finding. There was, however, much more complexity in how this was understood, especially when considering the association between library and books. While the frame of the academic library as books was an inevitable finding, there was an equal acknowledgement that the library collection is more than just books. This suggested that the understanding of library collections is changing and is more encompassing of electronic resources and other physical materials.

Social interaction as an element of the academic library stood in contrast to the traditional view of the library as a serious and silent (or at least quiet) study space. This not only reflected the view of participants but was inferred in the design of the physical library space. No longer are academic libraries spaces for individual study. They are spaces to collaborate and work on group projects. There was also reference to how valuable staff support was to library users.

The academic library as a physical space was, to some extent, a refutation of the focus on the digital space. This was not to suggest digital is not essential, but many of the fears over the future of academic libraries as presented in the introduction are based on concerns over digital access replacing the need for a physical library. This research

suggests that an all-digital future is still some time away – if it even happens at all. As above, libraries are more than resources; they are also places to congregate.

Finally, the idea of the academic library as exclusive was a direct contrast to the public library. Participants felt that public libraries were open spaces for the public good. As spaces designed for academics, students and researchers, academic libraries were seen as exclusive spaces. This does not, however, have to be the case. The BJL was noted as an exception thanks to the public art gallery, exhibition space and café.

However, these findings of what library users think an academic library is in the neoliberal university only present a partial picture of their engagement with the library. For this reason, the third research question explored users' lived experiences of the academic library

### 8.1.3 The academic library experience (SQ3)

Considering users' experiences of the academic library presented some interesting contrasts in comparison to their definitions of what the academic library meant. Library collections, which featured so prominently in the meaning of the library were rarely referenced in experience. Here, the focus was on learning, presenting the neoliberal academic library as more focused on the use of collections as opposed to their curation. Social interaction also featured, but in the context of the BJL, this developed as more of a community. There is a collegiate 'feel' to library spaces, with students bound common study goals. While community is important, there was also recognition of the academic library as a space of solitude. Social interaction also materialised in the support offered by library staff in the BJL, framing the library as a space of personal development. While the meaning of the library focused on social interaction, in experience the importance of solitude re-emerged. This represented the need for some library users to experience the library as individuals.

One of the most interesting contrasts between the meaning of the library versus experience is that of technology. Technology was rarely discussed explicitly by participants. The library was not framed as a technological space. However, observations identified technology as a ubiquitous feature within the academic library. Technology was essential to the use of the library for nearly all observed users. This

ubiquity perhaps contributed to the lack of acknowledgement it receives. This is also a useful warning for the problems of asking about library experience. Often the things that are most important to library users are so ubiquitous they bare no reference.

The thesis also found that the academic library was not a perfect experience. While the meaning of the library was quite idealistic when considering the library experience, more issues emerged. Academic libraries can be confusing, overwhelming, and perplexing. Here technology can emerge as a barrier, not an enabler. Studying for a degree or other higher-level qualification is difficult. As the academic library is the site of study for many library users, it also can become the site of distress, anxiety and upset for some users. While this may not be because of the library directly, it is something academic libraries need to be aware of. In the case of the BJL, the library was also seen as a source of support for these stresses.

Electronic resources were also identified as a problematic area. While all users agreed on collections as an essential aspect of academic library provision, there was confusion and disagreement over the role of the library in the provision of electronic resources. As demonstrated throughout the thesis, these resources are expensive, and it is highly problematic if the value of these resources is not fully realised. Even if it is, it is also an issue if this value is not attributed to the library, especially given the metrics and evaluations associated with neoliberal HE.

In exploring how library space is experienced, this thesis demonstrated a different dimension to the academic library. Experience goes beyond definition. The academic library is different things to different people, often all at the same time. This makes the library complicated to define and indeed suggests that many of the approaches presented in the literature review are far too narrow in scope. The next few sections will discuss how these findings challenge the existing literature on academic libraries, leading to specific recommendations.

#### **8.1.4 Summary**

As the answers to SQ1, SQ2 and SQ3 show, there is a complicated array of understandings and experiences of the neoliberal academic library. While this is slowly changing, dated perceptions of academic libraries still prevail – even amongst library

users. Often, dated perceptions were acknowledged as such by participants, yet still perpetuated. There was, however, signs of change. For example, framing BJL as a place of community and technology shows acknowledgement that academic libraries are more than just book warehouses. This has implications beyond the BJL and shows the need to acknowledge a change in both the understanding of academic libraries and the knowledge associated with them.

