

An integrated study resource for veterinary students at the University of Edinburgh: the library and the “Study Landscape”

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Abstract

In 2011 the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies moved its teaching and learning activities to one campus. The Lady Smith of Kelvin Veterinary Library now links to the Study Landscape, a student-centred space for self-directed learning. This allows students access to a range of physical and electronic resources including specimens and themed resources. This paper presents the practical experiences of the author in collaborating with academic and technical colleagues to populate the Study Landscape with appropriate resources. This collaboration has increased our understanding of the different learning resources used in veterinary medicine and can assist us in our provision of more ‘traditional’ library services to the Veterinary School.

Key words: libraries; education, veterinary; schools, veterinary; librarians.

Background

The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies was founded by William Dick in Edinburgh in 1823 and is the oldest veterinary school in Scotland and the second oldest in the UK. It is within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. From the mid twentieth century the School, as was common in veterinary schools in the UK, was split between its city centre location which housed mainly preclinical teaching and its rural location where most of the clinical teaching was carried out. Each location had a library. In 2003 the School management group agreed that the split site arrangement no longer gave students the best learning experience. Furthermore, the School’s buildings were not best suited to changes in the curriculum and to learning and teaching methods. Planning then began on a new building which would consolidate all the veterinary teaching and teaching support in one location, at the University of Edinburgh’s Easter Bush Campus. Library staff were involved in the planning and design of the library space in the new building and academic staff visited new veterinary teaching buildings in Europe and North America. The Director of Teaching was impressed by the library and Study Landscape at the University of Utrecht and planning began for a similar resource at the School. It

was agreed that the library and study landscape facilities would be linked, but would be separate spaces, allowing for different types of study space, with noisy and quiet areas. The Veterinary Teaching Building was completed in spring 2011 and The Lady Smith of Kelvin Veterinary Library (LSoKVL) opened on 1 August that year.

Facilities in the new teaching building

The School has 778 undergraduate students, 389 postgraduate students (around 170 of the latter are online distance learning students). There are 571 members of staff located in a range of buildings across the campus. The Veterinary Teaching Building cost £45M and covers 12,500 sq m over three floors.

The building houses all teaching and teaching support staff. The ground floor has a variety of teaching spaces, including lecture theatres, teaching laboratories, post-mortem and anatomy dissection facilities and a café. The Study Landscape and the LSoKVL are on the first floor, along with further teaching spaces, group study areas and the Veterinary Teaching Organisation. The third floor has staff offices and School administration. There is wireless networking throughout the building to encourage “anywhere - any time” learning.

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The Lady Smith of Kelvin Veterinary Library

The LSoKVL (*Figure 1*) has 97 study seats and five group study rooms, providing a further 50 seats. The helpdesk provides library and some IT support.



Fig. 1. LSoKVL from the Reserve area (Copyright Ecospace)

With the move to the new facility the LSoKVL was asked to manage the lending of the School's sets of bone boxes. These are housed in the closed access specimen store in the LSoKVL and are issued from the helpdesk. The LSoKVL is staffed from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, during semester. However, students can swipe in using their student cards and use the Library outwith these hours. The Veterinary Teaching Building is staffed from 8am to 10pm, seven days a week, during semester, and students can swipe into the building and use the Library and any of the other study spaces. There has been a reduction to the open access print collection and there is an e-preference mandate. With the move to the new site the LSoKVL moved around half of its collection into the off-site Library Annexe and this move has ensured maximum space for study seats in the new



Fig. 2. The Study Landscape, taken from the door closest to the LSoKVL



Fig. 3. The Study Landscape

library. The Library Annexe has an excellent scan and delivery service and to date all requests for material from the Library Annexe have been fulfilled the same day. The Library links to the Study Landscape allowing students access to a range of print and electronic resources combined with specimens, and veterinary and animal husbandry equipment.

The Study Landscape

The Study Landscape (*Figure 2*) is an open study area for individual or group work. There are 86 seats in a variety of configurations: some are at individual PCs; some are at 'teaching studio' units with one PC per group; some are at open desks. There are whiteboards for group working and these are well used, as can be seen from *Figure 3*.

