[7] Elizabeth Tilley, 'Personalized boutique service: critical to academic success?' (2013) 19(1) New Review of Academic Librarianship 78, 82.

Biography

Sara Roberts is a Law Liaison Librarian at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. Sara has worked in public, academic and special libraries for the last 20 years. She is closely involved with the New Zealand law librarian profession, and has been the secretary of the New Zealand Law Librarians Association for the last five years.

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Moving or Relocating a Library

Abstract: In this article Ruth Bird examines the issues around moving, or relocating, a library. Drawing on her experiences of moving, relocating and renovating, and in the context of current work that is happening at the Bodleian Law Library (BLL), she compares the issues in relation to both law firm libraries and academic libraries. The article examines space management and collection management issues, planning, allocating roles and how the burden of moves can be shared in a collaborative way. Ruth also looks at the 'people' issues and the implications for collections.
Keywords: collection management; space management; moving libraries; law libraries

EVERY LIBRARY MOVE IS UNIQUE

In 2000 I wrote an article entitled Planning a New Legal Resource Centre for the 21st century[1], and included this appendix:

Some hints for librarians planning new libraries:

- Learn the jargon
- Know what a square metre means – try to visualise spaces
- Ask for more than you need initially – you can always cut back graciously when pushed later on
- Keep a copy of every piece of correspondence, and file notes of phone calls
- Take notes at meetings, check minutes
- Learn the difference between base building and fit-out
- Learn about data sheets
- Pay attention to HVAC – heating, ventilation, air conditioning
- Check elevator capacities, goods lifts, loading docks, if relevant
- Discuss security, data points, lights, fire safety, washrooms, windows, wall finishes, flooring, cables, wireless, humidity, etc
- Think about functional relationships between spaces
- Visit, visit, visit – the more law libraries you see, the more you can refine your thoughts and plans
- Read the IT pages of newspapers, *Wired* magazine, etc to pick up on trends in technology which could be applicable.

In the intervening 15 years, would my advice differ? Not a lot…

Let us face it, most of us are not designers, architects or building planners by nature. But we are all involved in space related issues every day, and somewhere down the track we may well be asked our opinion on the current and future space needs of our libraries. That is, if we are lucky. The way space allocation is dealt with in the private sector can differ quite markedly from the public sector,

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and in this paper I will describe my experiences to illustrate some of these differences.

Over the past 30, or so, years I have been fortunate to build, relocate, renovate, refurbish or downsize 9 or 10 libraries, both in the private sector and the public sector. In each case there has been some common ground but also some stark differences.

PRE-PLANNING, ALLOCATING ROLES, SHARING THE BURDEN – COLLABORATION

Each move starts off as a gleam in the eye. If you are fortunate, it will be your ambition and will be met by the organisation. Or it will be part of a grander plan by your organisation, and you will be affected/involved and, hopefully, consulted. So there are some common points.

a) Architects – ensure you meet with them from the outset. This may be easier in a firm than in academia, where there is often a large estates department managing building matters. Try to be in the planning group from the outset, sell it as sharing your expertise to avoid later surprises to the architects!
b) You can't be everywhere, and if you have a team in your library, be sure to share the burden. The bus principle applies even more critically in a library move, because many minds will see potential glitches, and think laterally when an insurmountable issue arises.
c) In a firm it is often possible to source the added resources from other areas within the firm, in my day it was the mailroom staff for some aspects of the move. In academia, there is often not the budget to hire all the people you would like, and many need to go outside the law library for the required assistance, calling in favours from other colleagues. Any project should include the costs of moving as an integral part of any new-build or refurbishment, and this needs to be incorporated from the outset.
d) Interruption to service – timing of works, any down time, alternative spaces to run a service- plan this as much as you can from the outset so that reader expectations of service disruption are managed, and there are no shocks. Make sure the e-access is working perfectly to compensate for the loss of physical access.

In the law firm environment I learned that architects do not understand functional space use in libraries, and are mainly interested in aesthetics and the corporate look.

In academia I learned that pre-planning too far in advance can lead to disappointment as start dates are delayed or projects deferred indefinitely.

