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# Refurbished, remodelled ... and revitalised

- a round-up of recent library building projects



Carol Kay  
Deputy Head of User Services  
University of Liverpool Library  
Tel: 0151 794 2685  
E-mail: c.kay@liverpool.ac.uk

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In late 2005 I was offered the chance to project manage the extension and refurbishment of the Sydney Jones Library, the arts and social sciences library at the University of Liverpool.

The preliminary stages of the project involved visits to many university libraries in the UK and Ireland that were in the process of being, or had just been, rebuilt, extended or refurbished. These visits were invaluable to the project team and ideas gleaned from them were the origin of many of the developments and floor layouts that were incorporated into our project.

2006–2008 went by in a blur as I was then heavily involved in the library project. The first stage was completed in summer 2007, with the majority of library staff moving into new accommodation in the refurbished University Senate House, now called the Abercromby Wing, next to the library. A new 'link' was built joining the two wings. The second phase involved the refurbishment of the existing library, now called the Grove Wing, and the creation of a new special collections and archives area. In the process of this refurbishment every one of the 1.2 million books in the Sydney Jones had to be moved!

The project was completed in September 2008 and one of the things I have most enjoyed since then is showing various groups around our new facilities. It struck me then that it would be useful to have an overview of recently completed library projects published in *Focus*: the descriptions of the work done could help inform prospective visitors who are themselves planning to embark on building development work.

A few months ago I posted a message on *lis-link* asking for volunteers to write about their respec-

tive projects and got a very positive response. The resulting articles are from a wide range of institutions but they all have a strong theme: find out what your users want and then see how you can modify or extend your space to meet those expectations.

As one would expect, there is a move towards open, flexible learning spaces where students can chat and eat/drink while they work together. There is, however, still a demand for more traditional study spaces and most libraries have zoned their study spaces to meet these differing needs.

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## Traditional classroom becomes an innovative learning space at Leeds Metropolitan University

Liz Lanfear  
Academic Librarian,  
Leeds Metropolitan University  
Tel: 0113 8123501  
E-mail: l.lanfear@leedsmet.ac.uk

Katherine Everest  
Professional Stream Leader: Library  
Services & Operations,  
Leeds Metropolitan University  
Tel: 0113 8123612  
E-mail: k.everest@leedsmet.ac.uk

Library space has been an important issue of debate and discussion for many years. Powell writes of the shift from teaching to learning and the important place that libraries hold in supporting the learning of students in the Higher Education sector.<sup>1</sup> Powell states that 'the design of library space can therefore either aid or impair the ability of students to achieve their academic potential' and that 'academic libraries must cater for an increasing range of learning activities' (p.112).

Academic libraries also need to cater for a wide range of learning styles. Collaborative learning is more commonplace now in higher education, as are group activities and assessments, and our library spaces need to be flexible and varied enough to accommodate these new ways of learning.

We recognise the importance of 'library space and ambience' in supporting the first-year experience at university: 'According to Bundy, libraries should be welcoming, inexpensive, flexible and

highly accessible. They should cater for all learning styles'.<sup>2</sup>

The recent refurbishment of a former 'classroom' in Leeds Metropolitan University Library gave the library the opportunity to put many of the above ideas into practice. The furniture chosen for the room is flexible and adaptable, to enhance inclusivity. There are comfortable seats with coffee tables, office chairs on castors and tables of different sizes and shapes that are easy to move around and arrange in a variety of ways.

'In line with the strategy of the university, our vision was of a contemporary library in a classic setting – a library in a listed building but designed for the students of the twenty-first century, a library that would meet the needs of current students but in a space that could accommodate change. We wanted an innovative library where, above all, the students come first.'<sup>3</sup>

As the amount of space available to us was reduced recently, we have to make the space we have work harder for us. This has been done by ensuring that the classroom can be used for a number of purposes. The whole library is connected to the wireless network and students and staff can borrow wireless laptops to use in the room. The result is a future-proofed, flexible, bold, creative, supportive and enterprising space in line with JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) guidelines.<sup>4</sup> What was previously a traditional classroom is now multi-purpose and students can read, write, deliver presentations or use IT there.

The classroom was designed with the future and change in mind. Our approach was to have as little fixed furniture as possible and to harness the latest technology. Floor boxes and the wireless network allow wireless laptops to be plugged in anywhere and smartboards have been installed. The furniture is highly flexible and mobile. The tables can be easily rearranged to enable different types of studying and teaching. The room has been transformed from one of our more traditional teaching rooms into a high-tech, inspirational learning room for students to work in outside their classrooms. Library staff also use the room for teaching and delivering workshops.

At the last university staff development festival, library staff offered a 'sell-out' workshop on developing library research skills for academic staff. We were able to divide the furniture into five work spaces, to permit small-group working and competition as well as tutoring to the whole



assembly. Three of us facilitated the workshop as a team and we used the smartboard to demonstrate online resources, as well as the flip chart and the whiteboard. It was a creative blend of traditional and high-tech methods of teaching, making full use of the multi-purpose functionality of the room. The feedback that we received after the event was extremely positive, and we have repeated the workshop several times since.

