

## Re-invigorating the Libraries of Lincolnshire

Section  
13.0 Design for Society

Client  
Lincolnshire County Council

Design consultancy  
Optima Graphic Design  
Consultants Ltd

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## Executive Summary

In April 2010 Optima completed a 2-year project to re-invigorate Lincolnshire County Council's Libraries. We worked alongside a team of building contractors and the Lincolnshire Library Service.

Optima created a new brand approach for Lincolnshire's Library Service. This opportunity arose when the service switched to RFID (Radio-frequency identification), a self service system that was being installed. This removed large check-in desks leaving the need for building repairs. Many libraries had also not been painted or carpeted in the previous ten years.

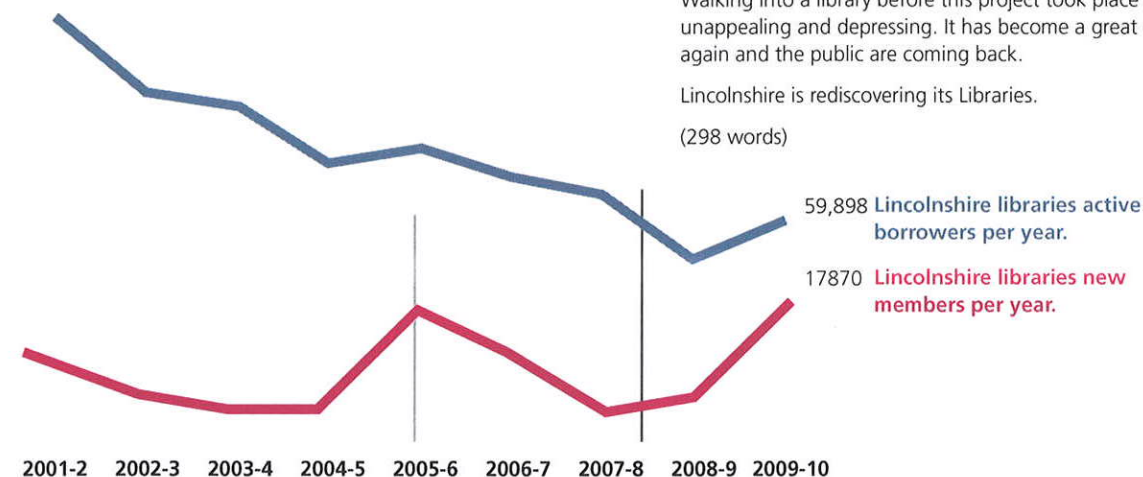
By looking at the figures you can appreciate the difference the redesign made:

- Turning around a year-on-year decline in Library usage, new memberships and active borrowers. **Following years of decline we increased new members by 2,330 the first big rise in 6 years.**
- When Waterstones or Amazon had become the Library to a large part of the public, we have recreated spaces that hold more value, people respected, appreciated and enjoyed. **Anti social behaviour has dropped by over 40% at Lincolnshire's premier city library.**
- People spend more time and come back more frequently. Visitors are discovering services that actually already existed because they are using the library for the first time in years. **Active borrowers is up 877 last year despite the amount of closures, this turned around an average 3,500 per year fall.**
- **Over 95% of all Library transactions now take place on RFID.** This system is similar to the self service booths in supermarkets and retail outlets that many people, especially the older generation, refuse to interact with. This is a real coup in an aging community.

Walking into a library before this project took place was unappealing and depressing. It has become a great experience again and the public are coming back.

Lincolnshire is rediscovering its Libraries.

(298 words)



Accounting of these figures changed in Lincolnshire in 2005 so there may have been a decline then too. Pre 2005 back to 2001 (furthest records supplied) figures had all continually declined in key areas of measure ie visitors to the library, books issued, new members and active members.

