

From a bare room to 7 libraries and a nomination for the Times Higher Education award in less than 2 years

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I have been working for **Global Banking School (GBS)** since November 2020. GBS is a higher education provider, offering a range of sector-relevant courses across eight campuses in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and beyond. In partnership with UK leading Universities. GBS delivers vocational, undergraduate, postgraduate programs in finance, accounting, tourism, healthcare, etc.

The aim is to help our students thrive, in today's competitive job market, offering excellent links to employers and a focus to an one-to-one academic and career guidance in addition to our specialised courses.

In September 2022 our Library team had been nominated for the “Outstanding Library Team”, award by the Times Higher Education (THE Awards). Our submission was related to our achievement of setting up 7 libraries during the pandemic. A great honour and a supreme joy for a team that have worked very hard to get where we are today. The night of the Awards we all felt proud, and at the same time, it felt unreal as it had been a non-stop race to get there. Definitely, this nomination busted our confidence and was a great way to celebrate our professional journey, together!

Here is our story behind it.

November 2020 and during the Covid 19 pandemic, I joined GBS's ambitious family to lead the Libraries set up and development project. The pandemic time was challenging enough itself with regard to work habits, travelling and meeting people, and this reflected to the way we worked in delivering results.

My mission was establishing all the library and learning resources for our learning community and in the shortest possible time. After working alone for the first seven months, focusing on the E-Resources set up and implementation, as well as on the design and delivery of Information Literacy online workshops, our first Assistant Librarian joined in May 2021, followed by the rest of the initial eight people team.

At this time, we had 3 London campuses and more outside London coming up.

The speedy and continuous growth of the institution led as well to continuous restructure as more people were joining. Our team changed managers 4 times, which was challenging, but on the positive side, provided us with new experiences and opportunities to develop in various ways.

Our focus was on providing the best possible services to the students, whilst shaping the library spaces, systems and services. We were challenged with deadlines, number of students per campus, and the fact that the libraries had to open and support our learning community the soonest possible. We also had to decide on the Classification system we would go for. We had started with LC, but later switched to Dewey.

Most importantly, we had to choose our Library Management system.

After various remote meetings with vendors, we came to the decision that FOLIO by **EBSCO**, would be the one for our needs. A new LMS based on today's technology set up to cover our institutional needs. This, was a great experience and procedure, with many skills to gain and knowledge to expand! With two-weekly online meetings with the Implementation Team, we managed to set it up, step-by-step, in only 14 months' time. It enabled us to launch our circulation service, a much needed one for our students. Everything took place online, something very new to all of us and the team only had a face-to-face training in April 2022. We had though excellent resources and online training material to navigate and learn.

Next step was the EDS set up and the collection development. We wanted to enable our users to access the Catalogue online and also be informed about new orders. We set up an API and opened the communication between our LMS and EDS service.

Using the API, enabled our LMS to not only read the new orders and transfer the information to our live Search, but also, to import MARC records for the newly acquired holdings. We also doubled our physical collections in six months' time, covering all the core and recommended readings for our students and our teaching staff.

Another technology related challenge that we had was the import of students to our LMS, as the admissions system couldn't talk to the LMS. To resolve this, we used Postman, an app that massively helped us on importing students' data in bulk.

In the meantime, we set up Ask-a-Librarian sessions that take place weekly in all libraries and provide 1:1 support to our learners. A service that continuously gets more popular and definitely increase student engagement.

The whole frenzy procedure gave the team plenty of tasks, hundreds of working hours, and the opportunity to gain excellent new skills and demonstrate existing ones. Brainstorming, persistence, determination, and a common goal were our driving force, our mission and part in the learning community of GBS. And it's more than worthy to say that teamwork was the key to our success. A lot of different skills and experiences came up together to shape this team. Continuous training was a must do, to ensure that we are all on the same page. Proper time management, human resources management, leadership skills and motivation had to be summoned in order to make this project work.

Today, the team has also doubled its size and we work on the circulation of Chromebooks to our students, using our LMS and on the Information literacy training for our staff. We aim to continuously review our services and keep updated.

Until a new crazy idea comes to our heads.

We have a long way to go and lots of aspects to improve, but at the same time, we share a vision.

And when people ask me: "How did you manage to complete this huge project, in a year and a half?", my answer is always the same:

I am blessed with a great team, and we all count on each other.

These views are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the views of UKSG.



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