MOST INNOVATIVE
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

NCI's mission

Located in the heart of the IFSC, National College of Ireland's mission is to "change lives through education." Renowned for academic excellence in Business, HR, Education, Psychology, and Computing, the College now has nearly 6,500 students across its extended campus in the North-East Inner City. National College of Ireland is a hub for innovation and research delivering real world opportunities for applied learning to students, as well as offering a supportive, inclusive, and welcoming environment where ideas can spark into spin-off companies and lifelong connections can be made.

NCI Mayor Square Campus

NCI Spencer Dock Campus

NCI's Norma Smurfit Library mission

At the Library, the goal is to always ensure that all learners can access the information they need in the right form. Crucial to every student's academic journey, the Norma Smurfit Library and Information Service provides access to a wide range of resources consisting of books (print & electronic), journals (print & electronic), case studies, training videos, guides, reference materials, study areas, computers, internet access, printing, and photocopying. It also offers research assistance, and information literacy to students and academic staff through the Library Help Centre. Seeking to bridge a traditional library service with

online information sources, and with accessibility and diverse user needs in mind, NCI's Library is always striving to ensure the resources and online materials always keep the user in mind, making the library experience as accessible as possible for all learners.

Tamara Malone, Online Virtual Library Support

Tamara Malone has held the position of Online Virtual Library Support at National College of Ireland since October 2023, after initially joining NCI as a Library Assistant in September 2022. In this position, she facilitates and enhances online library services and outreach for NCI students and staff. She is interested in accessibility and universal design, bibliographic services and collections, and the inclusive, welcoming, and engaging design of library spaces and services.

LibMaps: What is it?

LibMaps is a new Library Mapping Project, initiated and successfully completed by Tamara Malone between May and September 2025. Using LibMaps, a new Springshare/LibApps product, Tamara created interactive maps illustrating both library floors. These maps contain clickable "hotspots" which lead library users to further information, e.g., about printing and photocopying services and how to find and borrow the books they are looking for. The library website, communications (email, instant chat, and website query), and space booking and appointment systems are all delivered via Springshare products, so the map has easily integrated with all of these.