Optima's work with the Libraries project begins

## Outline of project brief

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### Goals

- Tight schedules that must be met. The RFID was to be implemented on a rolling schedule over 12 months, with minimal disruption to service.
- Work to budget - the budget was transferable between sites dependent on size, reuse/recycling of existing equipment and structural implications caused by additional building work.
- Create a Library Design 'Toolkit' - Optima were commissioned to create all the branding, internal and external signage, internal graphics ie illustrations, wayfinding, internal layout and interior decoration. This formed the Design Toolkit. - this evolved with the project so that the staff could implement change themselves with the remaining 38 county libraries.
- Ultimately the County Council wanted to see an upturn in all figures for the Libraries. An increase of 2,000 was verbalised for New membership during the advertising campaign for all libraries.
- Reclaim the shop fronts (previously rented to local businesses) to drive new visitors to the Library.
- Clearly identify the sections and services within the library. This includes IT and Local information and history.
- Create a consistent brand that added value to the Library service and placed libraries back at the heart of the community.

### Overview of market

Library users in Lincolnshire had been dwindling for a number of years and the central aim of this project was to encourage the public to re-discover their library, attract new visitors and shed their 'stuffy' image. The average age of Lincolnshire residents is older. In East Lindsey the average is 43.4 when the national average is 38.6, so we were tasked with not alienating the older generation whilst capturing the new. There has been a slow decline on a number of fronts.

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Individual visits	1,863,576	1,923,723	1,862,122	1,797,501	1,790,669
Items issued	1,930,093	1,823,731	1,682,011	1,542,933	1,453,686
New members	15,145	17,800	17,120	15,134	15,540

Lincolnshire is a very Rural county with a population of only 700,000 in the second largest geographic county in the country (almost 7,000 km<sup>2</sup>). The 4th lowest population density in England after North Yorkshire, Cumbria and Devon. Any marketing of change is difficult to target due to geography and limited media opportunities.

### Project launch date

Phase 1 completed 29th March 2010 ahead of schedule by 2 days.

### Size of Design Budget

Phase 1 and 2 combined was £1.52 million including all the IT kit, tags, tagging, property work etc. Total spend on property elements in Phase 1 was £600k. Total Design spend £75K for delivery of brand, visualisations, key individual signage pieces, new card designs, liveries and toolkit.



## Outline of project brief

### Outline of design solution

The 'discover libraries' brand promotes the multitude of activities that Lincolnshire libraries provides. The aim was to re-establish libraries at the heart of the community – a social place to take a break, meet people, read and relax. The graphic elements which make up the brand were developed to be flexible across a range of media including:

- Library cards
- Leaflets
- Small advertising campaign
- Signage
- Window graphics
- Online media
- Mobile Libraries

The brand also reflects a diverse community engaging with the library in different ways, grouped as:

- Information
- Learning
- Entertainment

Lincolnshire County Council commissioned Embervision to carry out audits of ten libraries. Embervision recognised that the libraries were dated and felt institutionalised. They recommended a move towards a more relaxed, informal 'boutique' style layout.

Optima were tasked with realising this retail style vision in the ten very different buildings. Working closely with the Council's contractor, Optima produced detailed layouts illustrating library stock, signage, interior decor, information graphics and wayfinding on scale plans using Google's Sketchup program. This enabled all involved to share the vision and to communicate the changes taking place to the public via the Council's website.

Each library brought with it its own set of challenges. Optima developed a set of central design principles that were applied to all libraries and formed the basis of the Library Design Toolkit:

- Consistent design templates to retain brand consistency. Creating a bold, cost effective and adaptable approach to building signage to work in a variety of situations. This gave the libraries presence on the High Street, whilst keeping an eye on the budget.
- Cleaner, clearer and easy to use internal wayfinding. A system of words and icons helps users identify topics and sections. We clearly defined the 'zones' in the library, enabling everyone to locate what they needed quickly. Highlighted the RFID system through both signage and zonal carpet colours made it easy to locate.

