

London Borough of Redbridge

Redbridge Central Library

**Bookseller
INDUSTRY
AWARDS**Shortlisted 2013 Bookseller
Library of the Year Awards

Redbridge Central Library, located just off the main pedestrian precinct in the town, was opened as a purpose-built library in 1986. The project presented many challenges as the building, spread across 4 floors, encompassed Redbridge's largest and busiest lending libraries for adults and children, a dedicated reference library, local studies and archives centre, the Redbridge Museum, the schools' library service and public meeting rooms. Having originally been established to address refurbishment of the ground floor and part of the first floor, the scope of the project expanded to include all of the first floor plus improvements to the second floor, a welcoming café in the foyer and an update of the building's directional signage.

Opening the Book was contracted to deliver an interior design which made the space lighter and brighter, implemented a successful transition from staff-led counter service to self-service via RFID and improved the customer experience for over 500,000 people visiting the library each year.

First impression

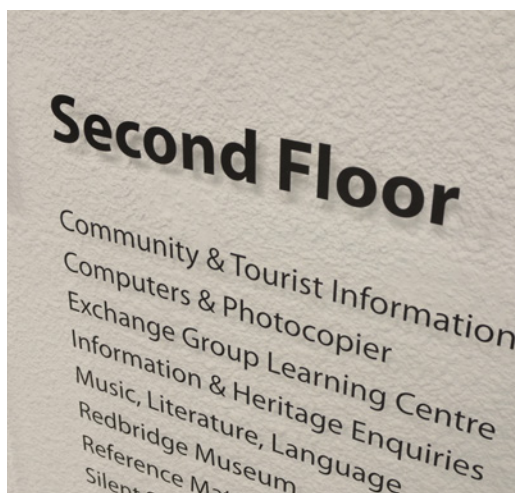
The most striking change for visitors is the transformation of a dark and uninviting entrance into a bright and buzzing area where books take centre stage through the use of retail-style display walls. Opening the Book worked with the architect and contractors to help open up the space, removing dividing walls and creating a new entrance straight through to the children's library. The addition of a café here makes this a welcoming area for families and individuals alike.



Children's library

A key part of the brief for the children's area was to make it flexible enough to accommodate the well-attended programme of events. Mobile shelving can be moved aside to create large areas for temporary seating. An interactive digital forest projection was installed – as children approach coloured lights dance across the screen and follow the child's movements.

Below: Journal display with storage
Below centre: Smart new directional signage
Below right: iPad stations for children



New ways of working

Opening the Book training supported library staff in the shift from being stationed behind large enquiries desks to being out on the floor assisting customers where they need it. One counter spans the transition between children's and adults on the ground floor and there are walk-to staff points in other areas. Staff also received training in how to merchandise the shelves using the new Opening the Book acrylics to aid display. Opening the Book acrylics to aid display.



Celebrating the architecture

Opening the Book brought a fresh eye to this tired building and planned a layout which brought attention back to impressive original features such as the stained glass window and original globe lighting. The colour scheme and flooring design enhance the feeling of space and light. The shelving layout achieves capacity without blocking any windows and makes the most of the popular original wooden benching built in front of the windows on the ground floor.



“For me, the quality of your product and how well it displays the book is a million miles ahead of anything else we've seen. The wider consultancy, merchandising and understanding of the book as a product again sets Opening the Book apart from the others.”

Gareth Morley , Head of Culture and Libraries,
Vision- Redbridge Culture and Leisure

Rebalancing distribution of the library offer

Another success of the project has been the space planning which looked at which areas of the library were under-used and where there was pressure on capacity. The new design spreads books and PCs across three floors meaning that, for example, the first floor, which rarely had visitors, is now attracting its proper share of footfall.



Hidden Museum

Opening the Book worked with museum staff to integrate objects from their collection directly onto shelves with appropriate stock.