There is potential for the tool to be rolled out as part of future campus-wide mapping activities. These new library maps allow for a more seamless space booking process, which is key going into the 2025/26 academic year as study rooms have been in very high demand during the past year, and queries as to how to find and book study rooms are among the most frequently received.
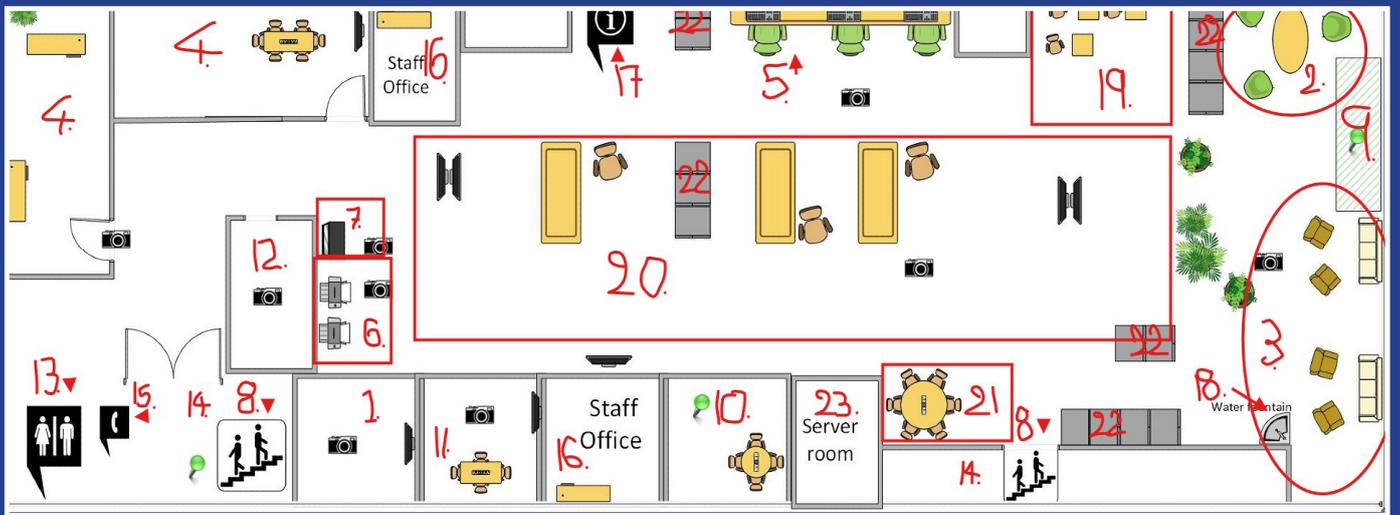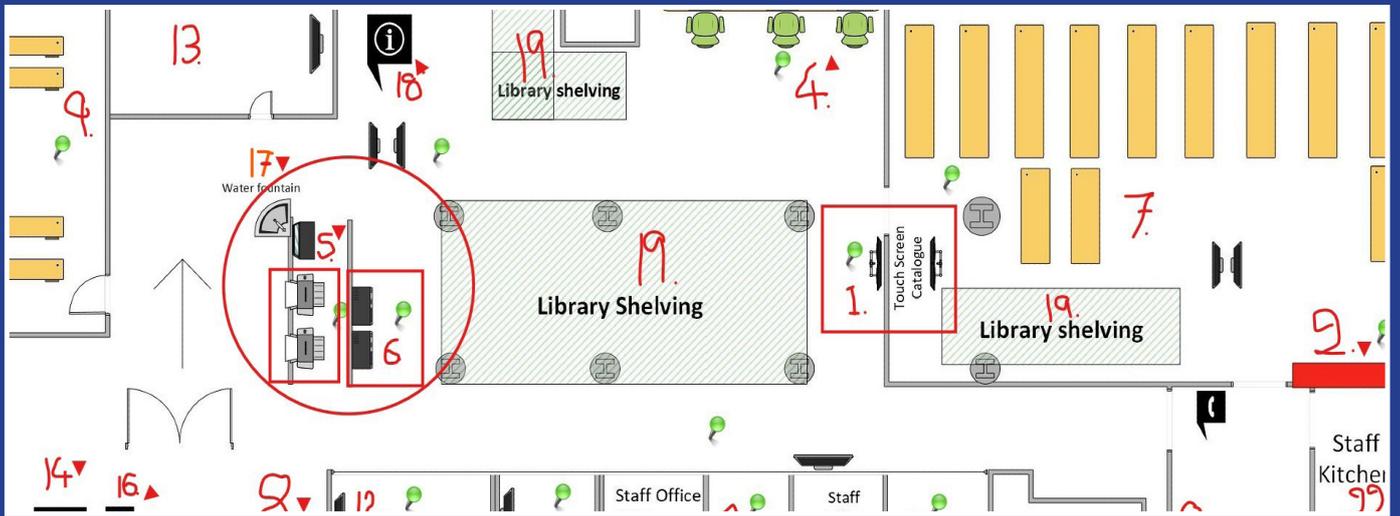
The "Why?" behind LibMaps

At NCI, student experience is always a top priority. How can the College progress so that students have a richer experience? These maps allow students who are new to NCI/the library to gain some familiarity with the layout of the space before first arriving, which can often be reassuring, particularly for neurodivergent individuals. Colour and font choices were made with accessibility in mind; images and text are clearly legible but in more muted tones to reduce sensory overwhelm. Sensory overwhelm is also reduced by ensuring the maps look clean and simplified. The ability for students to check which study rooms are currently available, or where to find printers (for example), will be helpful to those with social anxiety who may feel nervous approaching members of staff.