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- 3 K. Everest and D. Morris, "'It's just like studying in your front room": designing a twenty-first-century library in a classic building', *SCONUL Focus*, 43, spring 2008, p 66-68
- 4 Joint Information Systems Committee, *Designing spaces for effective learning: a guide to 21st century learning space design*, Higher Education Funding Council, 2006, available at [www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded\\_documents/JISClearning-spaces.pdf](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/JISClearning-spaces.pdf) [accessed 5 May 2009]

## Learning hubs at the University of Nottingham

Valerie Housley  
Head of Accommodation Management  
Information Services,  
University of Nottingham  
Tel: 0115 9514621  
E-mail: [Valerie.Housley@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Valerie.Housley@nottingham.ac.uk)

Sue Storey  
Head of Library Customer Services  
Information Services,  
University of Nottingham  
Tel: 0115 8467311  
E-mail: [susan.storey@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:susan.storey@nottingham.ac.uk)

Exciting developments over the last three years have led to significant changes in four of our twelve libraries. Changes cover the use of space, student experience and staff roles, and centre round the learning hubs we have developed in partnership with the centre for integrative learning (CIL), one of our four centres of excellence in teaching and learning (CETL).

The main enablers for these changes were, firstly, a new campus, to which most non-frontline staff and the whole department of manuscripts and special collections moved, and then the very active promotion of RFID self-service, resulting in about 80% of transactions being done by library users. Thus we had free space and available staff.

For start of session 2007–2008, we refurbished half of Hallward, all of George Green, all of James Cameron Gifford and all of Greenfield Medical Libraries, between them covering a wealth of subjects. These are very different spaces, but in each we have implemented the key principles of a learning hub, offering flexible learning to suit different needs. In summer 2008 we did the rest of Hallward and moved round some stock in George Green, so all four libraries now offer students a variety of learning environments, from the active buzz of the learning hubs to traditional silent study spaces, with some quiet areas in between. Student feedback has usually been very positive, and staff have moved into a different way of working, which is bearing fruit for the service and for individual career development.

So what do we mean by a learning hub? We describe this in various ways (according to the audience and the word-count limit) but the core is flexible, technology-enhanced space for group work and individual learning, in an open

environment or bookable group-study rooms, with roaming staff to support the variety of uses encouraged by these spaces. We didn't need to tell students what they could do here: we developed the space, put the equipment in and they came and did whatever suited their current needs. We took the opportunity to relax the rules on phones, food (allowed except hot food) and drink, so these spaces are truly flexible and at times really do buzz with activity. The quieter and silent study areas have much stricter rules on noise, food and drink (nothing except bottled water) and we worked closely with the students' union on developing those areas, giving them where possible a different look and feel to offer visual clues to the different uses.

Hallward is our largest, most heavily used library, open 24x7 for most of term time, and reaching visitor numbers around 9,000–10,000 a day at peak times. It has the richest learning hub, and also houses the CIL, whose pedagogic (and financial) input were very valuable as part of the project. Here we have several bookable group-study rooms (housing four to eight occupants), with smartboards and projectors or interactive Panaboard; two workshops (with six PCs round the edge, a central meeting table, projector and smartboard, with one room equipped for video conferencing); a computer training room for 30, with projector/smartboard; a video-editing suite for four; a screening room for 50, with cinema-style seats and superior projection and sound equipment (but no popcorn so far!). All of these rooms are left open for general use when not booked, and mostly they are booked through the library catalogue. We also have two CIL studios, each for 25, which can combine into one large room, with multiple projectors and smartboards which function separately or together and cameras for recording presentations and video conferencing. These rooms are booked through the CIL, but CIL staff encourage as much use as possible for any purpose.



Workshop in Hallward Library (Tim Hodges Photography, <http://www.timhodges.co.uk>)

In the large open space on this floor, we have short-stay PCs (for 15 minutes), a large mobile plasma screen/PC combinations (designed to be moved so you can create the space you want for your group), lots of soft seating and large computer tables with a mix of fixed PCs and laptop plug-in points, to use with your own laptop or one loaned from the lending desk (bookable through the library catalogue and extremely popular). Wireless is pervasive throughout the building. Photocopiers, printers and drinks vending machines are gathered into an equipment hub. We also have a Thunder Wall virtual flipchart. This is owned by another of the CETLs, the virtual learning laboratory (VLL) and is purposely located in the open space.



*Thunder Wall in Hallward Library (Tim Hodges Photography, <http://www.timhodges.co.uk>)*

Throughout, we have used light and space and bright colours, in contrast to what we had before and to the traditional library space people might expect. The entry floor also houses a mix of seating, PCs/laptop plug-in and a café with PCs, as well as the short-loan collection, self-service machines, another equipment hub and the lending desk. These are the noisy floors, and we work hard to keep the two upper floors dedicated to silent or quiet individual study.

The other libraries have smaller, less rich learning hubs, but follow the same principles and offer the same noisy/quiet/silent split.

