

BBC Learning English
Talk about English
Academic Listening
Part 8 - Using the library



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This is not an accurate word-for-word transcript of the programme.

ANNOUNCER:

It's time for **Academic Listening** - a series for students at English-speaking universities. Join Susan Fearn and members of the World Service class of 2001 for this programme that focuses on using the library.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

My name is Clare, welcome to University College London Library. We're in the Arts and Humanities Library at the moment...

Susan: Clare Woodhouse works in a busy university library.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

On a typical day, on the issue desk when we first come out we empty the book bin - where you leave books after the issue desk is closed. So we return those first thing in the morning, switch on the computers, change the date stamps and then we open at 9.30, and students can come in from that point.

Susan: Last time we thought about academic reading and at some of the different skills that can help you gather relevant material quickly and efficiently. But where do you start? Libraries contain thousands of books, on dozens of subjects. And they're scattered - it sometimes seems at random - around a number of different rooms - and sometimes many different buildings ... as this student has discovered.

CLIP: Student

At my University the Library is divided specifically in subjects, or in areas - because it's Oriental and African studies, so some of the areas are divided in South Asia, South East Asia, Africa, and then in other parts of the library the division is made of topics, like art, or archaeology, anthropology, linguistics and things like that. There is another important section about periodicals, and they are divided in big volumes and all the references are in the main floor. So we go there to get all the information in the computers and then we go to the reference which is created on the computer to look for the books, and I think it's very important to start - at the beginning - to start knowing how the books are classified, so when we go there we actually find them. Otherwise we can get lost very easily...

Susan: ... and no wonder! But it doesn't take long to start making sense of this apparent disorder ...and the sooner you start, the quicker you'll finish!
As a new university student, the chances are you'll be invited to visit your new library on a guided tour. And my advice is to make sure you go! You'll discover areas in the library where you can sit and study; perhaps you'll find a university computer where you can practise your English, type an assignment, gain access to the Internet or open a new email account. You'll discover how the library is organised and, perhaps most importantly of all, you'll learn how to locate a book ... on any subject – from architecture to zoology. Imagine, for

example, that you want to find a specific edition of your favourite novel: “Oliver Twist” by Charles Dickens.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

When you're given your reading list for the course, you need to come to the catalogue hall and you get the computer screen and say we're going for 'book title' - if you click under 'type word or phrase' - so we put in 'Oliver Twist', then click on 'g'o and it comes up with all the titles with Oliver Twist in them. So we'll go with this one - say we're going for the 1949 edition. It'll tell you which library it's in and how many copies are available - so you click on the 'library' and then it'll come up with the item status. If it's out it'll have a due date - if it's out on loan - and then the classmark. The classmark is given to every book in the library and it will tell you exactly where it is on the shelf - so we'll then go and find the book.

Susan: Different universities have different systems to help you locate their books. The principle is the same. You'll need to do a search: using the title of the book, or by the author's name, or, perhaps by the subject area. If you're lucky, your search will result in a sequence of letters and numbers. This classmark is a code that will tell you where to find the book – in which building, in which room, on which shelf.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

The first part of the label will say English - which means it's in the English section of the library. So when you're there, the next part of the label will be XR - so you go round the shelves in the English Library to XR. Within XR, the number - 1 to 20 and Oliver Twist will be at number 20, and then it's arranged by author so it will be DIC for Dickens. Right now we're going to look on the shelves. So the classmark, the first few letters are the location within the library. Then the number will tell you the shelf and then the three letters are the first three

Susan: So, once you've found the book – you'll want to read it. There may be a study area in the library where you can read it straight away. In fact, if you've selected a book that belongs in the reference section of the library, you'll have to read it on the premises. And if you've chosen a very popular book, you may not be allowed to keep it for very long. A librarian will tell you the borrowing regulations at your library: which books can be taken home and for how long; how many books you can borrow at once; and what will happen if you don't return them on time! The librarian will also explain how books are issued - where you'll need to go and what you'll need to do. As Clare Woodhouse explains, students at University College London use their student identity card.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

When you join the university you are given an ID card which also counts as your library card. So when you find the book you want to borrow you get your ID card, go to the issue desk and you give them the card and the book. They scan the book, put it onto your library record, the computer reads the barcode - then you can borrow it for the time that's allowed on that particular book. We have three hour loans, overnight loans, one week and standard loans, which it'll say on the front cover, and you get the book stamped in the front and you then borrow it until that date, when it needs to be returned.

Susan: Increasingly, as academics publish their research online, students are finding that the internet can be a rich source of valuable, up-to-the-minute information. A word of caution though: because it's so easy to publish material on the World Wide Web, the volume of material can be quite overwhelming. And it's sometimes hard to check the academic credentials of the authors.

So, if you don't want to tackle virtual publications just yet, another place to find contemporary research is in the periodicals or journal section of the library.

Periodicals are usually organised by subject, but may be in a different part of the library – away from the books. Clare Woodhouse again.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

If you look up on the library catalogue and it says 'economics periodicals', they are shelved separately from the books. We have a current display of periodicals - the last three years in this central shelving unit - and then around the edges we have the last ten years available.

Susan: As many of you will know, perhaps to your cost, you sometimes face problems you hadn't expected. The university library is a busy place. There can be long queues to take out books or use the photocopier; the book you need may be on loan to someone else; you may want a rare publication that your university has to borrow from another library using an interlibrary loan scheme. Your essay deadline is looming, and it's all taking much longer than you anticipated ... so make sure you give yourself plenty of time!

That's not the only problem known to students and library staff alike.

CLIP: Student

Well I think that the libraries nowadays are organised in very similar ways but it always depends on the technology that is put in the library. Some libraries that I used in Mexico for example didn't have very computerised systems so it was more difficult to find books. Having had the opportunity to make research in libraries in Spain, Mexico and Britain, what I can say now is the main problem is not actually the language but getting to know the classification in each library and getting used to it with the time - that would be the most important thing for me.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

The main problems that students have with using the library are things like when books haven't been borrowed by cannot be found on the shelf - they are often being used by someone in the library or are sitting on desks when someone has used them, so they are not issued to anyone but they are not on the shelf.

Susan: You'll need to learn how the catalogue system works and how the library is laid out. And, remember ... if you're having problems, help is always on hand.

CLIP: Student

The librarians in libraries, I think they are very, very crucial for our searching for a book because sometimes we can find the classification for a book but once we get there we cannot find the book, and if there is no one to help us to find it, on many occasions we cannot get the reading done. So I think the job of the librarian is very, very important.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

My advice when using the library would be - don't be afraid to ask, either the librarians or other students. They're more than happy to help. The other advice would be, come in with the book titles you want written down so you can show them to the librarians so they can see exactly what you want - and mainly just do not be afraid to ask, because we are here to help.

Susan: And we end today as we begin ... with a helpful hint . There's one very quick and efficient way to learn how your university library is organised – right at the beginning of your university career.

CLIP: Clare Woodhouse

Another good way is to come to a library tour. Most libraries will hold tours for new students within the first two weeks or so of term - make sure you come on one of the tours and they will show you where everything is and how it all works.

ANNOUNCER:

That brings us to the end of the programme, in which Susan Fearn discussed university libraries: how they're organised, how they operate, and how you can use them efficiently.