LibMaps was shortlisted from a very strong field for an NCI President's Award in 2025 as the maps address NCI objectives such as "To embed access in our programme design, delivery, assessment and in all student services," and "To measure, celebrate and support equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability."

Consequently, the use of the product addresses further NCI objectives such as, "To continue to enhance NCI's leadership in access to education, broadening participation, educational pathways and diverse delivery models," and "To continue to be thought leader in access and innovation in third-level education."
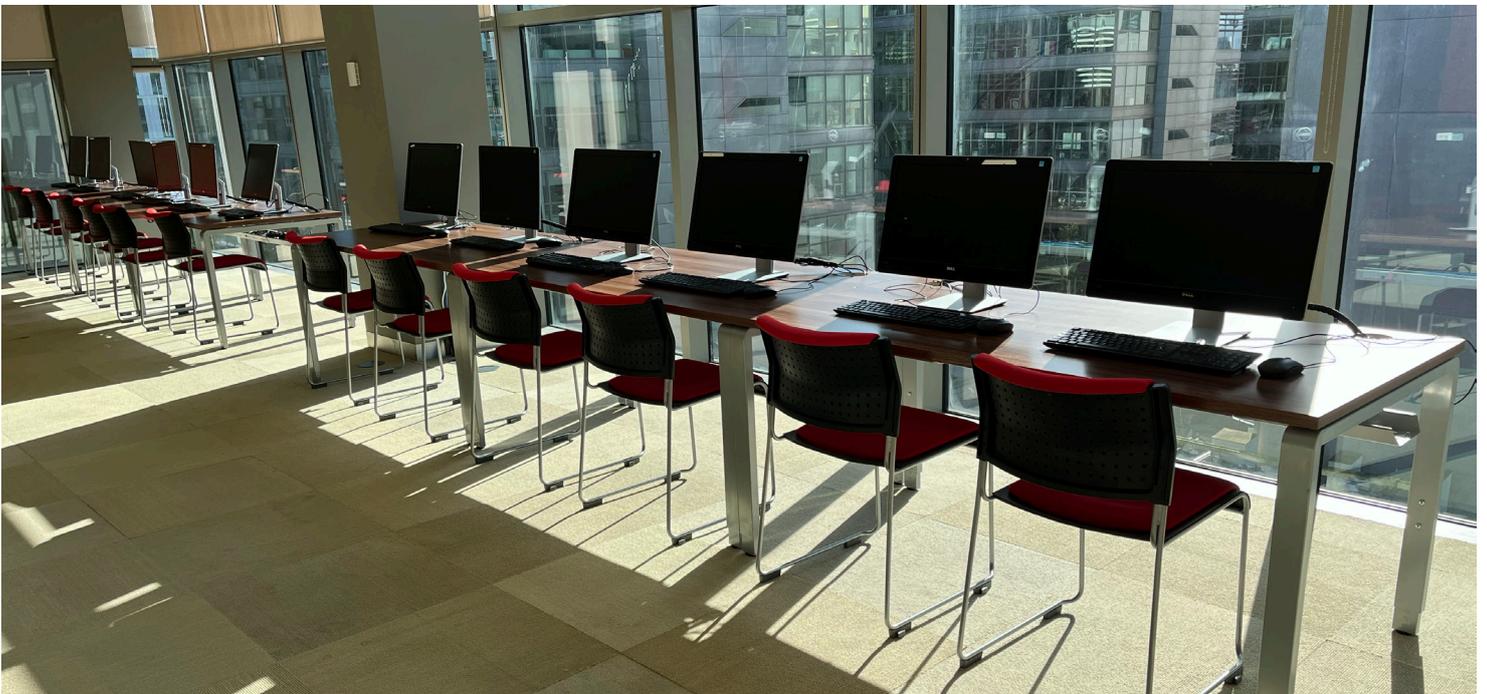
Challenges overcome during the process

Time management became more complex as Tamara balanced the implementation of LibMaps alongside her regular duties. This project involved adapting new software alongside managing timelines and various projects while always keeping accessibility in mind.