We have grabbed the opportunities presented by these capital developments to progress staff roles. Roaming staff members offer active support to students using self-service and other technology, moving throughout the day between different activities and no longer stuck behind a lending desk which can form a barrier between them and the students. We have created a new role of 'information assistant', and these work closely with IT staff, developing new skills and expertise to increase their range and the service offered. The

staff have played a large part in the learning hubs' success.

After two years, we see these spaces as the norm for a university library, and we are delighted that we have enriched both the student experience and the career prospects of our staff. And we have almost forgotten the two summers when we felt like we were on building sites, keeping all library services going with a smile! The results are worth every penny and every speck of dust.



*The George Green Library entrance floor with hub and self-service*

## **Seeing clearly – the redevelopment of the Central Library, Imperial College London: a review of the extension and refurbishment of the Central Library, South Kensington campus, from concept to completion and beyond**

Angus S. Brown  
 Team Leader for Public Services, Central Library, Imperial College London  
 Tel: 020 7594 8823  
 E-mail: [a.brown@imperial.co.uk](mailto:a.brown@imperial.co.uk)

Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor. When a series of disparate factors became aligned in late 2005, the chance to redevelop level one of the Central Library was seized by the then Director of Library Services, Clare Jenkins.

### **INFLUENCING FACTORS**

Over the past five years a number of department libraries had come into the building, maximising stock access but eroding study spaces and flexibility as collections grew.

Some influences were of our own design – a radical review of print collections against secure electronic alternatives allowed the library to

rigorously realign journal collections to electronic delivery.

Most crucial were timely external factors – the closure of a bookshop occupying a corner of the library building and the removal of a large part of the Science Museum Library’s older collections (almost 50% of level one was used for storage).

Underpinning all these influences was a strong desire to redefine library services for a twenty-first-century student, resident in an international institution. That the library should reflect user needs was a given. Evidence was gathered via student feedback, a postcard survey and of course benchmarking against the library sector generally.

The postcard survey was exactly as it sounds – a quick question survey focusing on student workspace preferences and habits, distributed on specially designed postcards using the tagline ‘The Central Library is changing – and so are you.’

The results indicated that 25% of users wanted to work in either a designated group space or somewhere that had a social buzz as a background. The majority of users work with a range of print and electronic resources at the same time. When asked to suggest one change or improvement, increased access to PCs was the number-one request.

#### **DESIGNS ON CHANGE**

Our remit was:

- to reflect the changing work patterns of students and support their broader learning styles
- to offer flexibility and adaptability of space to meet current and future demands on the library building
- to respond to the expectations of students and staff in an ambitious, demanding university.

Beneath these drivers was a much longer shopping list, including a learning café with a range of PC options, innovative and inspiring study areas for group and individual work, teaching and training rooms, interrelated service desk and staff space and the elusive ‘wow’ factor – level one would be our shop window; it had to mirror all our aspirations.

The design timeline for the actual library space was incredibly short for such an ambitious project. A small library design team met on a weekly basis

with the architects (A-EM) between October and December 2006 to work on the floor plan and concepts for the different types of space.

That the design had to incorporate certain fixed structural features – the main stairs, lifts and internal supporting walls – made the challenge all the greater.

The following year and a half saw level one disappear under a shroud of hoardings (or a hoard of shroudings!) and library services were delivered via a temporary location from the upper floors.

#### **SEEING THE IMPACT**

Level one opened in July 2008 and its success was transparent, translucent and clear. The innovative design uses a range of materials to divide and define space, creating a range of enclosed and open spaces which define use and purpose.

The group-study area offers a range of options from flexible open space with movable furniture to more defined work spaces called ‘think tanks’ and ‘c screens’.



The café is of course a study space too, though kept discrete as it can only be entered from before the library entry gates. Seating has been created to encourage both individual and collaborative PC use, as well as comfortable low seating for social



and chill-out time. College catering provides a staffed service between 08.30 and 23.00 during the week, though the space remains open for 24 hours with vending provision.

The individual study and training area has a different feeling. Muted blue walls and solid wood desks create a quieter environment. Three student-bookable rooms are also available for presentation practice and group work.

The staff- and service-focused zones were the most difficult to design: the configuration, interrelationships and travel routes through the building challenged everyone involved. That self-issue usage has increased (from 50% to 70% of all loans) by the clever positioning of our machines and that we have been able to make the coretext collection walk-in access are both indicators of success.



The floor has been enhanced by the generous donation of over 50 canvases by artist Bob Brighton. The bold colour themes challenge the eye and complete what is very much a visual space.

We have relied on college expertise to help support the promotion of the completed project. The online video tour remains the most watched videoclip on the college website. A direct link is available from [www.imperial.ac.uk/library](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/library).

#### **AN EYE ON THE FUTURE**

Instinct and seeing the space in use tell us that the design is successful. Gate entries, circulation and head counts all confirm that we are a third busier than a year ago. For more formal evidence we have committed to monitoring and reflecting on the design throughout this academic year, considering both its impact on the library and our ambitions for library space in the future. In November last year a follow-up survey was conducted,

reviewing the student to study spaces ratio across all floors of the library. At the time of writing we are about to embark on holding a number of focus groups, with the student response to the group-study areas being key.

