



Woodbridge Library: expanding the user demographic

Prepared for: as part of the Suffolk County Council Consultation Process

Prepared by: Adrian Melrose

30 March 2011

Draft 1



*Growing owner managed
business profitably*

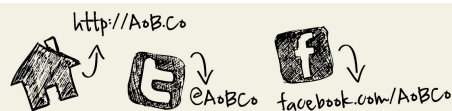




Table of Contents

Woodbridge Library: Expanding the user demographic	1
Background	1
Opportunity	1
Current Observations	1
Building a Digital Hub in Woodbridge	2
Race Online 2012 - A community initiative in Woodbridge	2
Conclusion	2
Next Steps	3



Peter Crofts

BY HAND

Date 30 MArch 2011

18 Britannia House
Woodbridge
IP12 2TW

01394 648 007
<http://aob.co>

Dear Peter

The Woodbridge Library: expanding the demographic

I enjoyed meeting you last week and thank you for all your efforts to help with the preservation of our wonderful new library in Woodbridge.

As promised, I attach a brief outline of what I discussed in the meeting.

I have posted this document online at <http://bit.ly/WoodbridgeLibrary> to encourage comment and debate and hopefully to recruit a few more supporters.

There are a significant number of people who support this vision and we could mobilise many volunteers if we needed to support your existing efforts.

Best of luck with the campaign

With kind regards

Adrian Melrose



Woodbridge Library: Expanding the user demographic

Background

We are all unsure of whether Suffolk County Council is in the position to continue to fund the Woodbridge Library expenditure of circa £300k per annum. There is now an urgent need to reduce costs and/or turn to alternate funding models to preserve and enhance the current service provision. The threat to continuity of service is of great concern to the local community (not necessarily limited to the current library users)

Opportunity

As a current user of the Woodbridge Library (only, however, on behalf of our young children) my observation is that there is an opportunity to tap into a demographic of user that isn't currently engaged in this community hub: those that create and consume media digitally (online). If we were to bring this demographic into the user base of the Woodbridge Library, we'd create a subsidiary revenue stream, and support structure of digitally inclined people who would both help with the ongoing running of the existing library services (stacking books, staffing help desk etc) as well as help create a critically needed Race Online 2012¹ presence in Woodbridge.

Current Observations

Out of town Suffolk has a poor reputation for the provision of higher speed broadband. There are currently few "digital spaces" for owner managed businesses who have harnessed the *power of digital* to meet, work and build a "startup culture" network. Woodbridge Library has a wonderful new purpose-built building including a conference room in it. I have discovered that this room is for hire at a charge of £35 per half day. It can accommodate 25 guests. It's modern, beautifully appointed and light and airy. This charge may initially sound understated but I later discovered that there is no

¹ Race Online 2012 is a national campaign to give Britain's socially and digitally excluded equal access to life-changing power of technology - founded and championed by Martha Lane Fox - the UK Government's digital champion (see <http://raceonline2012.org>)



provision of internet! - neither cabled or wifi anywhere in the Library. Should this required internet facility be offered, I can see no reason why the room would not be in great demand and command a daily rate way in excess of the current one. Not only that, but the occupancy would rise dramatically. I am yet to see the room in use by any group other than the library staff. Not only would the room be a fantastic facility but would increase the footfall to- and user base of- the library.

Building a Digital Hub in Woodbridge

In terms of the above and whilst the provision of internet (both cabled and wifi) would be a great way to boost the library revenue stream I feel that the space described above could be used in a more meaningful way both boosting the revenue stream and creating a digital hub in Woodbridge expanding the user demographic of the Library to create a pool of progressive digitally inclined volunteers who would support the current and proposed community initiatives. If the room were to be used to create a members only hot desking work environment the Woodbridge Library could become a digital hub in Suffolk. Paid membership would entitle users to access a “hotdesk” in the facility for up to 10 hours a week - booked online on first-come-first-served basis this facility could produce up to £10k per month² The setup cost would be minimal and involve purchasing workstations: this could be sponsored by one of the private digital agencies in Suffolk.

Race Online 2012 - A community initiative in Woodbridge

Going forward it is critical that those who have been digitally empowered help those who have been excluded (for whatever reason: social, economic or lack of knowledge/empowerment/confidence/facilities). The Library’s support base continues to be threatened by the Digital Divide and rather than fight it, the Libraries need to embrace this and play a central role in bridging this divide. Race Online 2012 is a national campaign to give Britain’s socially and digitally excluded equal access to life-changing power of technology - founded and championed by Martha Lane Fox - the UK Government’s digital champion (see <http://raceonline2012.org>)

Conclusion

What better way to transform the Woodbridge Library into a digital hub - creating a precious revenue stream to preserve the existing services but also to recruit a new digital demographic who can also help in the Race Online initiative?

² Based on 120 members @ £80 per month.



Next Steps

A group within the Suffolk Digital Community would be fully prepared to develop a comprehensive plan if the above achieves any traction. It goes without say that this would be a project for the community by the community and would be funded by the volunteers.