



What they say about using the AIU Centre

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Research Skills Series

What they say about using the AIU Centre

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Research Skills Series

I've written before about 'Ways into the Collection' as well as reasons why it's a good idea to consider the Centre's resources when planning for your study and research. But what's it like actually to use the Centre?

From my experience, using the Centre is like an adventure into the unknown in terms of the richness and quality of the resources at our disposal. Whilst it's true navigating the databases to find material relevant to one's particular area of interest can sometimes be tricky, that's more than made up for in the quality of input and guidance provided by the staff tasked to make our time in the Centre both enjoyable and optimal.

I'm mindful of course that these may just be my own opinions. So I've been interested to find out whether other users agree with my assessment by checking out their feedback.* In this blog post, I'm sharing what I found with you.



Image courtesy 'evondue'

(<https://pixabay.com/en/checklist-choice-priorities-survey-2277702/>)

Users came to know about the Centre via a number of routes, mainly bibliographies mentioning the collection, web searches, and the advice of their lecturers. Most found searching for material quite easy, especially when using the archive collection catalogues, although it was noted by some that using the general Manchester Libraries database was quite difficult. This is not news to Centre staff, who are engaged in ongoing work to make available resources on the [Centre website](#) which give insight into different aspects of the collections to help users find their way around more easily.

For example, my blog post '[Ways into the Collection: Databases](#)' gives potential and actual users detail on how to make the most of the available databases in ways that highlight the range of Centre resources they wish to find. In particular, there are instructions on how to use the Manchester Libraries database as well as the archive collection catalogues, so that users can avoid the frustration of trying to work this out for themselves.

Other user comments indicated that any difficulty in using the databases was outweighed by the quality of service and advice given by the Centre staff themselves. This chimed in with my own experience. All noted the eagerness of staff to help, and particularly the role of our Senior Library Assistant Ruth Tait in signposting additional material relevant to an individual's research topic (located in the archives and/or book collection) and flagging up as yet uncatalogued material which would soon be available.

Of especial note was the reflection that the staff with whom users interacted had insightful knowledge of what the different collections contained. Users appreciated the fact that this meant staff input could be proactive rather than being just the retrieval to order of materials identified by users from databases. Staff had obviously engaged with the resources, which meant they could give input on which parts of collections might be more relevant to a particular topic than others. This saved the users precious time, and made for a much higher quality experience.

Having taken a look at the feedback given by others, I was struck by the positive experience they had reported. My own reflections were therefore not unique, and I feel able to invite you all to come and see what the Centre offers to your studies and research secure in the knowledge that you'll be welcomed with the high quality service that I've enjoyed myself.

* My thanks go to Ruth Tait (Senior Library Assistant) for making available to me the anonymised user comments upon which the contents of this blog post are based.