## Outline of project brief

- More end of aisle and free standing displays guide visitors through the library, created a lighter, brighter space to visit and work. Removal of large desks further enhanced the feeling of space. Key worries over security were dumfounded as the fall in anti-social behaviour reflected 'better libraries' had increased the public's respect for the service.
- Reclaimed the 'shop window' spaces for promoting library services and created bold displays that attract more people to look, visit and join.
- Designed local interest boards for each library using resources collated by the staff from each library. Space has been designated within each library to hold leaflets and flyers about local events and attractions. The fact that more people visit the libraries than there are issues highlights the importance of the Libraries as a hub for local information and IT access.
- 'Moving here' sections have been introduced to hold resources for members of the community from different nationalities whose first language is not English.
- Children's areas have been enhanced using vibrant colours and wall art, aiming to inspire a new generation of library users.

(497 words)

## Summary of results



## Summary of results

### Delivery Achieved

Critical to the commission was the delivery of 10 Libraries to a set timescale. The project completed 2 days ahead of schedule.

### Budget

The project including internal signage production, was delivered at a fraction over £600K.

### Changed perception

Within the last year the libraries have all closed for periods between 5 weeks and 10 weeks to effect the improvements. However the initial figures are fabulous showing:

- **The public have embraced RFID from day 1 and have averaged over 95% self issues and self returns, showing that customers are using the new technology in their droves.** This includes one elderly lady in Stamford who wanted to "make it harder next time", by using the self-issue machine in a different language!
- Proven increases across the board in interactions, new members and items issues. **A case study for Stamford denotes an 8.8% increase in interactions, a 42% increase in new members and an 8.2% increase in issues.**
- **First increase since 2005\* in new members during the initial 2008/2009 period including Louth and Stamford following a year-on-year reduction.** Turning around a 2,000 reduction into a 400 increase.
- **More importantly the first increase in active users since 2005\*. Figure had fallen since 2001 from 83,507 to 59,019 but in 2008-2009 started to rise to 59,896.** This rose despite one of the ten libraries being shut at any one point during the year.
- **PLUS survey on the Libraries attractiveness rising to very good in the first survey of 2010, up in Louth from 86 to 96%, in Stamford from 88 to 94% scoring 'Very Good'.**
- Reports on how the public have re-engaged with the library or is covered their libraries. **Two teenagers were overheard in the High Street in Stamford on go-live day. They remarked enthusiastically, "Have you seen the new library?" Members of the public have asked "Are the Libraries now run by the private sector?" and have pointed out, "It's like Waterstones but with a better choice of books".** These are all recorded by staff on engagement cards.
- When we placed a piece of advertising in local press highlighting the new libraries, cards and RFID Optima were advised that what the service wanted was to see a rise in visitor numbers by 2,000 from this promotion. **Stamford Library received over 2,000 visitors in its first weekend of opening.**
- **As the last library re-opened, total new members in 2009-2010 (DURING the bulk of the work) was up 2,330 to 17,870 and rising.** Higher than even 2005.

	2008-2009	2009-2010
Boston	1,994	2,393
Gainsborough	1,197	1,270
Grantham	1,766	2,312
Horncastle	360	526
Lincoln Central	3,439	3,390
Louth	729	1,104
Mablethorpe	620	623
Skegness	1,085	1,206
Sleaford	1,429	1,410
Spalding	1,451	1,760
Stamford	1,470	1,876
<b>Total New members</b>	<b>15,540</b>	<b>17,870</b>

\* Accounting of figures changed in Lincolnshire in 2005 so there may have been a decline then too. Pre 2005 back to 2001 (furthest records supplied) figures had all continually declined in key areas of measure ie visitors to the library, books issued, new members and active members.

## Summary of results

### Changes in behaviour

Libraries can often attract difficult customers. But despite the removal of large desks between the staff and the public, initial reduction in antisocial behaviour incidents (PO3 incident forms) are down on average 40%. In Lincoln, the largest library 16 incidents pre the RFID implementation has reduced down to 10 incidents being reported post the new look library. Same building, same staff, same equipment other than the RFID computers. Thanks to the changes, a 'different feel' to the library and changed perceptions this is all great for visitors and very importantly, for staff.

