



# ONE LIBRARY

## 350.000 USERS. 2775 NEW BUSINESSES

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*The British Library Business & IP Centre opened in 2006 to provide a resource centre through which the British Library could focus its support for innovation and entrepreneurship. Since then we have welcomed 350,000 people through our doors and helped create 2775 businesses. An independent study estimated that an entrepreneur using the BIPC was four times more likely to be successful than the UK average.*

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### Supporting innovation since 1855

From the austere perspective of 2014, 2006 feels like a lifetime ago but the actual involvement of the British Library in supporting innovation goes back to 1855 and the opening of the Patent Office Library in London. A thriving community of patent professionals built up around what was one of the world's first open access libraries containing patent and research literature. In 1973 this became part of the new British Library and in 1999 it re-located to the new British Library building in St Pancras some distance from the patenting community. This move and the increasing amount of patent literature freely available on the internet meant that numbers using the new reading room were low.

In 2002 the BL's CEO, Lynn Brindley, visited the Science Industry and Business Library in New York City and this provided the inspiration for a dynamic new BL service for entrepreneurs. Three years later funding had been received from local government in London to build training and meeting facilities and to engage with other service providers. The re-branded Business & IP Centre opened in 2006.

### So you want to develop a product?

What does the BIPC of today offer to someone looking to develop a product or service idea? The service is loosely based around three main forms of support.

- Free access to premium published information: we offer the UK's largest collection of online and printed resources in BIPC reading rooms. This includes market research from publishers like Euromonitor, Mintel and Frost & Sullivan; company information sources like One Source, Orbis and Kompass; intellectual property

databases like Derwent Innovations Index. Due to publisher licence conditions readers can only access electronic sources in our reading rooms.

- Training: we help our customers make effective use of this information through training in research techniques and different aspects of intellectual property. We have a network of partners delivering workshops addressing practical challenges such as financial management, funding and developing products. The workshops delivered by BL staff are free but a small charge is made for partner workshops.

- We help entrepreneurs to engage with others to build their knowledge and confidence. BL staff do this through offering 1-1 business and IP clinics. These free sessions to help them build a strategy for using our resources and other services. We have two external experts who offer free mentoring through our 'Ask and Expert' service. We also run evening events called 'Inspiring Entrepreneurs' at which high profile entrepreneurs tell their stories and where delegates can network. Networking opportunities like this, and the more informal networking that takes place in the Centre and at workshops, are highly valued by our customers as they enable them to share experiences and make new contacts.

In developing this service to this point we have faced a number of challenges.

Firstly was the question of credibility. Career librarians and entrepreneurs may not seem to have much in common but we have found that the relationship is complimentary as we can help entrepreneurs make decisions based on a full and objective understanding

of their market sector. At the same time we have found the energy of entrepreneurs to be infectious which has influenced how we develop and deliver our services. Entrepreneurs and librarians often use very different language and we addressed this by providing opportunities for business advisor training and for staff to spend some time with small businesses and business support organisations.



*British Library Business & IP Centre*

Secondly, we faced the challenge of raising awareness of the service. We did this through effective, but expensive, advertising on the London Underground. We also invested time in developing social media channels such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to promote events but also to help build online communities. Perhaps most successful has been the development of a Partner Programme. Our partners include 15 Service Delivery Partners who deliver services in the BIPC and 20 Strategic Partners who are typically large public bodies who are also key players in the development of a UK-wide strategy for supporting enterprise. There are also 100+ Marketing Partners who play a crucial role in promoting our services and it is their work that has probably had the greatest impact.

Last but far from least is the perennial question of money. The BIPC collections and reading room reference service are fully funded by UK government. External funding is needed to cover additional value-added services, such as workshops and 1-1 sessions and we have received money from local government organisations, EU project funding and limited amounts of private sponsorship. Customised training and research, which we deliver on a limited scale is charged at a level which covers all costs.

### **What's next?**

Thinking of the challenges we face looking forward. There are three which are particularly significant.

- Developing a clearly defined customer journey to enable us to offer an integrated set of services to support an entrepreneur through the full life cycle of a business. We have had some success in doing this with early stage businesses but less success with established businesses.
- Developing a better service offering for entrepreneurs who are based outside London.
- Ensuring the financial sustainability of the BIPC service.

There are activities currently underway which we hope will help us to address these.

We are in Year 2 of an European Regional Development funded programme called 'Innovating for Growth' which provides training and mentoring to help businesses that have been trading for over one year to grow. By the end of this programme in 2015, we will have worked with 150 such businesses, helped to create at least 200 jobs and built up invaluable experience of working with businesses at this stage of development.

We are also piloting the development of services based on the 'Lean Start-Up' philosophy which we believe could be the basis of a customer journey. This work forms part of our contribution to an EU Interreg project called the 'Open Innovation Project'

Financial sustainability is a major challenge at a time in which UK public funding faces reductions on an unprecedented scale. Our strategy involves continuing to monitor funding and revenue-generating opportunities on a UK, European and international scale.

However the crucial factor will be how we look to develop and evolve dynamic services that can be shown to provide real value to our customers and to understand the place that we can most usefully occupy within the UK enterprise and innovation support infrastructure.

Links:

Business & IP Centre Website: [www.bl.uk/bipc/](http://www.bl.uk/bipc/)  
The Lean Start-Up: [www.bl.uk/bipc/](http://www.bl.uk/bipc/) 

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