We have refurbished one floor of a five-storey building. The completed refurbishment continues to send ripples of change through the library service. What we do next may be curtailed by the financial climate, but certainly not by aspiration and ambition.

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## **Oxford developments**

Donald M Mackay  
*Head of Health Care Libraries,  
Oxford University Library Service*  
Tel: 01865 221950  
E-mail: [Donald.Mackay@hcl.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Donald.Mackay@hcl.ox.ac.uk)

Roger Mills  
*Head of Science Liaison and Specialist  
Services, Oxford University Library Service*  
Tel: 01865 275080  
E-mail: [roger.mills@ouls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:roger.mills@ouls.ox.ac.uk)

Oxford University Library Services (OULS) are currently engaged in a major programme of library-space redevelopment and refurbishment. Plans include a major new humanities library at the centre of the university's Radcliffe Observatory quarter and a dramatic remodelling of the New Bodleian Library.

Recently completed projects within science and medicine include a new library space for the medical community in Oxford and a major refurbishment of the Radcliffe Science Library.

Library spaces for scientists, healthcare workers, students and researchers are changing, evolving dramatically to meet the rapidly changing needs of library users. Library staff in Oxford are working hard to meet these new expectations.

Our users still want the 'cathedral hush' with comfortable and generously proportioned study spaces. They want strong collections of physical textbooks and professional library staff on call. However, they also want space to interact with classmates, colleagues and librarians. They want to interact formally and informally, in group-study spaces, in training rooms and in open communal areas with comfortable seats, refreshments, newspapers and current journals.

Our users want decent IT spaces and workstations – wireless access throughout, obviously, but also fixed PC workstations. Junior doctors or medical students dashing between wards and classrooms aren't able to lug a laptop about, and neither is a busy staff nurse coming off a twelve-hour cardiac shift at 5 am.

Of course this is very much the 'information commons' approach, with the library as the 'third place' (not a classroom/ward/laboratory and not home but something in-between work and pure leisure) or the learning/research café approach. In practice in Oxford science and medicine we describe it to our users and others as the best of traditional library services combined with better IT and teaching spaces and a more 'Borders' look and feel.

Historically, library provision for science was shared between departments, colleges and the central Radcliffe Science Library (RSL), scattered over 15–20 sites. With increasing use of e-resources delivered to the desktop, footfall in the smaller libraries has declined, and a decision was taken some years ago to concentrate printed resources for both reference and lending in one central 'hub' site.

The RSL is the chosen site. Originally erected in 1901 to accommodate the science collections previously based in the university museum next door, it was extended with a second wing in 1934, to house the legal deposit collections transferred from the central Bodleian Library. In 1975 an underground stack and reading room were constructed to meet demand, and a separate undergraduate science lending library (the Hooke Library) was opened in part of the original 1901 wing.

To adapt the building to its new role as a science 'hub', the RSL and Hooke Libraries have been merged and their reference and lending collections interfiled. The main entrance hall has been completely restyled to provide a bright, airy space with reception and issue desk, workstations for quick-reference consultations, self-issue machines and printing, photocopying and scanning facilities. One end of the room is devoted to a lounge area with comfortable seating where eating/drinking/talking are permitted, and the fresh white walls provide a home for a changing exhibition of artwork by students of Oxford's Ruskin school of drawing and fine art.

The two wings of the building were originally constructed on different levels, so access between them involved stairs. To improve this, the link



between the two wings, with its lift and staircase, has been completely demolished and replaced with an all-glass construction housing a new staircase and a re-oriented lift now serving all levels. As well as greatly easing day-to-day management, the new link provides superb, hitherto unseen views of the neighbouring museum and Rhodes House buildings.

The former Hooke Library space has been refurbished to provide additional staff accommodation, a café area with vending machines and a much-needed training room equipped with 30 workstations, projection facilities and a smartboard. When not in use for training, this is available as an additional study space for students, and can also be hired by academic departments for teaching.

The geography departmental library was incorporated in the 'new' RSL at the same time as the Hooke Library, and further departmental collections from experimental psychology, plant sciences and zoology will follow in 2009–10, in space released by the continuing transfer to off-site store of printed journals that are now available electronically. Usage is growing steadily, with over 1,000 users now a typical daily figure in term time, which is treble the former RSL usage. Many compliments have been received on the improvements and on the user-friendliness of both the design and the library staff and services.

Staff of Health Care Libraries (the clinical medical side of OULS) have also been working to redevelop and refocus library spaces in line with our users' changing needs – most recently with the opening of a new knowledge centre to replace two more traditional libraries.

Located in the heart of a £50 million new biomedical research building and three years in the planning and construction, the Knowledge Centre provides services to a very varied clientele, including



the biomedical research and student community based on the university's Old Road campus and all of the NHS staff based in the Churchill Hospital. The new service complements HCL's main site – the Cairns Library in the John Radcliffe Hospital.

The emphasis is very much on the zoning of space to provide a range of facilities and services in a relatively small physical footprint of just 330 square metres. Historical plans for a much larger facility with a large physical collection were dramatically revised at the start of the process as the impact of Oxford's growing electronic collections on user needs and behaviour became apparent. As our electronic collections increase, our paper collections shrink and so less space is required.