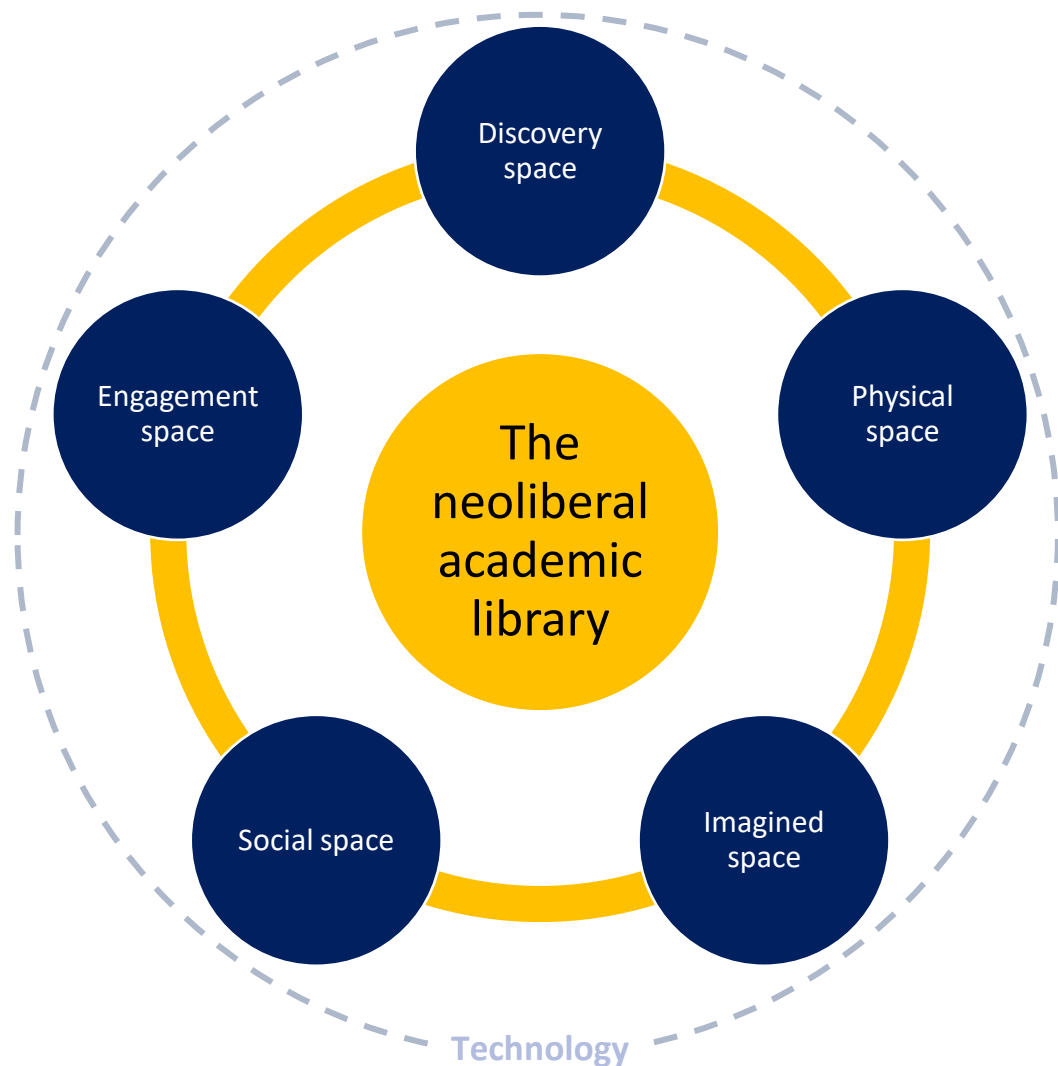
However, given the combination of financial pressure and a need to remain competitive in a neoliberalised HE market, the problem set out in the introduction is realised. If libraries do not demonstrate their relevancy, funding will be cut. If technology develops further, the existence of the physical library will be questioned. While the BJL is an example of a library that has substantially changed, this is not always acknowledged by users. But it is experienced by them. While the ways in which library users talk about academic libraries may not reflect their use of them, their experience does. While they may not discuss it, library users leverage immense value from academic libraries. This value must be recognised within the environment of neoliberalisation in HE. Academic libraries may be costly to run, and the resources they provide may be expensive. They are, however, essential spaces that support universities in remaining competitive while also helping students to navigate the neoliberalised world in which they live.

A partial response to the issues set out in this section is presented in answer to the MQ of this thesis. In answering the question of how users experience library space in the neoliberal university, this thesis presented a new framework through which academic libraries can be defined. This model can be used to demonstrate the broader benefits of an academic library, encompassing the diverse activities they undertake. The next section will revisit the findings of the MQ.

## **8.2 The user experience of library space in the neoliberal university (MQ)**

Based on the findings in SQ1, SQ2 and SQ3, the answer to the MQ of this thesis produced an innovative approach to defining the neoliberal academic library. This recognised five spaces to the academic library: physical space, imagined space, social space, engagement space, and discovery space. This finding stands as one of the primary contributions of this thesis. This has been summarised in Figure 8-1 below,

which is explicitly designed to expose neoliberal library space in a way that is accessible to library professionals.



**Figure 8-1 The five spaces of the neoliberal academic library**

The discovery space firmly placed the focus on the use of the collection as opposed to its curation. While curation is still essential, in the competitive neoliberal university, it is user satisfaction that us of the utmost importance.

The physical space reasserted the importance of the physical library. The physical academic library is not dead. This space is not blinded to digital access, also encompassing whatever spaces users may use to access library resources.

The imaged space demonstrates the complicated ways in which library users see library space. Physical reality is one thing, but there are a whole range of ideas and



experienced associated with the academic library that are essential enablers for the success of library users.

The social space weaves together the many threads associated with people throughout the thesis. This recognises that learning has changed and that socialisation and learning are inseparable. Academic libraries are no longer silent spaces (although some spaces within them will be).

Finally, the engagement space represents the critical association of academic libraries and librarians. This was, however, more encompassing of different library staff and the support they offer users. It framed the library as a space of personal development. This was an essential aspect of the neoliberal library, and also a cure for some of the problematic experiences associated with it.

Figure 8-1's overview of the neoliberal academic library is inclusive of all service areas. This presents an encompassing approach to defining the academic library as opposed to the models in the literature that often focus on specific aspects of the library such as customers, collections or spaces. In contrast, many of the models presented in Chapter 2 focused on specific aspects to the deficit of others. For example, Bennett (2003; 2009) and Matthews (2009) focused on the users to the deficit of all other aspects of the library. Similarly, (Andrews et al., 2016a) and Davenport (2006:12) risked acknowledging services, particularly digital ones, to the deficit of all other library activities. The findings of this thesis are purposefully encompassing and applicable to a broad range of academic libraries. As established in the methodology, this stands as a theoretical framework that can be further tested and explored through other research and case studies.

While Wilkin's (2015) model is similarly reflective of the broad range of functions, the details are quite different in comparison to the findings presented above. While Wilkin focuses on creating and managing spaces, there is little acknowledgement of the digital environments that are central to the operations of many academic libraries. There are explicitly acknowledged in the physical space of these findings as while the access may be digital, it still takes place in a physical location and the interaction is just as real as those done within the building. Wilkin also has no consideration for how

different users interpret the library, which is one of the significant contributions of this thesis. The findings here are not just a theoretical model, but something that has developed through empirical research.

Of particular note in this approach is the focus on discovery above knowledge, collections or books. Discovery still acknowledges the importance of curation but places the focus on usability. This very much reflects the current paradigm of library collections which is more focused on realising value from what is within the collection as opposed to the preservation of it for the sake of preservation.

The most significant space, however, may be imagined space. All of the models introduced in the literature review took account of the more tangible aspects of space (physical or digital). While some of the studies presented in Chapter 2 did consider the imaginary space, these tended to focus on public libraries, stereotypes, media, and popular culture. The imaginary space, however, accounts for the more practical implications for imagination in the neoliberal academic library. In particular, this suggested community was part of this space for it would not be possible for the community to be 'real' considering the numbers involved. Libraries need to be more aware of how this collegiality develops to nurture this further. While not a real community where all members know each other, library users are nevertheless ascribing to a common set of practices and beliefs.

