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<http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> (Retrieved 22 January 2007)

# ***InfoZone*: an enticing Library and IT induction?**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the *InfoZone* initiative was to develop a successful non-credit bearing combined Library and IT induction, to entice students into Library and IT facilities, and introduce them to basic services and information literacy skills early in their HE career. The aim was to navigate students through an ever growing and confusing mire of information and systems, to provide them with the basic tools needed for their first few weeks at University, and in so doing support the University's retention programme.

**Methodology:** This paper reports how librarians embraced new methods of working to deliver general Library and IT inductions. Evidence suggests that these new methods including project management, marketing and user engagement assisted the success of this initiative in the continual attendance of students from 2003 onwards.

**Findings:** Evidence gathered from the past six years of the project suggest it is possible to create a basic combined Library and IT induction which students will attend and benefit from at the start of their courses. The article recommends that by constantly gathering attendance statistics and qualitative feedback from students and staff involved in such an enterprise, the proactive and continual improvement to the delivery of such inductions will occur.

**Originality/ Value of the Paper:** This paper offers an innovative and engaging formula for the successful delivery of non-credit bearing combined Library and IT induction. This paper also shows *InfoZone* to be an annual project which needs flexibility to adapt to the ever changing information landscape.

## **1. Introduction**

Do students attend general library inductions without the external motivator of assessment? Perhaps when you get the formula right! During the past six years at Staffordshire University, over 1700 students have attended a basic combined library and IT induction known as *InfoZone*. This has been successful because its formula includes strong project leadership, staff and student ownership, responsive yearly delivery and it is embedded into the wider context of *Welcome Week* (a series of University wide events for new students). This article examines how *InfoZone* came into being, its organisation and the embedding of combined library and IT inductions within a University service (the newly merged Information Services). Finally, discussion is given to how these interventions (which deliver baseline information literacy skills) are measured for future development to ensure that students attend "boring" library and IT inductions. Recommendations are put forward on how an organisational template for delivering these inductions should be constituted.

## 1.1 What is *InfoZone*?

*InfoZone* is the combined library and IT induction offered annually to new students during *Welcome Week* at Staffordshire University. Designed in response to a number of internal and external factors, which will be highlighted, these 50 minute inductions provide students with the fundamentals of library and IT services and a base line of information literacy skills to enable students to function comfortably in their new learning environment. *InfoZone* is also used to promote the information literacy credit bearing module (InfoSkills) and to signpost future generic, integrated and embedded information literacy training which is available (from Information Services) to students throughout the academic year.

## 1.2 Creation of *InfoZone*

The genesis of *InfoZone* occurred during 2003 in response to a number of factors:

Firstly, the need for a combined library and IT induction was identified by staff when the University merged its library and IT services to form 'Information Services'. Previously, ad-hoc separate student inductions had been delivered by staff from each service, often causing duplication. The staff from the *InfoZone* project group identified that students would benefit from attending a series of sessions starting with a basic introduction to services, followed by future classes aimed to develop a range of information literacy skills.

Secondly, the newly merged service created professional challenges which helped to shape the creation of *InfoZone*. For example, librarians in the newly merged service became the key teaching staff. However, the main challenge of the merger was for librarians to embrace IT and embed this into teaching sessions which had previously focused on library skills and services. As a result, librarians at Staffordshire reinvented themselves by proactively embracing IT knowledge through various means of hands-on learning and information sharing.

Thirdly, the need for a combined induction was fuelled by the confusing mire of electronic systems and information provision which daunted new students. Systems included a wealth of online information including databases, e-journals, e-books, and support systems of e-mail, online printing, VLEs and portals. Librarians recognised the confusion that this rapidly changing information landscape generates and the need for clarity regarding support systems.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the University's student retention drive supported the creation of a more coherent combined induction to the libraries and IT facilities. It had been noted that the majority of students leaving University did so during the first few weeks of their course. Although factors contributing to this were varied, including personal and financial considerations, the University created a Welcome to University Group comprising of faculty and support staff including the Student Office, International Office and Student Union to tackle this issue. This group introduced a number of timetabled events to guide students through the difficult first few weeks of University life. Information Services shared their idea of a general combined library and IT induction with this group, feeling that it may help students to gain confidence with library and IT services, making them feel part of student life and to support retention. As Edward (2003, p.228) has indicated: "Commitment to the institution, a sense of belonging, is seen by many as paramount in the survival of a student." Consequently, *InfoZone* inductions became an integral part of the Welcome to University Group's activities from 2003 and which has helped to secure the project's profile and its success over the past six years.

These factors helped to forge *InfoZone*'s identity at the University. It is now felt that the process of collaboration between faculty, librarians and administrators in the Welcome to University Group, regarded as an essential part to any successful information literacy programme (ACRL 2000; Bundy 2004) has become the norm at Staffordshire University.

## 2. The InfoZone Project

Once the need for a combined Library and IT induction had been recognised, a project group was formed to take this initiative forward. The group was comprised of librarians, marketing, IT and web development staff. In 2003, developing services via in-house project management was relatively new to Library staff. This practical method of service delivery, practised by IT colleagues, was introduced to library staff at the creation of the combined Information Services. Pinfield (2001) identified this as an element of the changing role of librarians, emphasizing that “project working is becoming more common” and that librarians “are expected increasingly to develop a project mentality and project-based ways of working” (Pinfield 2001, p. 37). As a result, the *InfoZone* project was scoped, scheduled and staff identified on paper, and presented before the Senior Management Team of Information Services for approval before any work was undertaken. On reflection, the project group feels that this structured approach of service development proved an invaluable aid to the success of this initiative. For example, identifying the scope and staffing of the project from the outset successfully focused the activities of the project, giving each group member a task and clearly defined roles of activity:

- Create a lesson plan / learning outcomes to provide a 50 minute induction for new students including essential IT and Library services (Librarians & IT)
- Develop a ‘name’ / brand (Marketing)
- Publicity of events (Marketing)
- Involvement of wider University groups to encourage participation and support for the initiative (Librarians & Marketing)
- Staff training to deliver inductions (Librarians)
- Development of a supporting website (Web Developer)
- Creation of an online quiz to support learning outcomes (Librarians & IT)
- Obtain student and staff feedback for development (Librarians)

These factors have remained the main focus of the project group during subsequent years, helping to embed the project into an annual practice of working and service delivery. The task orientated ethos of the project encourages library and IT staff to bond as a project group and has helped staff to feel that they have equal ownership of the project. This ownership and motivation has helped the continued successful delivery of the project on an annual basis from 2003 onwards. Today, the majority of the original 2003 project group still contributes to this project.

## 3. Marketing

Marketing has played a pivotal role in the success of *InfoZone*. The newly merged Information Services created a new Marketing Team which enabled project staff to tap into new ideas and methods to promote services. Marketing was a relatively new concept to librarians at Staffordshire University in 2003, a thought echoed by Brewerton (2003) who indicated that “Marketing is often viewed as something done by business people or pop stars. At best it is a rather flamboyant “add-on” and not core to the real work of information management” (Brewerton 2003, p. 268). As *InfoZone* was a general induction package with no lure of academic credits, targeted marketing to advertise this service was regarded as essential.

One of the first considerations for the group was the identification of a name. Previous generic inductions had simply been ‘Library’ or ‘IT’ inductions. Now that the service was merged, a ‘Library and IT induction’ seemed confusingly long. Project staff wanted to formulate a new name, which could be marketed easily, appealed to new students and could incorporate both elements of the service. As a result, staff provided suggestions, and ‘*InfoZone*’ was chosen as it implied the provision of information. The name also enabled marketing colleagues to develop a ‘brand’ approach, by creating a series of eye-catching logos (see figure 1). The purple logo was designed after discussion with the Student Union and *Welcome Week* group who use the colour purple to

identify themselves during *Welcome Week* events (for example, Student Union volunteers wear purple T-shirts). Marketing colleagues embraced this idea and developed the *InfoZone* logo to reflect these events; this helped to embed *InfoZone* within the wider University context of *Welcome Week*. Students surveyed in 2003 indicated that they also favoured the *InfoZone* logo (90 out of 131). Many felt it was “*simple and straightforward*” and it was obvious to its purpose. For example, one student indicated:

*The ‘i’ represents info and the circle shows that there are/is a lot of info around.*

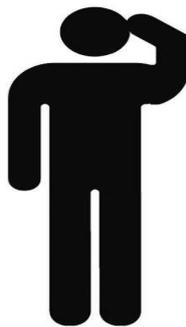
A number of students also liked the logo as it was “*purple*” and was repeatedly a “*favourite colour*”. 117 students out of 122 surveyed students also indicated that they thought the name was appropriate as it was “*easy to remember*”, “*recognisable*”, and even “*cool*”, “*snappy*” and “*Hip*”.

**Figure 1: Purple *InfoZone* Logo 2003**



From 2007, the purple logo was replaced with a ‘stick-man’ logo (see figure 2) as the University introduced corporate colours of red, white and black. The stick-man was designed by marketing colleagues to support these new colours and to continue to use a ‘branding’ approach to raise *InfoZone*’s profile across the University.

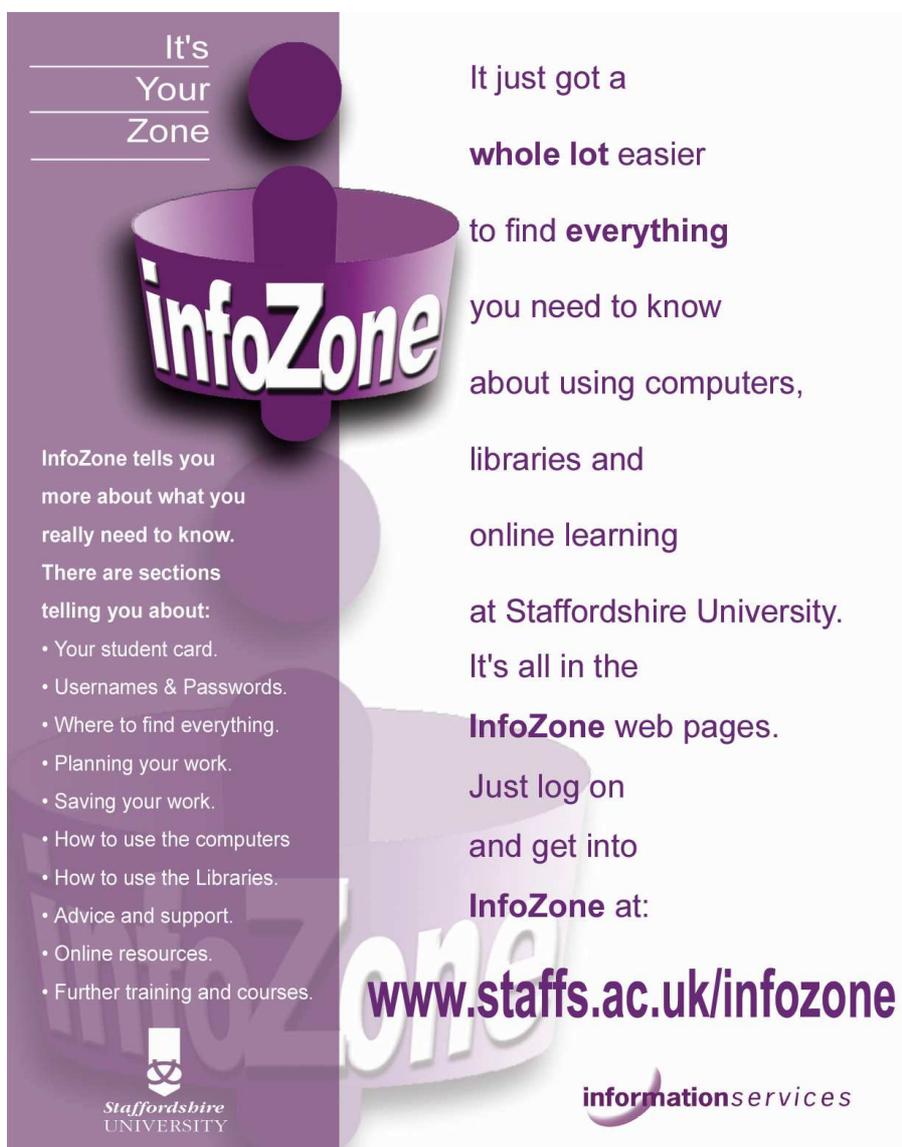
**Figure 2: *InfoZone* Logo 2007**



Marketing staff also developed new marketing strategies to promote *InfoZone* including the use of free postcards from an external marketing company, to provide an overview of what students can expect from attending these events. The cards appealed to students and staff as they were an

eye-catching design and easy to use (see figures 3, 4 & 5), and were displayed throughout the libraries and IT centres. The Student Union was also given cards to display and to deliver during *Welcome Week* as part of their 'Information Drops'; these 'drops' involved the daily delivery of printed material to halls of residence on campus to inform new students of events for that day. To further enhance the programme, marketing staff have annually secured prizes that have enabled us to develop an online quiz as part of the induction with yearly *InfoZone* competition winners. Prizes have been freely donated from various library suppliers, the University Bookshop and Information Services who have provided print and photocopier credit. From 2003, prizes have included DVD players, digital cameras, local theme park tickets and book tokens. These prizes not only increased the profile of prize contributors, but also the *InfoZone* inductions. Winners are photographed at a special prize-giving ceremony which has also helped to raise *InfoZone's* profile.

**Figure 3: *InfoZone* Postcard from 2003**



The postcard features a purple and white color scheme. On the left, a purple vertical bar contains the text 'It's Your Zone' at the top, followed by a large, stylized 'infoZone' logo. Below the logo is a list of topics covered by InfoZone, and at the bottom is the Staffordshire University logo. The right side of the postcard has a white background with purple text describing the service and providing the website URL. A large, faint 'infoZone' watermark is visible in the background.

It's  
Your  
Zone

**infoZone**

InfoZone tells you more about what you really need to know. There are sections telling you about:

- Your student card.
- Usernames & Passwords.
- Where to find everything.
- Planning your work.
- Saving your work.
- How to use the computers
- How to use the Libraries.
- Advice and support.
- Online resources.
- Further training and courses.

It just got a **whole lot** easier to find **everything** you need to know about using computers, libraries and online learning at Staffordshire University. It's all in the **InfoZone** web pages. Just log on and get into **InfoZone** at:

**[www.staffs.ac.uk/infozone](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/infozone)**

**information**services

Staffordshire  
UNIVERSITY

Figure 4: InfoZone induction postcard from 2007 (front)

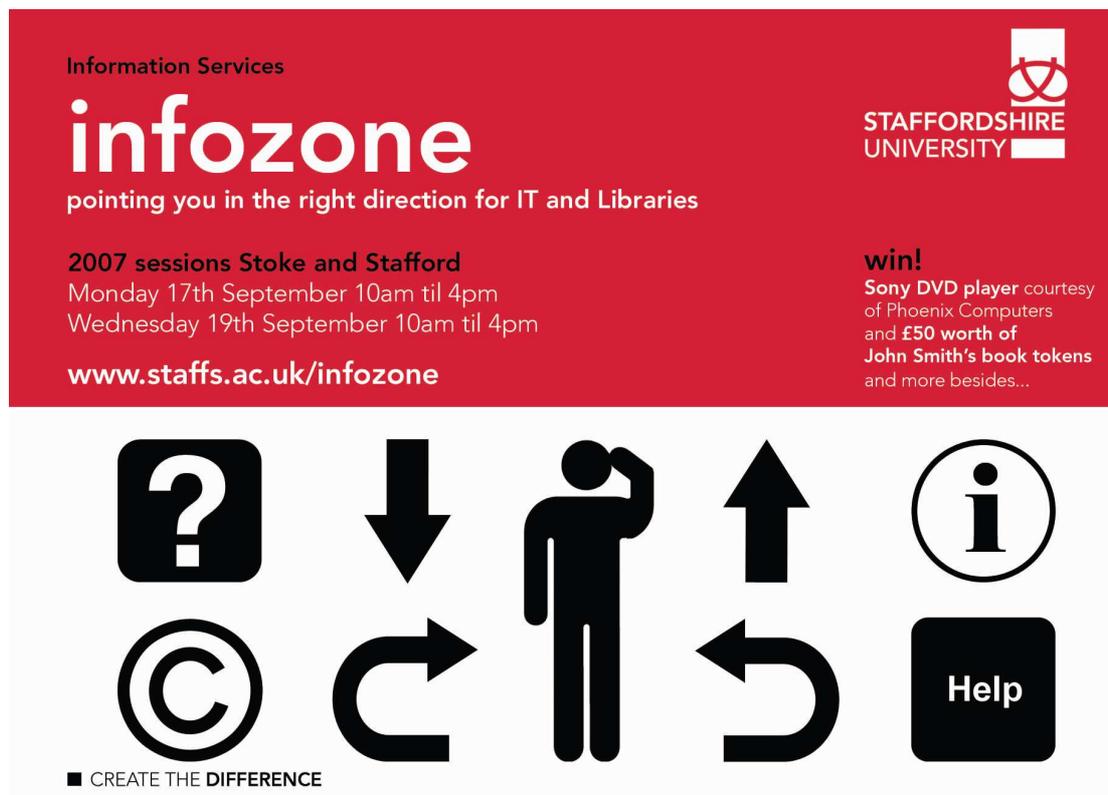
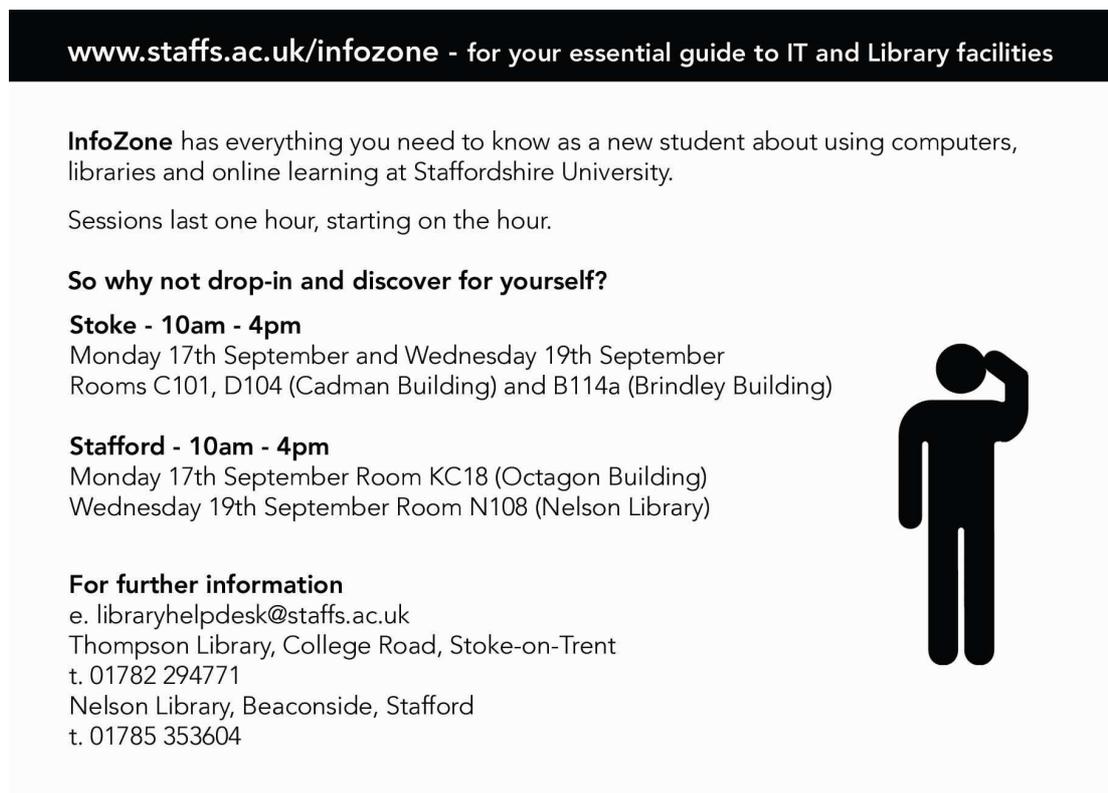


Figure 5: InfoZone induction postcard from 2007 (reverse)



## 4. Do Inductions Engage Students?

From the start, project staff wanted to develop a teaching and learning intervention that was both interactive and engaging to enable students to get started with basic library and IT facilities during their first week at University. Staff wanted to move away from inductions that were “passive and dull” (Edward 2003, p. 226) and had previously relied upon PowerPoint demonstrations and formal speakers to present Library and IT information to new students. Librarians wanted to encourage ‘hands-on’ interaction with resources to enable students to engage with resources available to them from the start of their courses. As a result, staff embraced these ideas and identified key factors that new students would need to understand about Library and IT services (see below) and used these factors to develop learning outcomes following guidance set out by SCOUNL (2004).

- Overview of Information Services – Libraries & IT facilities at the University
- Student Card – how to access libraries, e-mail and PCs on campus
- How to log on to the PCs
- What's on the desktop – standard software available to use across campus
- Saving and backing up work – how to save effectively on the network and memory pens
- Printing – how to use the printers and photocopiers
- University e-mail account – how to use e-mail on and off campus
- Internet – including searching the library catalogue
- *InfoZone* website to support learning in the session
- *InfoZone* Session Quiz and Feedback

Each element was then organised into a series of brief smart-board demonstrations (using recommendations put forward by Jones et al. 2006), with search examples that students could try for themselves at their own PCs, ensuring that the sessions remained engaging. The demonstrations focused on the learning outcomes enabling students to understand the basic starting points of Library and IT services. The project group also developed a script from this lesson plan and learning outcomes which was then used as a training tool for staff delivering the inductions (more experienced staff could work solely from the learning outcomes if they wished). This flexibility also provided a staff development opportunity within Information Services. For example, the script method of training enabled staff that had not delivered or were not confident delivering teaching to feel supported and comfortable enough to volunteer to help. Thus, in 2003 five IT staff volunteered to support the inductions alongside librarians.

*InfoZone* inductions are delivered in labs to encourage active hands-on learning. In addition, students are offered walking tours of facilities after the 50 minute session to increase visual awareness of services. The sessions incorporate the use of a prop to promote information. Staff felt that this could help to impart information visually and make the induction more enjoyable for themselves and for students, trying to move away from the fact that “library instruction can be boring to teach and boring to listen to” (Trefts and Blaksee 2000, p. 369). Hence, each year *InfoZone* includes an A6 reproduction of a student card. Staff use this prop to identify the various elements of the card to students, explaining where they can find their email, library and logon details and how and what they can be used for. This oversized student card is informative, adds an element of fun into the session and provides an easy and excellent ice-breaker. The library

card prop quickly became a favourite of library staff as it was easy to transport to other workshops and was easy to explain and use. The prop also helps students to see staff as approachable and this often leads to more questions being asked during classes. For example, 86% of attendees surveyed during September 2008 indicated that they felt comfortable enough in the sessions to ask questions. Students also reinforced this with their comments, including:

*Very informative and helpful and I felt able to ask questions when I needed to.*

*I thought the session was very well done and all the questions I asked were answered so I could understand exactly what I needed to know.*

This combination of designated content and interaction by hands-on examples and props has helped to successfully encourage students not only to attend the *InfoZone* inductions, but also to engage with learning systems and information at an early stage in their academic life.

*InfoZone* inductions incorporate supporting web pages providing information from the session and an online quiz. The quiz (in essence a formative assessment) was designed to test the learning outcomes. Students are informed at the start of the session of the online quiz and the possibility of winning prizes with correct answers. The quiz consists of 6 multiple answer questions which ask students basic Library and IT questions to test their understanding from the session. Questions since 2003 have been focused on reinforcing what students need to know to get them started with libraries and IT; hence questions have included asking which drive students need to save their work to on the network, what late night opening hours are offered and what does ASK stand for (Assignment Survival Kit)? Each question on the online quiz also provides a 'clue' link which leads the student to a web page on the *InfoZone* site where the answer can be found. Responses to the quiz are sent to a shared staff email account which librarians sort to ascertain correct entries and select yearly prize winners. During *InfoZone* 2008 over 79% of responses were correct, while incorrect responses enable the teaching team to examine possible information that needs to be reinforced or changed for the following year's *InfoZone* sessions.

The supporting *InfoZone* web pages were designed to provide new students with a point of reference for information covered during *InfoZone* and support Gadd's idea that "This would overcome "information loss" and allow students to refer back to the information when it became more relevant to them" (Gadd 2001, p. 249). Terminology on the web pages was carefully chosen to encourage student ownership of the information. Elements were described as "*your IT*" and "*your libraries*" to highlight that they were fundamental student resources owned and used by students. In 2003 students surveyed responded positively to the supporting website indicating that:

*Because the first week of information will be very stressful, this site will be very helpful.*

Another student commented:

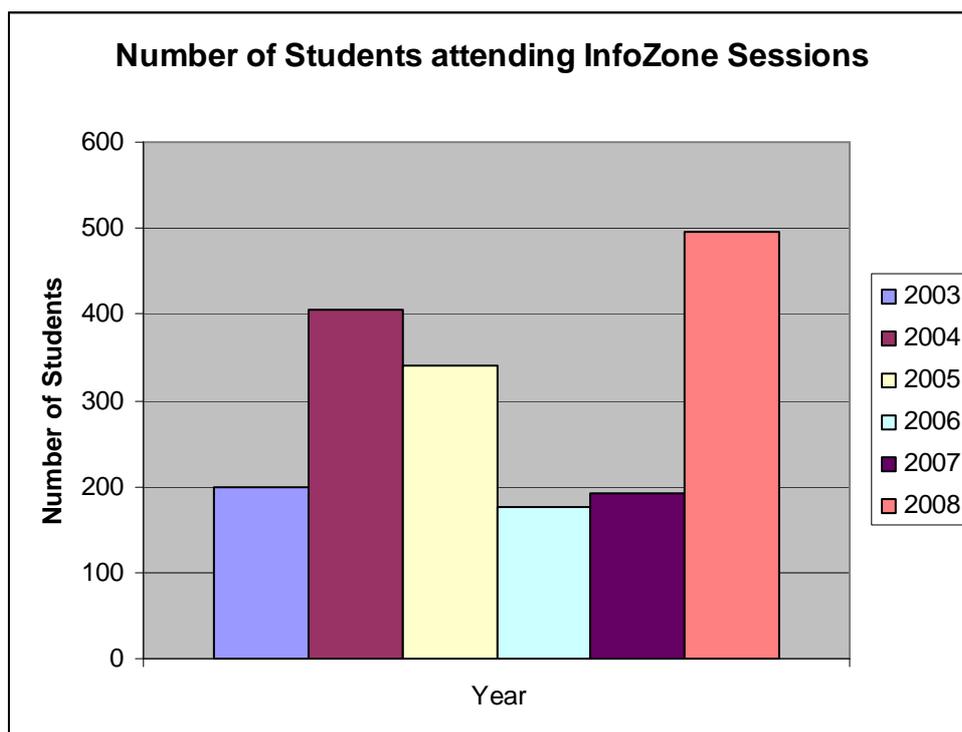
*Gives basic understanding of the services provided" in "layman terms" and "its there if you forget something.*

New elements have been added yearly to sessions depending on new services, initiatives or systems introduced at the University and their importance to new students. For example, in 2006 ASK (Assignment Survival Kit) online software was introduced to help students plan and research their assignments (Adams et al, 2008). This software was specifically designed to support the study skill needs of students which assists them to plan their first assignment: a demonstration and explanation of the ASK resource was included during the *InfoZone* inductions delivered from 2006.

## 4.1 Successful Student Attendance?

As a result of robust project organisation, embedding and engaging students during inductions, *InfoZone* has continually lured students into attending general library and IT inductions at the University. Previous Library and IT inductions were sporadic and had no documented attendance figures. However, librarians indicated that generic non-credit bearing drop-in sessions attracted few students prior to 2003 (i.e. 2 or 3 students per session). As a result, these types of inductions were rarely delivered due to staff time constraints and poor attendance. In comparison, over the past six years, the yearly attendance of students to *InfoZone* sessions has increased, enabling us to reach over 1700 students since 2003 (see figure 6).

**Figure 6: Yearly Student Attendance**



Student attendance figures have also enabled us to identify the most appropriate days for delivery of *InfoZone*. The yearly statistics have indicated that the most popular *InfoZone* sessions are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays during *Welcome Week*. It can be seen that when *InfoZone* was not delivered on these days student numbers fell (see figure 7). Upon further investigation this lack of attendance on Mondays and Wednesdays was due to more important or alluring events planned by the Welcome to University group during *Welcome Week*. For example, student arrival and enrolment onto courses takes place on Monday and the Student Union offers day-trips to various places of interest (i.e. Chester, Alton Towers etc) on Wednesdays. This information enables *InfoZone* project staff to negotiate with the Welcome to University Group to ensure that sessions are delivered on days which suit student needs.

**Figure 7: Welcome Week InfoZone attendance Totals by Day**

Day of InfoZone event:	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
<b>Monday</b>		43				
<b>Tuesday</b>	241			40	112	120
<b>Wednesday</b>		149	15			
<b>Thursday</b>	151			300	293	
<b>Friday</b>	104		161			80
<b>Totals</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>200</b>

Statistics gathered over the five years have also highlighted that attendance varies at each site of the University indicating that to maximise attendance, sessions need to be delivered at a variety of campuses. This was particularly highlighted in 2007, when we introduced *InfoZone* inductions to our second Stoke campus, Brindley (see figure 8). Results were positive and indicated that Brindley was a popular venue.

**Figure 8: Attendance by Location**

Lab Locations:	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
<b>Cadman - Stoke</b>	284	75	161	300	293	80
<b>Octagon - Stafford</b>	54	19	15	40	112	120
<b>Brindley - Stoke</b>	158	98				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>200</b>

#### 4.2 Student Feedback from *InfoZone*

Since the inception of *InfoZone* in 2003 we have constantly monitored attendance and asked students for feedback. The original project group felt that this was the best way not only to gather quantitative attendance statistics, but also to gain insights into whether we as a service were meeting the needs of our students. Feedback in 2003 was gathered by asking students to complete a user satisfaction form at the end of the session. Just over half of the 200 students who attended completed a feedback form (122); this was partly due to inductions over-running, or staff forgetting to hand out the forms. From 2004, in an attempt to increase the response rate an anonymous online web feedback form was introduced and added to the *InfoZone* website. Students now have to complete the satisfaction form before they can enter the *InfoZone* prize quiz, and both feedback and quiz responses are then sent to a shared staff e-mail address for sorting. This method of obtaining feedback gained a substantial increase in responses to over 75% each year. Feedback forms are kept to a maximum of eight questions and are focused on design and delivery of *InfoZone* sessions. For example, during *InfoZone*'s first year, project staff wished to determine whether students liked the name, logo and content of the inductions. Responses from the 122 forms were positive, and a typical answer was:

*Contains all the Information you need in one place!*

Comments from 2003 feedback indicated that over 90% of students felt that the session is important and useful:

*Worth attending, as I wouldn't have understood the info later and I feel that I may have struggled.*

*It really helped me as I've never sent an e-mail before today and didn't know how to. Thank you.*

*I enjoyed the session as it was very informative and because I work full time it has been a help to know that I won't always need to run off to the Library every time I need something, I can do it online.*

*Very good introduction to Information Services.*

*I did not realise how much there was available to me, to help with assignments and that I was able to use the programmes at home.*

*It was well structured and allowed us to ask our own questions without feeling pressured into it.*

*Excellent induction session.*

*Quality mate...quality.*

*All students should attend - they may feel it is not beneficial - but it really is!!*

In addition to the positive feedback, students have also provided much constructive criticism that has helped us to amend and update the content and organisation of *InfoZone*. For example, a number of students indicated that they felt the sessions would benefit from having handouts as well as the supporting web pages. Consequently, from 2004 each student who attends an *InfoZone* induction also receives an "Information Services Handbook" (now more snappily titled "The Essential Guide"), containing all the information a new student would need to know about Information Services. Similarly in 2006, students commented that "*It was hard finding the InfoZone*" rooms. As a result, from 2007 marketing staff created a series of "*InfoZone Arrow*" posters which were used throughout buildings helping students to navigate their way to an *InfoZone* induction.

## **5. Professional chameleons and an ever changing future?**

*InfoZone* has demonstrated that it is possible to entice students to attend generic library and IT inductions. Librarians leading the *InfoZone* programme proactively utilised their chameleon-like professionalism to ensure the success of the project by adapting to the ever changing needs of the HE environment. The team recognized that:

To be a part of the future, we must embrace these changes and turn every challenge into opportunity. (Steyn & de Wee 2007, p. 797)

By taking their past experience of poorly attended generic inductions and service changes in their stride, librarians at Staffordshire University have adapted - by embracing new ideas, skills and ways of working - to provide a colourful and successful alternative. The past six years have led us to believe that general library and IT inductions can work and that the success factors to achieve this must include:

- Project led organisation and delivery
- Appropriate project staff
- Embedding into University context & services
- Innovative marketing
- Engaging content
- Proactive development

Addressing these elements ensures that general inductions are well constructed and attended by students. By working together, staff across services can foster ownership and a pride that enables students to attend inductions which they feel will benefit them during their first few weeks at University.

Finally we feel that we can say "Yes", you can entice students to attend inductions and even learn from them as evidenced in the number of correct quiz entries. In 2007 95% of students attending these sessions indicated that they felt more aware of library and IT services. Student feedback also clearly reveals that students regard these sessions as most beneficial to their own learning. One student indicated that it was "great for new students" and it enabled another to "make the most of all the facilities available at Uni". However, we realize our programme is not perfect and will continue to harness student feedback, project group meeting output and comments from our

Welcome Week Group colleagues to improve the programme. We believe that *InfoZone* offers a template which could be adopted at other institutions to establish inductions as an integral part of an overall welcome package and serve as an introduction to the information literacy skills necessary to navigate the ever changing information landscape.

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