

## LETTERS to the EDITOR



*From Kate Davenport*  
Head of Libraries

Dear Editor

### KNOWLE LIBRARY

Further to the letter from E.G. Webb about Knowle Library in the January 2007 Newsletter and the comments associated with it, I should like to reply on behalf of Bristol City Council.

The old library in Knowle was overcrowded and no longer suitable for delivering a modern library service. We investigated the possibilities of extending the old building, but this proved to be extremely expensive for very little gain of space. When we were offered an alternative in the shopping centre, this seemed to be a sensible option, and we were able to negotiate a good financial deal.

The new library is accessible by stairs, lift or direct by car using the rooftop car park, which has parking bays for disabled people right next to the library door. It is modern, bright and airy where the old one was cramped and gloomy. There is half as much floorspace again, and the contemporary furniture makes much better use of space. Use of the library by young people has increased by 25% since the move into the new library, while our long-standing readers continue to visit.

Signage has been an issue, and I should love to be able to promote our service much more positively at ground level. A change of ownership of the shopping centre during the negotiation process has not helped in this respect. We continue to work on improvements, and would welcome any help which Civic Society members can offer us in achieving it. However, we have used our major asset – the long first floor window looking out on the A37/Broad Walk junction – to do just what Roger Crudge suggests. We are proud of the new library, and have mounted a window display which not only welcomes passers-by to Knowle Library but also gives a flavour of what is to be found inside.

We should be very pleased to welcome Civic Society members and show them our vision for twenty-first century libraries.

*From Gary Gostelow*

Dear Editor

### KNOWLE LIBRARY

The library was moved from a lonely and vulnerable location on Redcatch Road with only one disabled parking bay to the first floor of Knowle Shopping Centre. (Yes, above the shops).

It is now close to the local amenities and is, therefore, much busier. There is adequate parking on the centre's roof for infirm and disabled readers to both park and access the library without any steps to impede their progress. This has enabled and encouraged previous library users to return to the library. Access is also available from the main body of the Centre via a staircase and lift. Although signage could be better it is just adequate both within and without the building.

The staff tell me that since the move was made the library is much more popular. There has been such a big increase in library usage and issues that some days they are literally run off their feet. The public computer facility has also been enlarged and enhanced.

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*From Francis Palmer*

Dear Editor, Chair and all members,

### KNOWLE LIBRARY

With due deference to all of our members with qualifications, experience and knowledge far beyond mine may I humbly voice an opinion regarding the debate concerning public libraries.

I read recently that Sony have launched a book reader that looks like real print has a battery that lasts more than 7,500 page turns and a memory that can store more than eighty novels.

When this gadget, its successors and computers are as commonplace in the home as an electric light bulb will future generations bother to walk through the wind and rain to visit a library? Will this mean the end of this civic facility? Not necessarily, hopefully if not for the storage of books over time the space will be utilised for different purposes beneficial to the community.

In the meantime we must ensure that the sites are retained and not sold off. However why not consider that it is possible for many of the existing valuable library sites to be developed? There are many places in our city where the library could be quite harmoniously incorporated in a larger building. The income from the development could then pay for the cost of running the library.

AN EXCEPTION TO THE ABOVE. HANDS OFF THE CENTRAL LIBRARY. Bristolian since the 13th century.

***The Editor thanks all those who have commented on this topic. However, she must now declare the correspondence closed.***