The Study Landscape has a life-size horse and cow which students can use to practice their haltering and bandaging techniques. The display cabinets in the Study Landscape contain specimens, animal husbandry equipment and other learning resources and students can use these alongside computer-aided learning programmes and textbooks. The specimens are rotated to reflect learning outcomes at different times of the year. The Study Landscape links to the Anatomy Dissection Gallery and students can also use the resources there. *Figure 4* shows the floor plan highlighting the flow from the LSoKVL to the Study Landscape. It also gives a detail of the Study Landscape floor plan.

Building the study resource

A Study Landscape Committee was established with academics, study support staff, technical staff and the Academic Support Librarian (ASL). The Committee discusses which resources to display in the Study

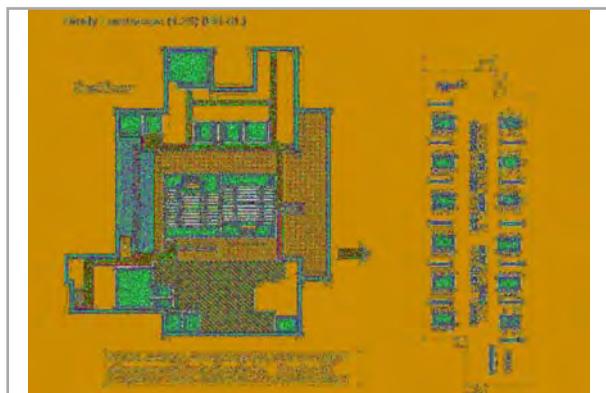


Fig. 4. Plan showing the first floor with the location of the Study Landscape. The LSoKVL is at the foot of this plan.

Landscape. The ASL works with LSoKVL helpdesk colleagues to ensure book displays are linked to learning and teaching. For example, a display of anatomy books and other resources, such as flashcards, can be timed to coincide with anatomy displays in the Study Landscape. Collaboration with committee colleagues has allowed members to share ideas on teaching and learning and the LSoKVL is able to purchase more material to support teaching, teaching methods and study skills.

Unexpected developments

Previously there were close working collaborations with teaching and learning colleagues, but the co-location of all staff on one campus has increased this. The ASL was previously based at a different location to most of the clinical teaching staff and it is now easier for the ASL to meet with these colleagues and vice versa. The ASL is collaborating more with study skills colleagues and works with the Lecturer in Student Learning on linked information skills and study skills sessions, built around the various stages of the assignment writing process. There has also been more collaboration with teaching staff around 'non-veterinary' subjects. The School is aware that the veterinary curriculum does not allow students time to study in other areas, as can happen in other degree programmes at the University of Edinburgh. Consequently staff are keen to encourage

students to look at non-traditional veterinary topics, such as poetry and art by veterinarians. There is now an annual 'the art of being a vet student' competition and the LSoKVL buys material to support this and has a display of relevant resources.

The LSoKVL is in a highly visible location in the building and could be described as a student 'hub' – students can now come into the library for a variety of information – from Edinburgh University Students Association 'Advice Place' leaflets on financial issues to stress awareness information. During the School's 'Stress Awareness Week' in 2013 students were able to collect 'exam stress survival packs' provided by the School and containing stress guidance, exam revision tips and sweets! The lending of the School's bone boxes (sets of dog bones used in anatomy classes) from the LSoKVL helpdesk has worked well and bone boxes are now available for short term borrowing for all students. This is well used, as evidenced by one of the students handing a bone to the helpdesk – she had found it inside an anatomy book!

Future developments

The LSoKVL is a well-used resource in the Veterinary Teaching Building and is popular with students; however, we want to continue to improve the service we provide to the students and staff of the School. We would like to work with academic colleagues to develop the use of QR codes on items in the Study Landscape. These could be used to point students to relevant resources in the LSoKVL or to e-resources. The increase of the use of displays in the LSoKVL to highlight lesser used items which the students might not have come across, but which may be useful to their learning is another area of possible development in mutual collaboration as is to work further with colleagues in Library and University Collections to catalogue more of the School's specimen collection and make these available for loan to the students. We would be grateful to hear from colleagues who have done this, or who are developing this. Finally, our main aim is to keep collaborating!

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