However, the Knowledge Centre still provides access to high-quality collections of books (the George Weirnik collection) and journals, as well as electronic resources. Other facilities on offer include spacious and quiet spaces for private study, WiFi access, networked computers with internet access as well as word-processing and related applications and self-service printing and scanning.

New services also include a group-study room (with a projector and laptops) that can be booked by any member of the library, as well as an inviting communal area with hot drinks, sandwiches, comfortable seats, newspapers and the latest journals.



As well as providing a greatly enhanced physical space for our users, the Knowledge Centre acts as a base for our outreach librarians – professional staff delivering high-quality information support for clinical research and patient care at point of need across the neighbouring hospital and university wards, labs and departments. It's not just library space that is changing and evolving in Oxford!

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**'... you sort of lose the will to live if you spend too long in the [carrels] ...'  
: improving facilities at Leeds University Library**

Liz Waller  
Head of Public Service Strategy  
Leeds University Library  
Tel: 011303437615  
E-mail: [E.J.Waller@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:E.J.Waller@leeds.ac.uk)

The past two years have seen a flurry of building improvements at Leeds University library, which has included the refurbishment of our Health Sciences Library.

#### **CONTEXT**

The library is a key player in a university-level project to develop a ten-year vision for the use and management of learning and teaching space, to ensure continued improvement of the student academic experience. The university's learning and teaching strategy highlights the enhancement of learning and teaching through the use of technology, with a particular emphasis on blended learning. The student portal is well established and popular and a new virtual learning environment was launched in September 2008. Within the field of medicine, dentistry and healthcare, pedagogy is giving emphasis to self-directed and reflective learning, communication and the development of teamwork. There is an increasing emphasis too on interdisciplinary working, driving a need for provision where disciplines can meet together within the library.

Within this context the library has plans to develop all its library buildings to create premises that will be at the forefront of academic library provision. Flexible and IT-rich, catering for twenty-first-century teaching and learning, the facilities will accommodate individual and collaborative learning with seamless access to IT

and print materials. This report details our recent improvements to the Health Sciences Library.

### HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY

The Health Sciences Library occupies 3142.23 square metres and is based in the Worsley building at the south end of the university's main campus. It contains the main collections for medicine and health-related subjects. It is a major, heavily used resource for university staff and students and, through a service-level agreement, for NHS staff employed throughout West Yorkshire who regularly use the library facilities. In 2007–08 there were 245,764 entrances to the library and in the same period 115,735 items were issued or renewed.

### REDEVELOPMENT

In 2007 we were fortunate to be able to develop our group-study area into a flexible, IT-rich space. Previously home to long rows of desks that were unsuited to group work, the area provided great potential for development. This relatively small-scale project was planned and funded in collaboration with the assessment and learning in practice settings (ALPS) centre for excellence in learning and teaching (CETL) based at Leeds (<http://www.alps-cetl.ac.uk/>). ALPS's aim is to ensure that students graduating from courses in health and social care are fully equipped to perform confidently and competently at the start of their professional careers.

Key features of this redesign work were:

- increased numbers of IT-enabled study spaces
- flexible furniture
- study booths
- soft informal seating areas.

After completion of this development we and the CETL staff undertook an evaluation of this space which highlighted issues with the rest of the library environment, hence the title of this piece!

With the assistance of the Wolfson Foundation and university funding we were able to follow up on this first phase of development to address the rest of the library space. Our objectives for the redevelopment of the rest of the library were to:

- create a multipurpose facility to be used for meetings, presentations, training and collaborative work: this room was to be equipped with flexible furniture, to provide plenty of

power and data sockets and a wireless router enabling use of IT within the space, alongside presentation facilities

- provide refurbished and enhanced library study space: the primary intention was to increase access to appropriate facilities for use of laptops and other portable devices, through provision of power and wireless routers. In addition some fixed-IT workstations would be provided and current furnishings (study carrels, seating etc.) updated to create a more comfortable quiet-working environment; with shelving running throughout this study space, enhanced IT provision allows students to work with print and e-resources in a seamless way
- re-locate the library counter to increase the space available to the users in the entrance area to the library: this space will be used to provide enhanced access to drop-in IT for external users
- enhance teaching facilities – two small teaching rooms were to be redeveloped to allow them to be used as either one training room or two, by use of a concertina wall; rooms are on open access as IT clusters when not used for teaching
- create an area for the high-demand collection: the library seeks to maximise the opening hours for customers by using custodian staff and self-service technology; having a self-access high-demand collection increases access to required materials during self-service hours.

Work commenced on the library in June 2008, with library services remaining open throughout, albeit with a reduced service. Bar some minor snagging, full service resumed for the new academic year in September 2008.

The newly refurbished library has proved popular with its customers: gate entrances have increased and we have received many positive comments on the facilities. The next stage is to undertake an evaluation of the improvements to the library from which we can learn to help us with our work in the future.