### **8.3 Revisiting Lefebvre**

This section will overview how Lefebvre's (1991, 1996, 2013) work has utilised within the five dimensions of library space: physical space, imagined space, social space, engagement space and discovery space. To achieve this, the three Lefebvorean works that were operationalised in this thesis are revisited to discuss how they were extended to produce the critical output of this thesis, the five spaces of the neoliberal academic library (Figure 8-1). As Lefebvre's work is both challenging and difficult to operationalise (Lyon, 2018; Elden, 2004; Shields, 2011), this section demonstrates one of the significant areas of contribution of this thesis. The key concerns of these works in the context of neoliberalism are also addressed. Some of the ideas in this section are also further expanded later in this chapter (see Theoretical implications).

### 8.3.1 The production of space

For this thesis, *The production of space* was the most influential of Lefebvre's (1991) works. In this seminal work, Lefebvre exposed space as a social product constituted from three facets: the conceived space, the perceived space and the lived space (Lefebvre, 1991). These facets of space were essential to frame academic library space as more than a physical given (Chapter 4). This was used to expose how library space is designed (Chapter 2; Chapter 3), conceptualised (Chapter 5) and lived (Chapter 6). As such, Lefebvre's three-part trialectic of space both structured this thesis and directly influenced the development of the five dimensions of the academic library.

Lefebvre's (1991) conceived facet of space represents how space is conceptualised and represented in models, plans, maps and designs. As such, it can be argued that Chapter 3 is the epitome of this space as it represents the spatial plans and designs of both the architects Sheppard Robson (2020) and Librarian (Heseltine, 2016). More fundamentally, the conceived facet of space is represented in every space of the academic library: physical, imagined, social, engagement and discovery. This is because these spaces represent how academic libraries are conceived to be experienced and used. It is, however, the physical space that has the strongest association with the conceived facet. This is because, as represented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, academic libraries are important physical assets for the neoliberal university. This thesis has shown how the design or re-design of any academic library space is a detailed process, and this is quite literally represented in the detailed plans and drawings presented by the architects.

This thesis has built on Lefebvre's conceived space to show how it goes beyond just architects and planners, but more directly encompasses the everyday conceptualisations of users, their communities and broader media (such as literature and television). As argued above, such media representations develop an imagined geography of the library as a space. This thesis has shown that this is influential in how library users conceive library space. Another significant area of contribution for this thesis is the re-assertion of physical space as an essential component of the academic library. While the future significance of physical library space has been questioned throughout the literature (see Chapter 1), the conceived space has demonstrated that

physical space is still core to the library experience for many users. In an increasingly digital world, this is an important assertion. It should, however, be noted that this does not apply to all users, and for those working at a distance, their experience will be far less dependent on the physical space. Their experience is nevertheless still conceived.

The perceived space represents the day-to-day interactions (Lefebvre, 1991) in library space. In this research, focusing on the day-to-day was essential to expose the discovery space, physical space, engagement space and social space. These spaces represent the everyday uses of library space: finding and using information resources, physical resources to support productive work; the help and support offered by library staff or peers; and, the social interactions that characterise library space. The focus on the perceived space was used to expose the complexities of everyday library space, encapsulating the flows and movements within and across academic library spaces. This showed library spaces were not just framed by their physicality, but by their use and the activities of others. This is further expanded upon when considering rhythms and rhythm analysis in the next section.

This thesis has built on Lefebvre's perceived space to expose not just everyday interactions in library space, but to include flows of digital information. This shows that Lefebvre's framework can be expanded to include the internet, recognising how time is eroded by the (digital) space (Massey, 2005). More significantly, this thesis has used Lefebvre's framework to recognise that even digital interactions are physically situated in a particular space. This is a crucial point as digital activity is usually framed as placeless. In this thesis, however, the digital is recognised as a way in which the library can, at least virtually, become situated wherever a user is based at the time. This not only recognises the library as a platform (Davenport, 2006), but recognises the physicality of these interactions. When considering the perceived space and digital interactions, the discovery space is the core constituent of that space. As library services develop, however, the engagement space is of equal importance digitally.

The lived space represents the experience of space, acknowledging how it is influenced by a range of complex symbolisms (Lefebvre, 1991). While classical interpretations of Lefebvre focus on linguistic and semiotic analysis to expose this space, this thesis reinterpreted the lived space with the use of imagined geographies, influenced by

Anderson (2006) and Said (2014). Not only does this situate this study within the field of geography, but it also, arguably, presents a much more approachable conceptualisation of the lived space. This is directly represented in the imagined space of the neoliberal academic library. This space captures the many imaginaries of the library, as seen in literature, film, music, and other popular culture. While many studies represent the imaginaries of the library, few relate it to the everyday realities of how it impacts library usage, and this stands as one of the crucial contributions of this thesis. The imagined space, therefore, adds a layer of interpretation over the other aspects of the academic library. For example, observing the interactions of the social space through the lens of the lived space recognises the (imagined) community formed in library space. This does not suggest the imagined space is excluded from the other aspects of the neoliberal academic library, but that it is a set of glasses through which the other dimensions of library space can be explored. As such, the lived space is built from experiences of library space, and it is, therefore, more challenging space to grasp. This is because it is built from individual and social interpretations and practices, which also means the imagined space is the more contextualised to specific libraries and therefore more variable between them.

In revisiting Lefebvre's conceived, perceived and lived facets of space, it is possible to consider these more fully alongside the five spaces of the neoliberal academic library. This is presented in Figure 8-2 below, which demonstrates the intersections between Lefebvre's trialectic and my model. Here, the conceived space is shown as encapsulating of all academic library space, with a particularly strong association with the physical space. Similarly, the perceived space intersects with much of the neoliberal academic library. However, there is a more direct representation of the social, engagement discovery and physical spaces as these represent the practices and flows within the neoliberal academic library. The imagined space sits slightly apart, for imaginaries are both personalised and socialised. As discussed above, this space acts as a lens through which the other spaces can be interpreted by library users. While shown as apart, the imagined space, nevertheless, links to the other neoliberal academic library spaces to develop interpretations of space.