PEOPLE ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN MOVING AN EXISTING LIBRARY OR PLANNING A NEW ONE

a) Staff facilities – tea rooms, toilets, shower room, work area, lockers, type of desks, storage for processing
b) User spaces – open plan, discussion rooms, carrels, pc provision, Do you still need computers? Is wifi adequate to replace ethernet connections? (my example of over-engineering was at the University of Melbourne where we installed 400 ethernet points across 3 floors to ensure everyone could plug into the network on laptops. Two years later, wifi was stable enough to make many of these obsolete!). Do users need discussion rooms? What teaching spaces do you need? Is there somewhere for librarians to consult readers in private?
c) Comfortable seats for casual laptop use. Quiet areas including no keyboard tapping. Coffee provision? Food allowed?

Consider people flows, consider the work spaces, size/height of bookshelves, do you need to have DDA compliance on height of shelves, eg. the newly refurbished Supreme Court Queensland Library where all shelves are a maximum of 5 feet high, and thus spread over a much larger footprint.

In both environments I learned that if the librarian does not speak up for the needs of the library staff, no-one else will. In law firms I was also defending the creation of a separate space for the articled clerks who wanted an escape from their offices.

COLLECTIONS AND SIZE

This is the unique area of expertise where you will be looked to as the person with the knowledge, and your say will be important if the project is to succeed.

a) You need to know how your collection is currently used, and the ways people may be using it in the future, whether it will be a virtual or physical library. Surveys help with some of this information, it provides hard data in this age where we can measure use of online material, eg. keep statistics on re-shelving and borrowing rates of the collection. Do you need security controlled access?
b) It is vital, if you are to have a say in the library design and you want to talk meaningfully with the architect, to get your measurements, facts and figures, and vision for the new space, clearly in your head, and better still, on paper. Measure, re-measure and then measure again. Know the size and type of stock, be on top of the data. Do you want to keep all monographs in a run whether folio sized or not, or have two runs to use space more efficiently? If your readers are practising lawyers you would most likely want one run if they are ever to locate anything on shelves by

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themselves.

Collections of books, for those who have them, are different in size, scope and purpose. In academia we have to worry about inexorable growth of collections if we continue to have paper holdings, which many of us do. The growth rates of serials is still relevant – how many years of growth will you allow for the law reports or journals you continue to receive in paper?

c) In academia there may be a repository to store material offsite; in the private sector you usually have to sell or discard unwanted resources. And making the decisions of what to discard is not easy, because you then become hostage to the prices set annually by electronic publishing houses from whom we lease material, we rarely buy it outright. Cancellation of online means end of access, full stop! Space lost to libraries has sometimes been turned over to student study spaces, or expansion areas for faculties, as their own needs change. The university still owns the space, it just repurposes it.

To move material off site when downsizing can mean a deal of forward preparation and planning; for example, at the Bodleian Law Library, we have long runs of serials for which item records were never created. In order to move these books to the storage facility, we needed to barcode each one and add an item record to the catalogue, so it can be retrieved by readers down the track. We embarked on this in December, with temporary staff, and completed the barcoding and move by May of some 55,000 volumes. We had to start this process even before we had a start date for the works, because without the removal of books, we have no juggling room. Any downsizing means much more pre-planning than administrators or architects anticipate or allow for.

d) There are the questions of type of shelving – open, compact – which affect us all, but in firms you may be in a building without the reinforced concrete floor to take the weight of space efficient compact. If you are in on the planning stage when a building is going up, you may need to ask for this option – it's much easier than later retrofitting.

e) In the past 15 years the greatest change any of us has seen has been the rise of the bean-counters, and the resulting equation – space equals cost. A lawyer in her office returns an income through charging a client. A library is viewed as an overhead that does not generate client fees. Once, a library collection of leather bound tomes was a source of pride in a firm; by about 2000 it was feared that it displayed a firm out of touch with technological changes, and thus was no longer viewed as something with which to impress the clients.

I was given a quarter of a floor of a city office block for our library in 1992, and was able to have rolling stacks to allow growth.

Contrast this to 10 years later, at another firm, where I was responsible for 8 libraries and, in the course of a couple of years, I had to help the librarians downsize 4 of those libraries, both the floor space and their collection.

My main lesson has been that size does matter when it comes to moving libraries. Large libraries need far more detailed and long term pre-planning than small ones. The Bodleian adventure is like rolling all my experiences so far into one.

Being creative in a firm, learning where to go to obtain paper when you no longer have it, being resourceful with less is also valuable. You will have to do this, it might as well be with a smile.