Between May and September 2025, (time of design and implementation) Tamara was also busy with regular duties, as well as some other larger projects. During the month of July, the library collects statistics and information for annual report running 1 July – 30 June, so this is one of the busier periods of the year. Tamara also organised the library visit for prospective students during Neurodiverse Student Open Day on 30 July,

as well as taking a role in the implementation of NCI's mandatory academic integrity training policy for Semester 1 2025/26.

While the deployment of LibMaps included the addition of information about what subjects may be found on which library shelves, this deployment took place in the middle of the annual library shelf tidying project, so the placement of books on shelves was in a state of flux.

"I dealt with these challenges through both adhering to a disciplined time-management system (inspired by Ryder Carroll's Bullet Journal method), and through maintaining regular communications and working closely with other members of the Reader Services Team here in

NCI Library, including seeking feedback on initial deployments of the maps."

LibMaps was a new product release that represented a new software system worldwide, and this came with its own challenges and learning processes. Often, when trying something new, the library team will seek out similar initiatives based in Ireland (usually the libraries of other Irish third level institutions) of the thing the team is trying. This allows the team to compare their project, as well as discuss its' implementation with other Irish academic librarians and compare challenges and strategies for overcoming these. However, at the time of our LibMaps deployment, there were no other Irish customers of the product.
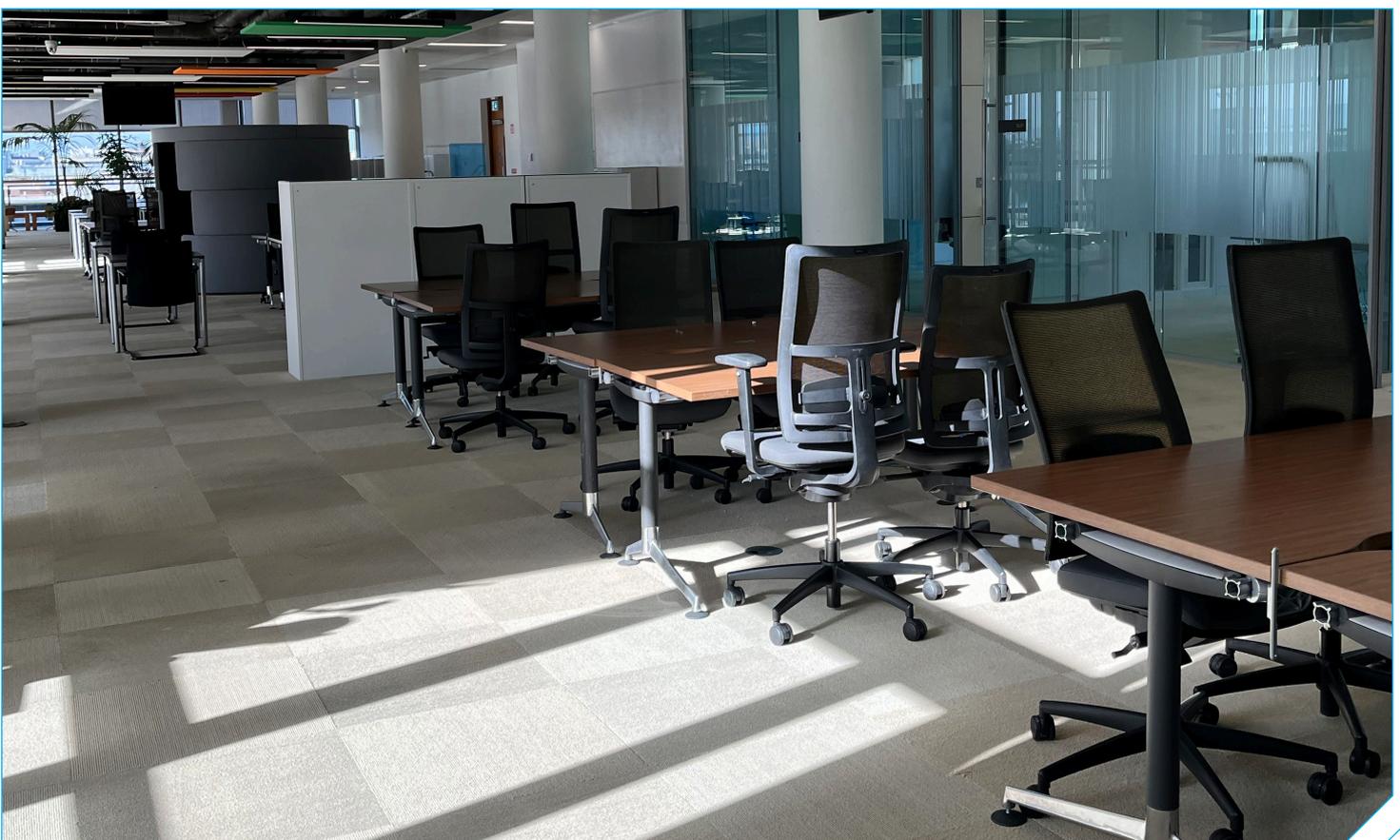
April Sommerville, Support Specialist/ Mapping Consultant at Springshare shared
"We are very excited to see how our first Irish client has used our product. Working with Tamara to ensure localisation and accessibility has been a great experience that will inform our future development."