While the below diagram is of less use for library professionals, it is, perhaps, a better representation of the theoretical underpinning of this thesis, demonstrating the Lefebvrian influences incorporated into Figure 8-1 (above). This stands as an important area of the contribution this thesis makes, particularly to geographical understanding of library space. These more theoretical implications are set out in a later section of this chapter.

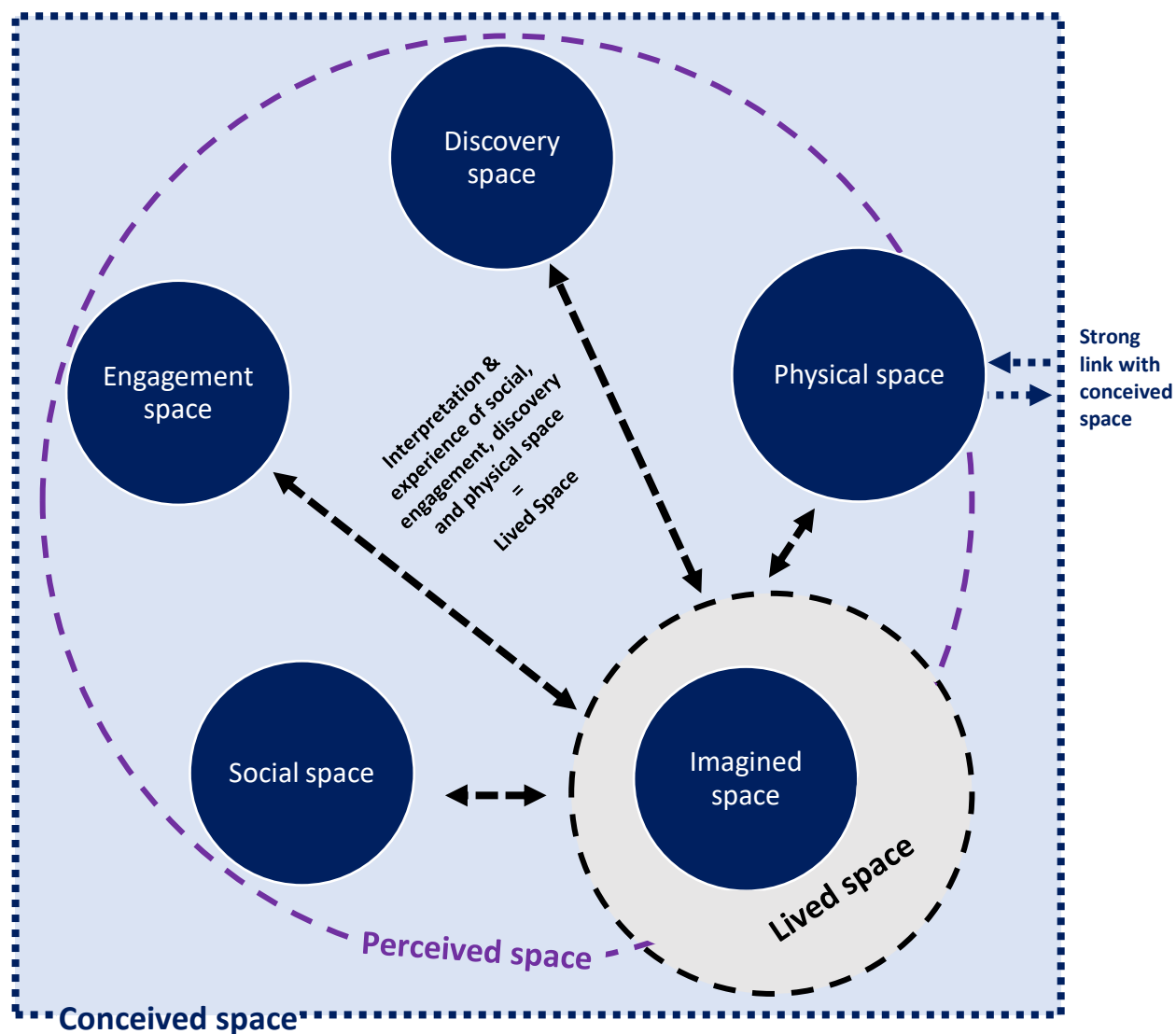


Figure 8-2 Revisiting Lefebvre with the five spaces of the neoliberal academic library

### 8.3.2 Rhythmanalysis

Lefebvre's (2003) *Rhythmanalysis* was a significant aspect of this thesis' method and methodology (Chapter 4). However, the influence of *Rhythmanalysis* goes beyond

method, as through researching and recognising rhythms, this thesis has shown how the neoliberal academic library is built from them. Recognition of rhythms helped to expose the everyday realities of academic library space. This was essential to uncovering many of the unspoken realities of academic library space, as demonstrated in Chapter 6. Rhythms are built into the five spaces of the academic library, recognising the dynamic nature of space. The neoliberal academic library is not static. It is built not just from the physical components of its environment, but from the actions and interactions of the library users within it. Through looking at rhythms, this thesis has demonstrated how the library can be a very different space at different times of the day.

This thesis has shown that rhythms are situated throughout the five spaces of the neoliberal academic library. In the physical space, library environments evolve through daytime and seasonal changes. There are hot days and cold days. There are days dominated by natural light where artificial lighting dominates others. For the imagined space, the interpretations of library evolve over the academic year. For example, the feel of the environment changes, particularly as assessment periods approach. At such times the imagined community of the academic library expresses a palpable tension. For the social space, interactions evolve through time. From periods of chatter at the start of the academic year to quieter periods of focus as assessment deadlines approach. The soundscape of space is closely linked to this. In the engagement space, library staff are dedicated to induction and directions at the start of the academic year. This progresses to more serious and detailed queries, and the trimester develops. These rhythms are situated within each day too. There are no library staff available overnight to help, and queries start to build as the library opens from 8 am. These peak towards late afternoon as queries trail off in the evening. Rhythms within rhythms. With discovery spaces, this thesis has demonstrated clear rhythms of use. These are plottable thanks to the available quantitative data, demonstrating clear cycles in the searching and use of information resources. In short, these rhythms build the five spaces of the neoliberal academic library.

Lefebvre is only implicit in how rhythms link to his trialectic of space, and this is not explicitly documented in *Rhythmanalysis*. This thesis stands as one of the few studies

to utilise both Lefebvre's trialectic and rhythmanalysis in research. As demonstrated in the previous paragraph, this thesis has identified rhythms within each of the facets of space: the conceived, the perceived and the lived. Rhythms are not just woven into the fabric of space, but they produce it. As this thesis has shown, such rhythms also produce the academic library.