THE WHO, WHAT AND WHY OF THE ACTUAL MOVE

It is labour intensive but important to map a move from one spot to another, to new floorplans from the old floorplans.

As mentioned, being part of the building planning group is essential. In a firm it may be easier to do this. In a university there can be layers of bureaucracy that prevent this, but it is important to try to make your voice a central one. You need to know not only the architect and designer, who plan the walls and the fit out, but also the book moving team/firm, to ensure they know how to follow your carefully planned mapping of what goes where and why and in what sequence. A removalist without book moving experience can be a disaster. In one library we ended up with the books shelved from right to left sequence on the shelves, which the staff had to go round and fix.

The timing of the move from old to new, or to refurbishment is important, and again you need to be involved in this. In academia it can be planned around vacations; in one firm it had to be done over a long weekend but also taking into account who would have moved into the building by that stage. It had to be timed with the move of the litigators rather than, for example, the Banking and Finance team, and involved three very long days; so you need to budget for the overtime costs if this matters in the overall project.

Lesson learnt; plan for disruption, publicise it to everyone, and insist on the work taking into account the requirements of your users, whichever your workplace.

PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

a) Prepare yourself for disappointment and frustration as well as the unexpected. If you are fortunate the first lot of planning will work and your project as mooted will get off the ground. This happened to me when I worked in law firms. The commercial imperative meant lots of decisions had to be made speedily and

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accurately, and so once the plans were agreed at management team and partnership level, architects and designers engaged the builders, and things got moving. Planned dates and timelines were met.

b) However in academia things have been different. At the University of Melbourne we went through 2 years of planning an underground extension to be suddenly told the university was erecting a new building just for law and we suddenly had a new build instead of a refurb. Even that morphed from a 23 storey narrow tower block to a squatter and more practical 10 storey building, with the law library on 3 floors. It was then built within 2 years of the revamped planning.

At Oxford, we have had 3 'minor works' in the past 11 years. We created a new graduate reading room out of a book stack, and added rolling stacks to another area for the stack material; we doubled the size of our tea room, and largest of all, we brought the Official Papers from the Radcliffe Camera into the ground floor of the BLL, removing tens of thousands of non-law Bodleian book stack materials to accommodate the OP.

For the Law Library itself, the plan was always for a large refurbishment. It was discussed in the 1990's, and by the time I joined in 2004, it was mooted to take place a year or two later. It then became a grandiose scheme for the whole building, ready to start in 2009. A lot of planning went into this, but I must have had a premonition, because I did not involve the staff greatly in these plans, it all seemed too ambitious. And, yes, it was delayed with the GFC.

The current plan was revived in 2012, as a revamped and reduced version of the 2009 plan. However, this time I involved the staff early on, and they have lived through the frustrations with me.

It is difficult being at the mercy of protracted and indecisive decision making. This refurb is, I think, more complicated than anything I have encountered, and even now, 2 months out from the start date, I am still not convinced we will go ahead on time[2]!

You are not in control, you need to learn to be the interface with your users and your staff, and while you need to inform them early, you should not alarm or alert them until you know exactly what is taking place when.

LEVERAGING THE GOODWILL ARISING FROM THE NEW LOCATION

Once you survive the move, make sure you have a party or drinks to celebrate, and ask the people who worked on the projects as well as your own staff and your library users. Architects, surveyors, logistics staff, etc – all like to be acknowledged and thanked.

And now the fun starts – new floorplans, new reader guides, improved services, maybe some snagging. No matter what you have been through, once the work is behind you, you tend to forget the bad and luxuriate in the newness of it all.

I have learnt that creating a new library or redesigning an existing one is, despite all the irritations along the way, one of the bonuses of this profession, and stretches you in ways you never anticipated!

Footnotes

[1] Ruth Bird, '*Planning a legal resource centre for the 21st century' [2000] 8(2). Australian Law Librarian pp. 93–106.*

[2] An update – the work commenced, on September 7, 2015.

Biography

Ruth Bird is the Law Librarian at the Bodleian Law Library, University of Oxford and has managed academic and law firm libraries in Australia and England for the past 25 years. In 2010 she was made an Honorary Bencher at Middle Temple. She was the National Convenor of the Australian Law Librarians Association (1994–1995), has been an active member of the Council of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (2008–2012) and a Board member of the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL) since 2007. She is currently the First Vice-President of IALL.

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