## Cardiff University – architects, sponsors and Carol Vorderman: the remodelling of Trevithick Library

Ruth Thornton

*Trevithick Librarian, Cardiff University*

Tel: 02920 875703

E-mail: ThorntonRM@Cardiff.ac.uk

Three years ago Janet Peters, the University Librarian for Cardiff University, approached me with the seemingly innocuous suggestion that an application be submitted for the next round of Wolfson Foundation/CURL (Consortium of University Research Libraries) libraries programme funding to refurbish Trevithick Library. This was a rather tired facility servicing the information needs of more than 3,000 students, plus staff, from the schools of engineering, computer science and physics and astronomy. This bid was successful and after a process involving the complete relocation of the library – twice – Trevithick Library has been utterly transformed for the better. As might be expected, this task was made possible through the hard work of, amongst others, our architect, library staff, university estates staff and the contractors. However, as will be highlighted, one unexpectedly vital partner in this enterprise was the university's development and alumni relations division.



*The old Trevithick library – uninspiring and drab*

To explain the background to this project, it is necessary to go back to 2004 when, immediately following an institutional merger, Cardiff University's Vice-Chancellor commissioned a full-scale review of the library service. Reporting in 2005, the review made many radical recommendations, including a major new build and the redesign of two existing libraries, including Trevithick Library, as part of a ten-year library strategy endorsed by the university. At that stage, Trevithick Library was struggling to provide a learning environment to match changing technological and pedagogical advancements. For example, there were no

group-study rooms and, consequently, researchers wanting quiet study areas competed with students who were required by their curriculum to work in groups. The library itself suffered from a lack of identity, and staff and students often complained about the low-level lighting and lack of ventilation. In short, the Trevithick Library did not inspire learning or, indeed, staying in the library any longer than absolutely necessary. The architect's brief was to create a prestigious facility: visually attractive, comfortable, efficient, well-stocked, well-equipped and, above all, carefully zoned to encourage a variety of learning styles. Key elements of the redesign included a new PC room, four group-study rooms, open study spaces and informal areas. This was a tall order for a relatively small area.

Working with architects based in the design research unit Wales – part of the university's school of architecture – had immediate benefits because they were active users of academic libraries themselves, and thus were familiar with some of the issues we faced. As part of a process of benchmarking, visits were made with the architect to the libraries of the Universities of Portsmouth and Southampton. Ironically, one of the conclusions we took from these visits was that, whilst architecture was important, to make a real difference we also needed to invest in good-quality furniture. The budget for the project was reasonable but, as is often the case, it would not stretch to the kind of furniture we really wanted. Despite this, we approached a local designer and furniture supplier for ideas. We identified suitable desking and a well-established range of chairs that had the benefit of being available in subtly different styles and a range of fabrics and finishes. We knew what we wanted: we just required the money.

The idea of sponsorship was mooted as a way of raising these additional funds. At first glance Trevithick Library might appear an unlikely target for sponsorship: it is a medium-sized library, located on the first floor of a multi-purpose, drably functional institutional building – hardly the most enticing of facilities to attract outside investment. Nevertheless, the school of engineering has many corporate contacts and, with the permission of the head of school, the development and alumni relations division set about making contact with companies, trusts and individuals that already had connections with the school. A proposal was written giving background information about the university, the library review, the current facilities, our vision and the investment to

date. The proposal also detailed what the library still needed, the benefits and recognition that the sponsors would receive and, finally, the reporting procedures required to ensure that the sponsors would know we were managing the facilities appropriately.

The zoning that we'd introduced as part of the overall plan had a useful offshoot, as potential sponsorship areas were already demarcated. We allocated an amount per room or area that we would attempt to raise through sponsorship. The obvious starting point was the four group rooms as they were separate, manageable spaces. Each room is four metres square and has glass walls on two sides and two solid walls. Selected companies were offered the chance to brand a room. One of the walls could be painted a solid corporate colour; a plasma screen would be positioned on the opposite wall and could be used for corporate images when not in use by the students; and the two glass walls could have images put on them representing some of the work of the company. In addition, the furniture would be upgraded and chairs could be upholstered in a corporate colour to match or contrast with the painted wall.

Pleasingly, three companies responded with interest to this proposal, all of whom had strong links with the school of engineering and were able to see the potential for encouraging graduate recruitment. Meetings were held and tours of the building site were given to the prospective sponsors. It was encouraging to see how quickly the potential sponsors became engaged with the project and our team – including myself, the architect and the representative from the development and alumni relations division – soon became adept at fielding questions and providing information about the project. This personal approach paid dividends and all three companies signed up to sponsor a room for five years. Indeed one company also chose to sponsor our new IT room as well as a group room. The general study area also gained some funds, as well as some attractive artwork from a major civil-engineering company. In addition, an educational trust agreed to provide funding over a four-year period for our journals lounge. We even gained sponsorship from surprising quarters, such as an alumnus of the university (now residing in Australia) who sponsored our silent-study area.

The official launch of the new Trevithick Library was held at the end of March 2009. All the sponsors attended and Carol Vorderman, an honorary fellow of the university, officially opened the

new facility. Seeing the reaction of our sponsors on the night it was clear that they thought their investment was worthwhile, even in the present financial climate. Our budget for furniture and equipment was more than doubled through sponsorship. This would not have been possible without our colleagues in the development and alumni relations division as their contacts and wealth of knowledge of how and who to approach led to sponsorship from charitable trusts, corporate bodies and an alumnus. That's quite some little black book.