While rhythms are essential to exposing the neoliberal library, this thesis' most significant contribution to rhythmanalysis is primarily one of method. As discussed in Chapter 4, despite authoring a whole book on the topic, Lefebvre does not document how to conduct a rhythmanalysis (Jones & Warren, 2016). This thesis has established the use of direct observations with the use of the AEIOU framework as an appropriate approach to conduct a rhythmanalysis. It has also shown how quantitative data can be used to target specific spaces, days and times to conduct 'sweep' observations. This allowed the recognition of rhythms in five spaces, over four daily periods across three times of the year. In the case of the BJL, this was a representative sample of times.

### 8.3.3 Writings on cities

Lefebvre's (1996) *Writings on cities* was briefly visited in Chapter 3. In considering neoliberalism, it was also appropriate to considering Lefebvre's work around the right to the city. In turning this idea to the Library, this thesis has briefly reflected on who the academic library is for – the users or to further the business goals of the university. Chapter 3 set out many ways in which users, particularly students, had a right to the academic library. While consumer or customer rights firmly answered this question, the issue is more significant than one of law. Access to the library and its resources is also an issue of equality and morality, as all students should have access to the resources they need for their success. There is also the issue of heritage collections and the role of the academic library in preserving these for the public good.

While this thesis has not significantly contributed to Lefebvre's work in this area, it has drawn parallels between the city and the campus. In the same that people are more than their production, so too are students. Where the city is an environment people come together, so is the campus for students. As this whole thesis has shown, the academic library is a significant part of any campus in the neoliberal university. As with *The production of space* and *Rhythmanalysis*, this thesis has shown how relevant



Lefebvre's work is today. Despite, Lefebvre's work being situated long before the true scale of both globalisation and neoliberalism, this thesis has shown that many of his questions around space, how it is produced and the role of power in this process are not only highly relevant today, but perhaps more so than when he wrote.

#### 8.3.4 Lefebvre and neoliberalism

In revisiting Lefebvre, it is also important to question his relevancy to neoliberalism. Across his published works, Lefebvre is well noted for his longstanding critique of capitalism (Lefebvre, 1991, 1996). Lefebvre recognised how the social structures of capitalism influenced the way in which the city is designed, understood and used. However, he also recognised that in influencing production, capitalism build structures of power that took control out of the hands of the people. Neoliberalism is not just a product of global capitalism; it is a set of policies that take capitalism further. As discussed in Chapter 3, neoliberalism achieves this through the liberalisation of both markets and capitalism (Guttal, 2007). While neoliberalism has brought individual freedoms, it has, however, primarily benefitted corporations, CEOs and shareholders (Harvey, 2005). As a form of capitalism, Lefebvre's ideas translate well to critique neoliberalism also. It is fair to argue that Lefebvre's disdain of capitalism would extend to neoliberalism, and if anything, his critique would become more scathing. This is because Lefebvre was overly concerned with the framing of people as a means to production, and neoliberalism does little to improve this position.

In *The production of space*, Lefebvre (1991) frames the city as a space built through the ways in which people work, interact and live. In his critique of capitalism, Lefebvre is wary of how cities have become spaces built for economic growth. For the university, the campus is the equal of this. In approaching HE through Lefebvre, it is possible to recognise how students can also be framed as a means for the University to gain capital (see Chapter 2 & 3). It is fair to argue that neoliberalism has extended this further. This places the Library as an economic asset designed to add value to the educational products offered by universities. This thesis is highly critical of this stance and has shown that the academic library is much more than this. The library is also a social good, providing resources to students and curating knowledge. It is an essential

aspect of widening participation, providing social and cultural capital to students that need it.

As shown in Chapter 3 of this thesis, students have a right to the library. This goes beyond a right granted from an exchange of capital. The same issue Lefebvre addressed to capitalism is equally applicable to neoliberalism. Indeed, it was through the application of Lefebvre to the neoliberal academic library that this tension was highlighted in Chapter 3, which questioned to what extent the library was for students. This was a broader issue. The purpose of the academic library and the conflicts around it has been represented throughout all the chapters of this thesis. A primary manifestation of this question is the issue of whom the library is for, with academic libraries grappling with the framing of students (and other users) as customers. While HE may be operating in global, neoliberal markets, this thesis has shown that Lefebvre's ideas are equally applicable. Library practitioners need to question, not accept neoliberal ideals. For this thesis, it was the use of Lefebvrian ideology that ensured neoliberalism was never accepted without critique.

#### 8.4 Implications

The findings of this thesis have demonstrated a series of problems for academic libraries. Neoliberalism is, undeniably, impacting HE. For academic libraries, this is characterised with raising costs and reducing budgets. Furthermore, fundamental questions around the need for academic libraries have been raised. Often this argument suggests online resources preclude the need for a physical library. This is, however, premised on the academic library being about collections alone. This thesis has demonstrated that academic library spaces are much more. This is acknowledged by how people use academic libraries. As Chapter 6 has shown, the academic library can be a place of learning, community, solitude, perplexity and technology. It can also be accessed digitally and does not require people to use the physical library building. While all of this is reflected in use, it does not necessarily emerge in the way users talk about the library. They see it as a collection above all else, with social interactions and physical environments playing a part in this too. This is an important finding because it shows how people talk about libraries is not enough to define them. If decision-makers rely on this framing of the academic library, it does not reflect its true worth. As the

model above has demonstrated, the academic library is much more. This must be acknowledged if academic libraries are to remain an essential aspect of the neoliberal university. If this case is not made, there is a real risk that academic libraries will become cost savings as universities aim to streamline operations.

This thesis's findings conclude on a rallying cry for continued investment and development of academic libraries. The library is not dead yet and must not die in the future. Academic libraries are not dusty repositories of books. They are physical, imagined, social, engagement and discovery spaces, all of which are vital to the success of students and other library users. Academic libraries cannot be complacent in their position in the university. As neoliberal higher education continues to build a sector focused on efficiency, quality and competition, there will be winners and losers. Academic libraries need to be aware of the competition, often for the first time. Technology corporations are straying into the territory of libraries, often providing a better service. Significant investment is needed in the development of library systems or procurement of solutions to compete with these firms.

