

Crime fiction writer P. D. James opens £11m library

British crime fiction writer P. D. James this week opened a new £11m library facility at the University of Portsmouth.

The new three-floor library complex - University Library - is a prototype for an energy efficient modern working and learning space, utilising the full potential of wireless and internet technologies.

The multimillion pound project sees the seamless integration of an older building constructed in 1976 into something new and unique - an eye-catching modern space of more than 10,000 sq. ft that will serve as a comprehensive centre for study, learning and research for students and staff of the 21st century.

The new features include 250 desktop computers in an enlarged IT workspace area and full wireless internet access throughout the building. Students can use their own laptop computers or borrow one from the University Library and log on to the internet via the secured University of Portsmouth network.

As well as offering access to 17,000 e-journals and substantial collections of e-books through Ebrary and NetLibrary, the Library provides group study rooms, and teaching rooms and seminar facilities. Help desks are located on every floor to assist users to exploit University Library's vast electronic and hard copy resources to full potential.

"It is a privilege as well as a pleasure for me officially to open the new University Library at Portsmouth," said Baroness James, who received an honorary degree from the University in 1999 in recognition of her services to literature and the arts.

"A library should be at the heart of all universities and this magnificent new building, with its valuable collection of printed and electronic books and its modern resources for learning, will not only hugely increase the amount of information available to students, but will be a symbol of the importance of this comparatively new University, both to higher education and to the city of Portsmouth," she said.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Craven, said libraries were a key element in giving people open access to information and knowledge which is crucial to the development of democratic societies. "The University Library represents a special place of learning where - like the Library of Alexandria more than 2000 years ago that housed the works of the greatest thinkers and writers of the ancient world - students and staff can study, learn, and exchange ideas that will hopefully bring benefits for all of humanity.

"It can be argued there has never been a greater need for people of all generations, cultures and



backgrounds to learn from and with each other in places of contemplation and greater understanding such as this."

The University Library was designed by Penoyre & Prasad after a competition organised by the Royal Institute of British Architects.