### Opportunities to develop the service

Following the declines in the service, the ability to be part of a project to turn the figures around has been fantastic. Mike Cavanagh who headed up the project wrote:

*"Optima's proposals and the way they have visualised the libraries through sketch-up has made it easier for us to appreciate the benefits and communicate the changes to the public. This made it so much easier for our implementation teams on site to deliver the dream and make it a reality. Decisions were made quickly, yet thought through, as part of an overall plan.*

*And oh what a difference the changes have made. The Libraries feel so much better to work and spend time in. They are bright places, that look modern and less cluttered. The stock is virtually the same but the look, the layout, the feel is one of a functional environment that has a much higher perceived value than we previously had.*

*In terms of budget, we have delivered a transformation in all our major libraries for a very modest sum. Big gains for small investment when compared with many other refurbishment and transformation projects.*

*This project is a huge success. Optima have been a great part of the team and the project would not have worked out the same without them. It has been great to work with them and the Brand manual and implementation guide they have produced means we can stay on track and make the rest of our libraries brilliant too!"*

This means that more people in Lincolnshire will have access to a better library service. The service can continue to grow in membership, hopefully preserving and expanding its services as a hub for the communities it serves in Lincolnshire.



Research resources



## Research Resources

### Research

Information has been obtained from the following sources:

- Customer conversation cards
- Lincolnshire Libraries PLUS survey
- Go Live Day anecdotes recorded by staff
- Library interactions, new members, members, active users, and issues, all from the electronic data collected monthly by Lincolnshire County Council. The method for counting visits changed in 2004-2005. Before that date, visitor numbers were estimated using a CIPFA methodology (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting). This uses a fortnight's count and factored it up by 26 to get a yearly figure. From 2004-2005 however, libraries used electronic people counters to count all those entering the library. PO3 incident forms are submitted through the service by staff.

### Other Influencing factors

Optima were part of a team.

Embervision, performed the Audits and Mouchel delivered the interior work including delivering the hardware. Intellident were the RFID suppliers and FG library supplied the new shelves and furnishings based on our requests. The service itself then managed the storage and restocking. Optima's role was as designers of key pieces and working with the Library service itself to ensure the new layouts and colour schemes worked. We ensured consistency for the brand and interiors in very different building types. Then helped the service communicate to the public what was happening and how the service was changing. There was a little new equipment including upgraded internet access computers and flat screens and some new stock changes within the Libraries. Fundamentally, other than the check-in/out RFID units, the service is the same.

We have only ever produced one piece of promotional marketing to advertise the changes to the service in the form of a local newspaper spread about the changes, appearing county wide in a free newspaper through residents doors. All other marketing was internal, ie within libraries or on the County Council's website. Other designers are now using the brand successfully to promote the service in other literature, but this too is only within the service, ie opening times leaflets.