While this section has focused on the findings of this thesis in relation to the research questions, the contribution this thesis makes in the area of methodology should also be acknowledged. While LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® is gaining traction as an educational tool, this thesis has presented one approach to applying it to research. Taking Blair and Rillo's (2016) approach and adjusting it to question; build; capture; and, share and reflect, has shown one possible application of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® in research as presented in Chapter 4. This was highly effective in exploring library space, a highly conceptual issue, and is also something that participants seemed to enjoy.

Considering this thesis in the broader context of geography, this research has contributed valuable insights into how academic libraries are experienced. Academic libraries are everyday spaces. To many students and academics, they are everyday environments that form a part of the experience of the university. Geography does not just study maps and the physical features of the land. It studies human interactions and cultures across space and place. This thesis has integrated geography into reflections on educational spaces to help understand how library spaces are conceived by designers and, perceived and imagined by library users. It has looked at how

academic libraries are lived and practised. This is a distinct contribution to geography in both operationalising geographic methods and developing inherently geographical theories about a particular space. This thesis has a different spatial view of the academic library when compared to existing research in this area, particularly that of other geographers. While the scale of this research is focused, it has shown the benefit of applying geography approaches to space in an educational context.

#### 8.4.1 Theoretical implications

As set out above, another contribution this thesis has made is in the application of Lefebvre's (1991; 2013) work to explore space. While this is certainly not the first study to use Lefebvre, the ambiguity in how to operationalise his theories in research has allowed great flexibility in using them to understand space, while also contributing new, use cases to the wider literature.

As Lefebvre's work was written in a remarkably different economic context, this thesis has also developed an approach to use Lefebvre's trialectic in the context of neoliberalism. This is important as Lefebvre's seminal works were written long before the full the neoliberal free market came to dominate global economics. In particular, the internet and the instant global flows of information were truly unpredictable for Lefebvre. However, rather than discounting his works, this thesis has shown how it is possible to incorporate a contemporary reading of Lefebvre's trialectic to account for this. The conceived spaces can incorporate the digital, and the perceived spaces include the flows of information associated with the internet. The lived space can incorporate both real, digital and imaginary spaces. As such, modern technological and economic developments do not invalidate Lefebvre's approach to space. As this thesis has demonstrated, Lefebvre's work is malleable enough to be still applicable today. More importantly, the Lefebvrian framework allowed the re-assertion of the importance of physical space. While the academic library is threatened by an overt focus on the discovery space, this thesis has shown that is only one facet of the academic library.

Finally, this thesis has made contributions to the application of Lefebvrian concepts as research methods. In particular, the Lefebvrian view of space as conceived, perceived and lived has been highly effective at exposing the diverse ways in which the

neoliberal academic library is understood and experienced by users. This can be applicable in other similar areas of geographical and educational research. In this thesis, Lefebvre was the driving force behind the use of focus groups, observations and quantitative data to expose neoliberal academic library space. This thesis has demonstrated that this combination of approaches is highly effective in exposing space. Furthermore, in the specific case of *Rhythmanalysis*, this thesis has shown how Lefebvre's conceptualisation of rhythm can help to capture how academic libraries spaces change through cycles of the day, week, trimester and academic year. While only used lightly in this thesis, it was a vital way of demonstrating the academic library is a dynamic space. Finally, the biggest concern in the application of Lefebvre is one of ontology. This thesis has shown that Lefebvre sits well within critical realism, accounting both for a material reality to the nature of space, but also different social interpretations. This is highly applicable for any researchers within to utilise Lefebvre also.

## 8.5 Recommendations

From the findings of this research, it is possible to identify six recommendations and future areas of research.

- Academic libraries must be appropriately funded to ensure they can continue to develop and deliver the full range of physical and digital services and spaces to the broader university community. Academic libraries need to continue to make this case to university management.
- There are several options as to how academic libraries may address the issues in how they are perceived. The central dilemma is whether academic libraries should focus on educating users to ensure they are aware of what libraries offer or whether the word 'library' should be abandoned because of the strong associations it holds. Information commons, academic commons, and learning commons are all viable alternatives.
- More work is needed to understand how users frame their online experience as part of the library – or not. At present, there is a real risk that valuable online resources may be socially undervalued by users, even where they economically deliver for the libraries budget.

- Future research in academic libraries should consider the stark difference between how academic libraries are perceived, conceived, and lived. This research has shown that asking people about their perceptions does not fully expose how they experience space. Innovative or participatory research instruments are required.
- There is potential for using geography to explore other educational spaces, and this thesis demonstrates some of the advantages of expanding this approach to other environments.
- Academic libraries are more than real physical spaces. Further research is needed on the imagined space of academic libraries to expose this space fully.

## 8.6 Summary

This thesis demonstrates that the way academic libraries are experienced and used demonstrates they are not 'redundant' or 'dated' spaces. They are spaces that enable the discovery of information resources. They are spaces that engage and support users in their work. They are spaces that provide technology to facilitate the creation of new academic works for both academics and students. They are critical social spaces that contribute to the university community. They are, perhaps above all, still physical spaces that matter. The digital library cannot yet replace them as they are more than just information repositories.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Library spaces



(based on: Solk & Heseltine, 2014, with own categorisation)

### The 38 types of space within the BJL

## Appendix B: AEIOU worksheets

This sheet is copyright 2011 Mark Baskinger and Bruce Hanington.