Tamara Malone
"While each LibMaps deployment is unique, I very much wanted to see some examples of how other customers had made use of the software, as this would give me a stronger understanding of the different ways it might be used to enhance usability and accessibility. Therefore, while seeking the advice of Springshare staff, I searched further afield and located several international LibMaps customers (primarily based in the US) and examined the maps that they created. These showed some highly creative uses of LibMaps that inspired me in the design and implementation of NCI's; in particular, Davidson College North Carolina have used LibMaps to map an entire campus area, which might be a useful direction for NCI to take in the future."

Accessibility for all was crucial, so working through earlier versions of the design that were not there yet contributed to the project's time challenges. Originating a project meant that there were no previous versions to compare to, so each iteration took additional time and testing to improve. Particular attention was paid to the clearness and legibility of the maps with users who have vision-based disabilities or differing needs in mind.

Tamara Malone
"I worked with the consulting team and developers at Springshare to make the symbols on the maps more legible. We had initially decided to use black symbols on a white background, so I asked about different colour options, and it was decided that rather than changing the colour, increasing the size and line thickness of the symbols would be the best option for increased legibility. It is fortunate that Springshare developers were willing to alter their designs based on our needs, and I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate on this."

Celebrating success and looking ahead

LibMaps has successfully been implemented at NCI's Norma Smurfit Library.

Conversations with Springshare staff during the initial design and implementation of LibMaps revealed that NCI Library is among their first Irish LibMaps customers and at the time of those conversations, there were no other examples of LibMaps integrations from Irish institutions.

The maps can be viewed **here**. Photos of the maps throughout their development stages, as well as spreadsheets that represent the data import that allowed the locations of subjects can be viewed **here**.

Moving forward, up-to-date photographs of library areas are to be added to the map, which will hopefully further help students to navigate the space. Work will also be done to progress to the development of a widget displaying the maps embedded in the library website homepage. Tamara also hopes to gather statistics showing user engagement, which will be helpful when considering how LibMaps may be rolled out across the entirety of NCI.

You can find Tamara's President's Awards video about the support that LibMaps provides **here**.

When nominating Tamara Malone for the 2025 NCI President's Awards, Mary Buckley, Librarian at NCI said, "Tamara has demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing library services for all students. This project exemplifies her dedication to accessibility and inclusivity, particularly in her thoughtful consideration of the needs of neurodiverse students. Her work reflects NCI's mission to deliver accessible higher education."