## Appendices





Before Grantham



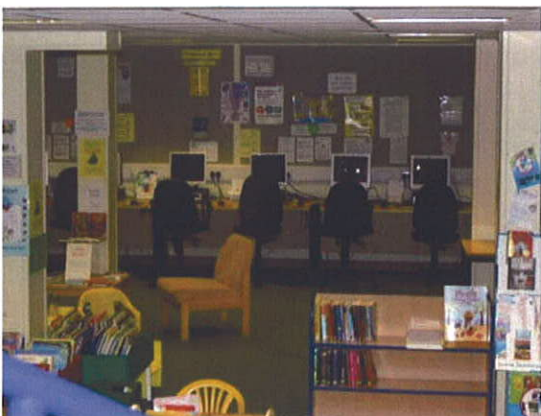
After Grantham



Before Lincoln



After Lincoln

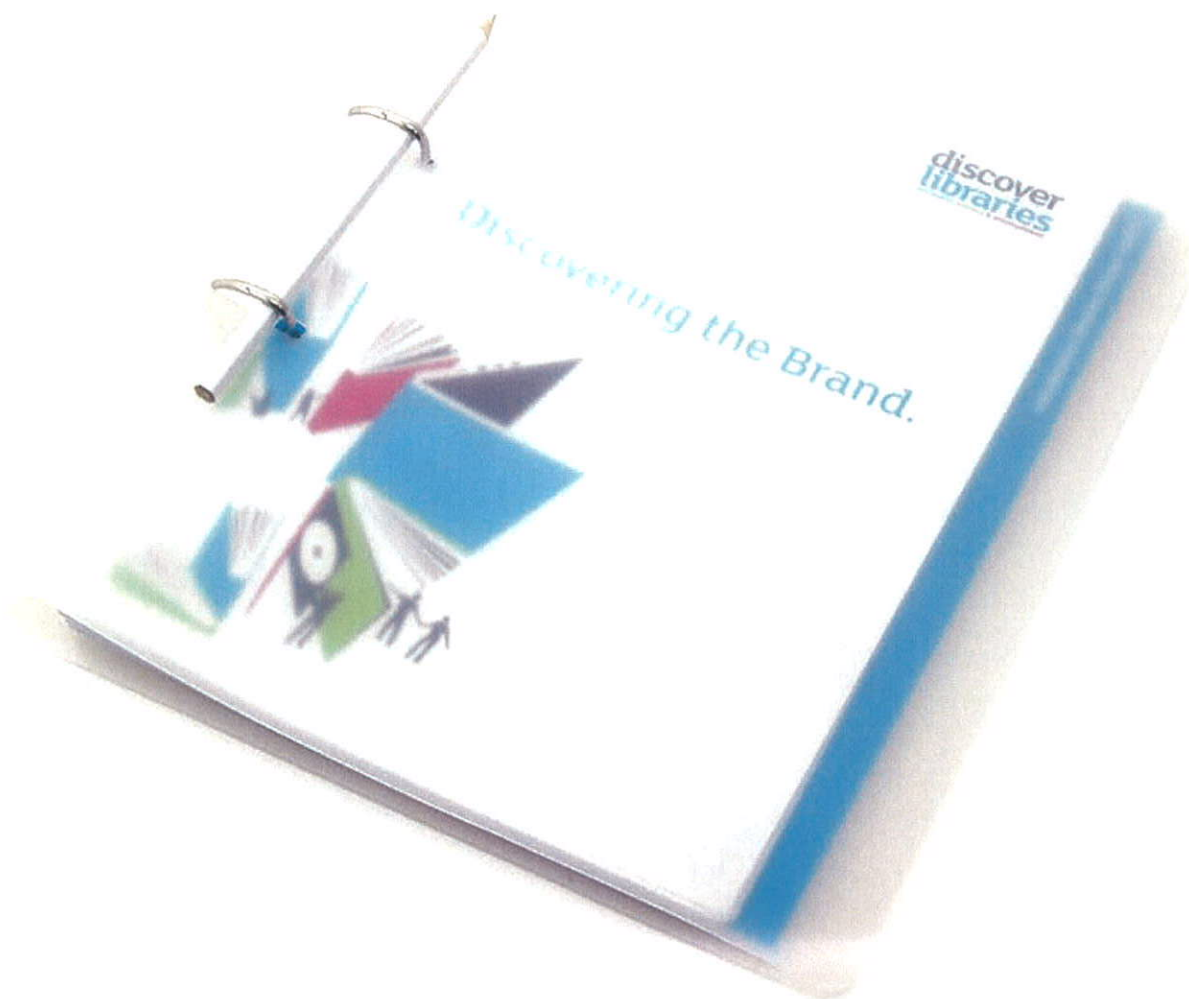


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