It can be found online at: <http://drawingideasbook.com/resources.html>

## Appendix C: Participants

Person	Category	Subject	Team	UG/PG
Academic 1	Academic	FSE	N/A	N/A
Academic 2	Academic	FSE	N/A	N/A
Academic 3	Academic	FHSC	N/A	N/A
Academic 4	Academic	FACE	N/A	N/A
Academic 5	Academic	FACE	N/A	N/A
Library Staff 1	Library Staff	N/A	HHC	N/A
Library Staff 2	Library Staff	N/A	Customer Services	N/A
Library Staff 3	Library Staff	N/A	Skills Team	N/A
Library Staff 4	Library Staff	N/A	Customer Services	N/A
Library Staff 5	Library Staff	N/A	Customer Services	N/A
Library Staff 6	Library Staff	N/A	Customer Services	N/A
Library Staff 7	Library Staff	N/A	Skills Team	N/A
Library Staff 8	Library Staff	N/A	Customer Services	N/A
Library Staff 9	Library Staff	N/A	Customer Services (Collections)	N/A
Library Staff 10	Library Staff	N/A	Skills Team	N/A
Library Staff 11	Library Staff	N/A	Skills Team	N/A
Library Staff 12	Library Staff	N/A	Research Services	N/A
Library Staff 13	Library Staff	N/A	HHC	N/A
Library Staff 14	Library Staff	N/A	Customer Services	N/A
Library Staff 15	Library Staff	N/A	Skills Team	N/A
Library Staff 16	Library Staff	N/A	Skills Team	N/A
Student 1	Student	FHSC	N/A	PGT
Student 2	Student	FACE	N/A	UG
Student 3	Student	FACE	N/A	PGR
Student 4	Student		N/A	PGR
Student 5	Student	FBLP	N/A	PGR
Student 6	Volunteer	FHSC	N/A	PGR
Student 7	Student	FBLP	N/A	PGR
Student 8	Student		N/A	UG
Student 9	Volunteer	FSE	N/A	UG
Student 10	Student	FACE	N/A	PGR
Student 11	Volunteer	FSE	N/A	UG
Student 12	Volunteer		N/A	UG
Student 13	Student	FBLP	N/A	UG
Student 14	Student	FHSC	N/A	PG
Student 15	Volunteer	FACE	N/A	PGT
Student 16	Student	FBLP	N/A	PGT
Student 17	Student	FHSC	N/A	UG
Student 18	Student	FBLP	N/A	PGT
Student 19	Student	FACE	N/A	PGR

## Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS (STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS)

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET TO KEEP

**Title of Study:**

READING THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY

**Department:**

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

**Name and Contact Details of the Researcher:**

LEE FALLIN

07506 744181

[Lee.Fallin@hull.ac.uk](mailto:Lee.Fallin@hull.ac.uk)

#### 1. Invitation

You have been invited to take part in a research project as part of a Doctor of Education (EdD) thesis. Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done, what your participation will involve, what data will be collected and how it will be shared/stored/analysed.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please make sure to ask questions if anything is unclear or you require more information.

Feel free to take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

#### 2. What is the project's purpose?

This thesis aims to understand how, as an academic library, the Brynmor Jones Library is experienced by different groups of people. This includes students, volunteers and staff, all of whom have different experiences. This research focuses on library spaces, both physical and digital

#### 3. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as you are fall into at least one of the following categories:

- University of Hull student
- University Library or City of Culture Volunteer
- University Library member of staff
- You have an association with the Brynmor Jones Library
- An architect or designer who worked on the Brynmor Jones Library redevelopment

#### **4. Do I have to take part?**

Participation is voluntary and it is up to you to decide if you wish to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also need to fill in a consent form to acknowledge you have agreed to take part.

You can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without prejudice. This means it will not impact your job, studies, well-being or any benefits which you are entitled to. If you decide to withdraw, you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up to that point. It is possible to withdraw your individual contributions until the conclusion of data analysis (four weeks after interview/focus group) by which point it will not be possible to remove data. The exception to this are the group contributions made as part of focus groups. As these are not identifiable to an individual, it is not possible to remove these contributions from the study once they are made.

#### **5. What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be invited to take part in a single focus group within which you will be asked to articulate and visualise your perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards libraries, and in particular, the Brynmor Jones Library. This will involve some group conversation, but to ensure everyone has opportunity to contribute, there will also be activities that involve LEGO, writing and/or drawing on both an individual and group basis.

The focus group will take approximately 2 hours of your time. This can be your sole contribution to the study, but you have the option to opt-in to take part in further aspects of this research. This includes:

- Taking part in an interview
- Taking your own photography within the library and sharing the photos with description/narrative.

If you indicate you are interested in further aspects of research, you consent to the researcher contacting you to arrange your further involvement.

Your consent to take part will be recorded on a separate form which you will be required to sign before taking part.

#### **6. Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?**

Focus groups will be captured with the use of photography, videography and sound recording. All recordings will only visually show focus group outputs (writing/drawing on flipcharts and LEGO models), no participants will be visually shown in any photo or camera recording taken by the researcher. At all times, the researcher will make clear what is being recorded.

Interviews will be captured with the use of audio recording. Participants will have opportunity to see transcripts of their interview and will be allowed to clarify anything on the transcript should they wish.

All audio and video recordings containing voice will only be available to the researcher for the purposes of transcription and analysis. One transcribed and analysed, audio will be destroyed for both audio and video recordings. The remaining audio-free video, photographs, transcripts and other anonymised research outputs will be published open access and an additional release form is included to facilitate this. No audio will be accessible to anyone but the researcher and no audio will be published.

**7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks to taking part in this research.

**8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

There are no immediate benefits for people taking part in this research project. Participants will have access to beverages during their focus group/interview but this is intended for comfort and not reward.

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will contribute to service development at the Brynmor Jones Library and the future understanding of academic library space(s).

**9. What if something goes wrong?**

In the first instance, any issues or complaints should be raised directly with the researcher.

If you wish to make a complaint or speak to someone external in relation to this research, concerns can be addressed to the Faculty of Art, Culture and Education Ethics Committee [face-ethics@hull.ac.uk](mailto:face-ethics@hull.ac.uk)

**10. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All information collected about you during the course of this research is strictly confidential. All research data will be attributed to pseudonyms and no one other than the researcher will have access to the identities behind these individuals. You will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications.

**11. Limits to confidentiality**

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it is possible, unless during our interaction I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

**12. What will happen to the results of the research project?**

Results of this research project will be presented and published as part of the EdD thesis. Further publications (including, but not limited to journal articles and books) may also result for this research project. All participants will have access to my thesis which will be published within the University of Hull institutional repository except in the event of my non-completion.

As suggested above, all non-identifiable pseudonymous research outputs will be published open access and an additional release is required to consent to this process.

**13. Data Protection Privacy Notice**

The data controller for this project will be the University of Hull. The University of Hull Data Protection Office provides oversight of University of Hull activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at [Data.Protection@hull.ac.uk](mailto:Data.Protection@hull.ac.uk).

Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this notice. The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data will be consent form and release you are required to sign before

partaking in research. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this project by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

***Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project.*** If I am able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide I will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact the University of Hull in the first instance at [Data.Protection@hull.ac.uk](mailto:Data.Protection@hull.ac.uk). If you remain unsatisfied, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Contact details, and details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/>

**14. Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is not organised or funded by any research body and is for the fulfilment of my EdD.