*Carol Vorderman, Janet Peters (Cardiff University Librarian, centre), Professor Malcolm Jones (Pro VC for health and estates) with representatives from the Wolfson Foundation, Corus, Mott MacDonald, Renishaw and Arup at the opening of the new Trevithick Library*



*The Renishaw group-discussion room: one of the three sponsored rooms*

## University of Newcastle: Robinson library project

Wayne Connolley  
University Librarian  
Newcastle University Library  
Tel: 0191 222 7662 ext 7591  
E-mail: Wayne.Connolly@ncl.ac.uk

David Errington  
Bookstock, Stores, Support Services,  
Communications and Buildings  
Newcastle University Library  
Tel: 0191 222 7662 ext 7716  
E-mail: David.Errington@ncl.ac.uk

### **PART 1: YOURSPACE AND THE LEARNING LOUNGE, JULY–OCTOBER 2007**

#### *Background for the project*

The rationale for the development of these new learning spaces was a desire to make a direct contribution to enhancing the student learning experience by providing highly attractive venues for IT-enabled collaborative learning.

Within the library, there was an awareness of a need to develop a learning environment more suited to group study and other changes in learning modes. Feedback from users had regularly highlighted the need for more group-study space and confirmed the library as a venue of choice for learning because of the unique combination of its attractive environment, substantial print content and extensive access to IT facilities.

#### *YourSpace and the learning lounge*

The two new spaces provided slightly different environments, with YourSpace designed primarily for group work utilising IT and the learning lounge offering a more informal internet-café ambience. Together they provide a total of 140 reader spaces.



YourSpace comprises:

- IT workspaces with PCs configured for use by small groups of various sizes
- clusters and paired workspaces for use with portable equipment
- presentation equipment and display screens for testing and modifying presentations
- movable study tables and chairs, plus sofas with low tables for casual study use
- height-adjustable workstations for wheelchair-users.

The learning lounge development has furniture designed for casual study and additional PCs for café-style use.

Both of these projects were carried out in spaces that were redecorated and re-carpeted in a style designed to suit their use and with new energy-efficient lighting. Characteristics of the facilities are IT provision for both fixed-location and wireless use; provision of interactive equipment; flexibility and adaptability; full accessibility and attractive and comfortable environments where food and drink and group discussion are acceptable.



The principle behind the development of the new spaces was that of collaboration. The concept of collaborative learning provided the original rationale for the new spaces and for the planning and delivery of the project. It involved collaboration between the library, information systems and services and estates in the execution of the project. It has been a hugely successful project, in that both spaces have been very intensively used by students since opening in October 2007. The success of this project also influenced the provision of new study space for users when the entrance level of the Robinson Library was remodelled a year later, in summer 2008.

## Cost

The project cost £270,000 and was jointly paid for by funding for teaching and learning infrastructure from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and a grant from the Wolfson Foundation.

### **PART 2: REMODELLING OF THE ENTRANCE LEVEL, JULY–SEPTEMBER 2008**

#### *Background to the project*

The adoption of self-service issue and return has grown steadily, with self-service issues comprising around 74% of all issues by 2008. As we had reached a plateau at this level, any further increase (which experience elsewhere suggested was perfectly feasible) could only happen if other changes were made. In addition, the shift towards self-services meant that the long issue desk, designed for many staffed service points, was no longer fit for purpose.

The location and design of the entry turnstiles and of the reception area close to the main door of the library proved awkward for both service and entry to the library. An analysis of traffic flows demonstrated that this could only be improved by a changed layout with clearer entry and exit routes.



The entrance area of the library was unwelcoming and almost gloomy. This was partly due to the gradual diminution of the quality of the lighting infrastructure and also the existing lighting wasn't up to meeting acceptable environmental standards.

The success of the YourSpace development had led to consideration of how this concept could be extended elsewhere in the library, since it had proved so popular in feedback from our users. The most obvious location for this was the area

adjacent to the main entrance, which was already used as a group-study area but which wasn't equipped to do so effectively.



#### *What did the project include?*

The main issues described above were addressed in the project, along with a number of specific design improvements, which included:

- a new reception counter with improved entry and exit traffic routes
- an expanded self-service circulation area, located next to the major traffic routes and provided with new equipment
- a smaller service counter with, like the self-service desk, a curved design that eases traffic movement round the area
- a remodelled group-study space, building on the example of YourSpace
- remodelling and refurnishing of the café area next to the main entrance
- extensive use of glazed screening to improve visibility whilst also providing security for the main entrance, staff working areas and the student texts collection
- replacement of the lighting throughout the original building (dating from 1982) with a new energy-efficient installation
- two new replacement lifts.

The major parts of the work were completed by September 2008.

## Cost

The project cost a total of £393,000, and was jointly funded by library bequest funding, HEFCE capital programme funding, an estates furniture grant, the Robinson Library budget and HEFCE's Salix energy management project.