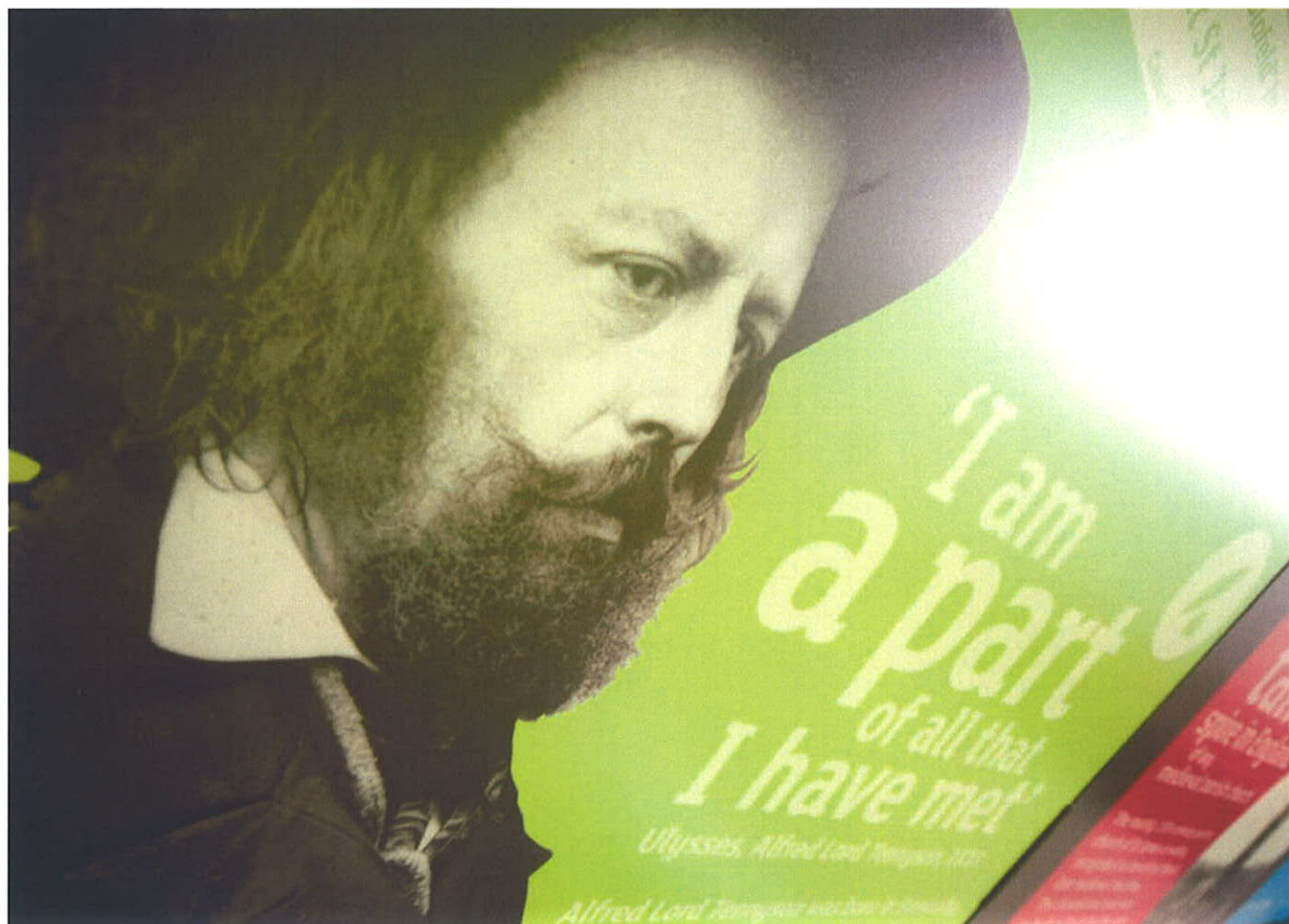


After Skegness













Lincolnshire Libraries  
**Design Toolkit**



Lincolnshire Libraries Design Toolkit



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