

# **N E W S   R E L E A S E**

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010

## **VISITORS HAVE THEIR SAY ON THE LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM**

Next week sees the start of a new round of Community Engagement activity for the Library of Birmingham, giving local people an opportunity to learn more and have their say on the interior of the building, due to open in 2013.

Members of the public are invited to drop into the Central Library Foyer in Chamberlain Square from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, where they can discuss the project with knowledgeable library staff. The activity, which continues from 10am-4pm until April 19<sup>th</sup> (excluding Sundays) focuses on the internal design principles developed by the design team at Mecanoo, and how they can be developed to satisfy the needs of everyone in the city and create a world class library.

The latest round of Community Engagement follows on from the previous period in April and May 2009, which sought to determine how library users would like to interact and engage with the Library of Birmingham and the facilities they would like to see included. With over 1,000 participants, the results of the activity detail how suggestions from members of the public will be incorporated into the new building in Centenary Square.

30% of all comments focused upon facilities, with accessibility highlighted as a key area. Requests included larger lifts and escalators, improved disabled access, and suitable toilet facilities on every floor. Other features that figured heavily in findings included the provision of a prayer room, cafes, outdoor terraces, and disabled parking.

Staffing was also high on the priorities of those who took part, with many saying that staff should be clearly identifiable, approachable and knowledgeable about specific subject areas. Participants also spoke of a need for help points on every floor, designed not to be a 'barrier'.

Posters detailing the key points resolved in last year's Community Engagement are currently being distributed around the city at Community Libraries and in Central Library, and the full report is available in the Community Engagement section at:

<http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/libraryofbirmingham>.

Many of the issues raised last year will be explored and built upon in the latest round of engagement, which provides an informal environment for members of the public to engage in discussion over a cup of tea or coffee, see examples of the interior design ideas and discuss how they can be used.

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Brian Gambles, Assistant Director, Culture said:

“Community Engagement is vitally important as we strive towards a truly world class library. It is essential that future users of the Library of Birmingham have their say on exactly what they want to see, and the results of last year’s focus groups gave us an invaluable insight into what the public expect from a modern library. This latest consultation gives our visitors an informal forum to sit down, enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, and discuss the development of the library with a knowledgeable member of staff. We look forward to seeing the results as we continue turning our vision into reality, to provide the finest facility possible in 2013.”

## **Media Enquiries**

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