**15. Contact for further information**

**Researcher:**

Lee Fallin  
[Lee.Fallin@hull.ac.uk](mailto:Lee.Fallin@hull.ac.uk)  
07506 744181

**Supervisor**

Josef Ploner

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research study.**



## Appendix E: Information Sheet for Observations

**You have been given this sheet as the individual who has given you this is a researcher conducting observations for a study. Please see this information sheet and speak to the researcher if you have any questions or concerns.**

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR OBSERVATIONS

YOU CAN KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM IF YOU WISH

**Title of Study:**

READING THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY

**Department:**

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

**Name and Contact Details of the Researcher:**

LEE FALLIN

07506 744181

[Lee.Fallin@hull.ac.uk](mailto:Lee.Fallin@hull.ac.uk)

**1. About this study**

I am currently conducting non-participant observations. This means I am recording descriptive notes about what I can see in this library space. I am not recording anything that is personally identifiable and anything I am writing about cannot be attributed to an individual.

**2. What is the project's purpose?**

This thesis aims to understand how, as an academic library, the Brynmor Jones Library is experienced by different groups of people. This includes students, volunteers and staff, all of whom have different experiences. This research focuses on library spaces, both physical and digital

**3. Do I have to take part?**

There is no direct participation for these observations. If you wish to opt-out, just let the researcher know and any observations related to you will be redacted from the study as far as possible. This is because nothing identifiable is recorded and nothing is attributable to you is recorded.

**4. Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?**

No video, photo or audio recordings are made of observation sessions. Only notes and sketches.

**5. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks to taking part in this research.

## Appendix F: Consent form for participants

**I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes means that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element that I may be deemed ineligible for the study.**

- |  | Tick<br>Box              |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I would like to take part in a focus group  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I would like to take part in an individual interview  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to four weeks after the focus group or individual interview   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I understand I cannot withdraw my contributions to group elements of the focus group once they are made as they are not distinguishable to me as an individual  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I consent to the processing of my personal information (name and contact details) for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with all applicable data protection legislation.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored anonymously and securely. I understand that results and publications will be pseudonymised, and that as far as possible, it will not be possible to identify me in any publications. Only my organisational affiliation (but not the title of my position) and broad non-identifiable demographics will be used against my pseudonym. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. I understand that if I decide to withdraw, any personal data I have provided up to that point will be deleted unless I agree otherwise.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I understand no benefits have been made to encourage me to participate. I understand that I will not benefit financially from this study or from any possible outcome it may result in in the future.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. I agree that my pseudonymised research data may be used by others for future research. [No one will be able to identify you when this data is shared.]
11. I understand that the information I have submitted will be published as a thesis.   
I wish to receive a copy of it. Yes/No
12. I consent to my focus group writing, drawing and/or LEGO models being photographed and filmed. I understand my likeness will not be recorded as part of this. I understand that the audio portion of any recordings will be destroyed immediately following transcription, but the video with transcription and/or subtitles will remain.
13. I consent to my interview being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be destroyed immediately following transcription.
14. I hereby confirm that I understand the inclusion criteria as detailed in the Information Sheet and explained to me by the researcher.
15. I am aware of who I should contact if I wish to lodge a complaint.
16. Use of information for this project and beyond   
I would be happy for the data I provide to be archived online and made available open access. I understand my data will be transcribed and pseudonymised so only textual transcripts and photographs of focus group outputs will be released.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant                      Date                      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher                                      Date                      Signature

## Appendix G: Consent form for organisation

### CONSENT FORM FOR BRYNMOR JONES LIBRARY

I, Michelle Anderson of the Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull **Hereby give permission for** Lee Fallin to be involved in a research study situated within the Brynmor Jones Library.

#### **I understand methods used included:**

1. Interviews and focus groups with staff, students, library volunteers and city of culture volunteers
2. Interview with Sheppard Robson (Architects)
3. The use of non-participant/unobtrusive observation within the library
4. Use of non-identifiable secondary internal data (gate entries, floor counts etc).

**I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/initialled boxes mean that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study.**

- |   | Tick box                 |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheets for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that the researcher will be situated within the Brynmor Jones Library for the purposes of the research project. This project will include photography of the library and internal library spaces.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored anonymously and securely. I understand that results and publications will use pseudonymised names <u>for participants</u>  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand no benefits have been made to encourage me to allow the Brynmor Jones Library to be used as a study site. I understand that I will not benefit financially from this study or from any possible outcome it may result in in the future.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I understand that results will be used for research purposes and will be reported as part of an EdD thesis and may be reported in academic journals.<br>I wish to receive a copy the thesis. Yes/No  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I am aware of who I should contact if I wish to lodge a complaint.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained through the Brynmor Jones Library and will not be used if I so request.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. **Use of information for this project and beyond**

I would be happy for the data I provide to be archived online and made available open access. I understand my data will be transcribed and pseudonymised so only textual transcripts and photographs of focus group outputs will be released. Each participant of this study will provide consent for this and it will allow the open-access publication of data.

**Secondary data**

9. I am happy for the researcher to use non-identifiable internal data such as library entry gate numbers and floor counts. I understand that while such data may be used within publications, it will not be included in raw data publications.

**For observations**

10. I understand the researcher will not identify themselves to participants and will be unobtrusively sat within the building.

11. No students will be directly approached as part of observations and the method being used in unobtrusive observation.

12. As general, non-identifiable observations are being made, no participants will be approached to gain consent.

13. No recording equipment will be used and data will be collected with the use of descriptive field notes.

**For focus groups and interviews**

14. I understand that all participants will be briefed for this study with the use of information sheets and consent forms. Their participation will be voluntary.

15. I understand participants will be recruited with digital signage, email, announcements at the end of library workshops/events/meetings and social media. I understand that no students will be approached with library study spaces or disrupted in their studies with requests to be involved.

**Organisational naming**

16. As this is a case study, and as the study focuses on the library building, it is not possible to anonymise the organisational name. The Brynmor Jones Library will be named in research publications or other publicity.

17. I DO / DO NOT require an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the research findings related to the Brynmor Jones Library

\_\_\_\_\_  
University Librarian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature