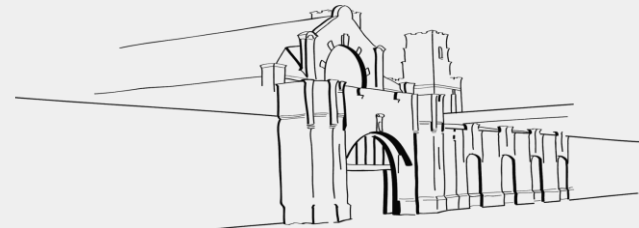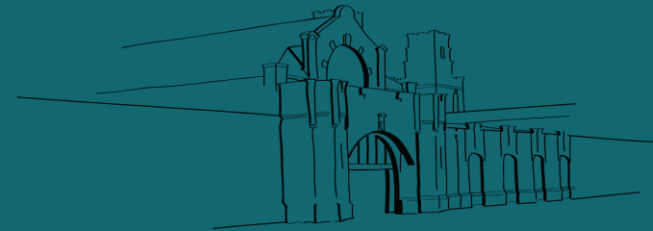# Developing an agile partnership

Creating and sustaining a culture of collaboration

Robin Armstrong Viner, Head of Library Services, Courtauld Institute of Art
Sian Downes, Drill Hall Library Manager, Universities at Medway

Introduction

- Background to our project

- Building and extending trust

- Establishing and applying principles

- Enabling and embedding effective collaboration

- Building the case for and delivering change

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Background

- Universities at Medway established 2004
- Tri-partite collaboration between Canterbury Christ Church University, the University of Greenwich and the University of Kent
- Shared campus and services including the Drill Hall Library
- Overseen by a strategic board and a operational group with representation from each partner
- Drill Hall Library manager a member of the relevant management groups at each partner

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Our project

- Procured a shared Library Management System for the partners

- Vision to deliver an improved academic and student experience at all campuses

- Conceived in Spring 2015 and delivered in Summer 2017

- Recognised as a major cultural shift for the partners

- Understood as requiring significant change management

- Included a programme to encourage and embed collaboration from the outset

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Extending trust

- Started with IT and Library directors from the partners
- Established a commitment to a collaborative approach
- Focused on shared objectives
- Provided a strong foundation for the project steering group
- Enabled empathy and support around must haves and red lines
- Followed up with workshops for functional experts from the partners

Facilitated by a change management expert

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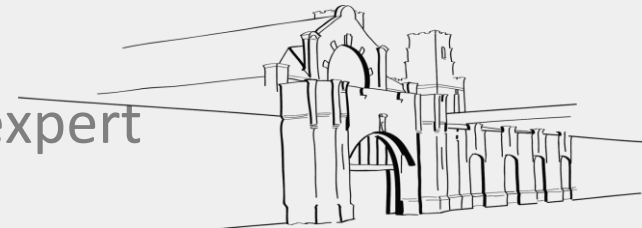
Establishing principles

- Acknowledged importance of a shared way of working
- Wanted to create a framework to support decision making
- Anticipated testing options against those principles
- Expected these to guide difficult discussions throughout the project
- Hoped they would maintain momentum against the schedule

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Applying principles

- Keep it simple - reducing complexity mitigated risk, allowing the project to be delivered on time and under budget

- Keep it collaborative - Maintaining a collaborative focus encouraged the partners to focus on the greater good rather than individual needs

- Using the technology as designed - Avoiding reverse engineering the system to existing processes maximised workflow efficiencies, as well as limiting future technical debt
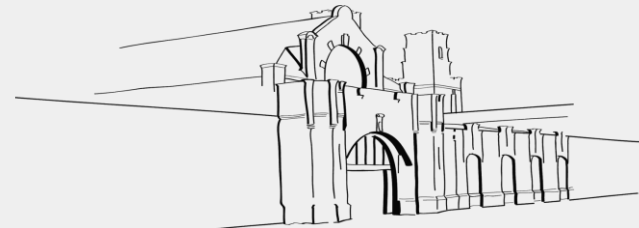
Enabling effective collaboration

- Looked to make the most of the available expertise
- Needed to understand partner strengths
- Believed they would address individual weaknesses
- Planned to identify collaborative leads
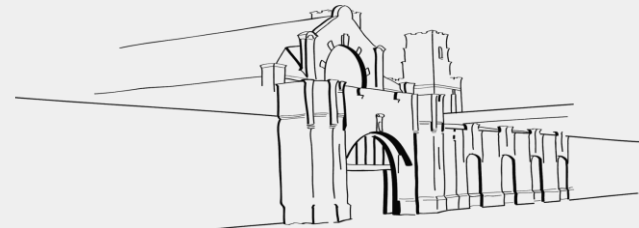- Aimed to bring together an exceptional and representative team
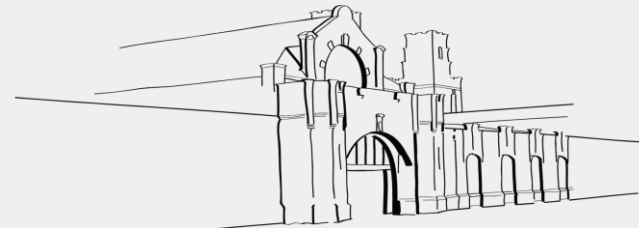
Embedding effective collaboration

- Listed key functional areas for the project

- Identified an expert from each partner to join a collaborative group

- Reflected on partners' strengths and weaknesses

- Suggested a collaborative lead for each group

- Checked the balance between individuals and across the partners

- Focused on outputs rather than approaches

- Established reporting mechanisms appropriate for each partner
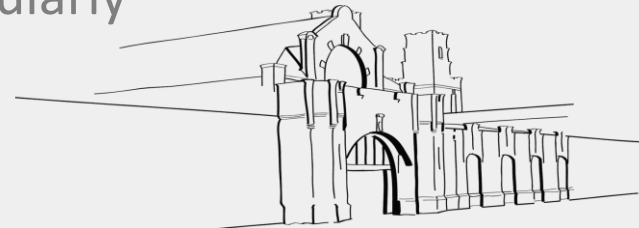
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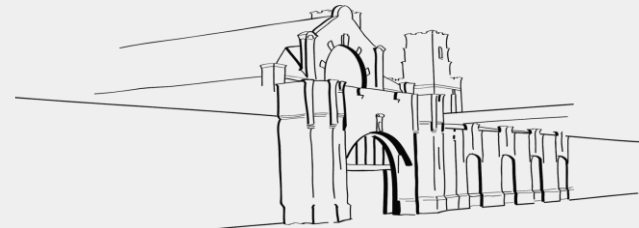
Building the case for change

- Considered the disruptive nature of change
- Sought to achieve buy-in for new ways of working
- Required teams to think beyond their own campus and institution
- Envisaged a customer-focused approach
- Foresaw the need for individual and project resilience
- Realised a sustainable methodology was essential
- Knew there would be challenges

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Delivering change

- Invested in change management
- Recognised our differences
- Created a vision, owned by the Project Steering Group
- Brought together key groups as quickly as possible
- Developed and delivered communications strategies
- Achieved functional gains for each partner and functional area
- Acknowledged challenges
- Reviewed and reallocated resource regularly

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Questions?