## Sheffield Hallam University: learning-centred space design

Deborah Harrop  
Student and Learning Services,  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Tel: 0114 225 4704  
E-mail: d.harrop@shu.ac.uk

Liz Aspden  
Senior Lecturer in Curriculum Innovation,  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Tel: 0114 225 4744  
E-mail: e.p.aspden@shu.ac.uk

### INTRODUCTION

In October 2008 Sheffield Hallam University opened a new social and informal learning space in the Adsetts learning centre. The space, complete with catering outlet, is spread across two floors and aims to complement existing facilities elsewhere within the building and across-campus. Here we take a closer look at the learning pedagogy underpinning the space, features incorporated into the environment and the outline evaluation and management strategies, and explore ongoing research relating to the continued redevelopment of Sheffield Hallam learning centres.

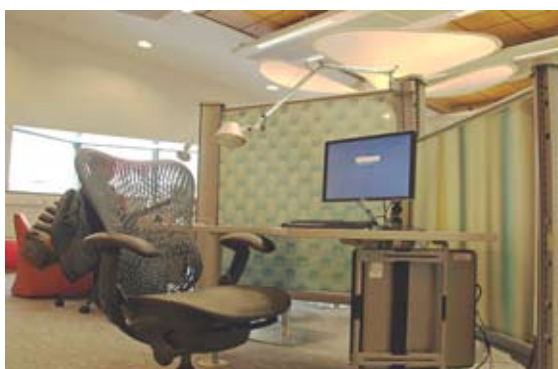
### RATIONALE BEHIND THE SPACE

In the current climate, a number of factors have increased awareness of the importance of learning spaces. For example, changing approaches to learning and teaching mean that students are increasingly expected – and expecting – to learn actively and to participate in group work. Traditional classroom and library design can, however, sometimes constrain opportunities for students to engage with work of this nature on campus. These constraints can arise from explicit rules about permitted behaviours, but our buildings can also send implicit messages about values and expectations through their configuration. For example, a traditional classroom, set up with fixed tables and chairs facing a teaching wall, will send strong indications about the activities it supports; likewise a library with individual study desks suggests to students that they are there to study alone. To address these notions of the 'built pedagogy'<sup>1</sup> and create learning centre spaces that would align with the institution's expressed pedagogical assertions, Sheffield Hallam adopted human-centred design guidelines which 'begin by considering the needs of the students and educa-

tors, making it possible for space to support the transformation of learning'.<sup>2</sup> The space described here was developed as part of a larger project to redevelop the institution's learning centres, and is the result of a close working relationship between staff in learning and academic services and in the learning and teaching institute.

### OVERALL DESIGN

The space is designed to offer students and staff a comfortable and welcoming environment that supports approaches to learning which are informal and social, and that encourages users to take personal responsibility for the area. The layout was designed in partnership with experts from Herman Miller (<http://www.hermanmiller.co.uk>) and the TSK Group (<http://www.tskgroup.co.uk>), so we were able to combine a thorough understanding of learning and teaching at Sheffield Hallam with a wealth of expertise and best practice from other organisations. In addition, both Herman Miller and TSK have excellent track records in sustainability, with strong environmental commitments and forward-looking policies, which we feel make a positive statement to all users and visitors. For example, the Mirra operator chair (used in this space) was first produced in 2003, is made of 42% recycled material and is 96% recyclable. All the furniture in this new space comes with a twelve-year warranty; however, we expect it to be many more years before we need to consider recycling it!



*Ergonomic operator chair and desk*

### SCREENS

Within the area we were keen to use screens to enhance the sense of space and offer semi-private areas for working whilst still allowing plenty of natural light to flood the space. Screening is used to break up the space into a series of connected but distinct zones, helping stimulate curiosity about what lies beyond. This technique has also been used to create a series of pods for groups of

varying sizes. Used carefully, screens have been shown to heighten users' awareness of others and to encourage them to be more considerate in their own behaviour. Whiteboards have also been attached to some of the screens to further facilitate collaborative working.



*Screens used to offer a semi-private environment in an open-plan area*

#### **FURNITURE**

The different zones and seating options within this space are designed to accommodate a range of activities and working styles. Tub chairs and low sofas, for example, promote a laid-back, domestic feel to encourage relaxation and high stools and tables are more suited to quick, ad hoc conversations, while lightweight chairs suggest that areas can be quickly modified to suit changing needs. Eye-catching pieces such as the triangular 'coconut' chairs and brightly coloured pebble-like seats throughout the area have been included to inject a sense of fun and encourage users to find ways of sitting that suit them.



#### *Triangular 'coconut'-style chairs*

To enforce the notion of the space being student-owned, we also offer space for learners to display their work, using either hanging wall frames, large digital screens or display cabinets.

#### **ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Whilst technology has an important role to play within the curriculum, fixed devices have been kept to a minimum. With ample provision of power-enabled desks, and a laptop loan scheme operating within the learning centre, users will be able to work flexibly in a location that suits their needs.

Feedback from students has also consistently highlighted the need for dedicated spaces where groups can get together to practice team or individual presentations. With this in mind, we included in the space two group rooms, each equipped with a PC, large-screen monitor, projector and screen.

#### **EVALUATION**

Since the space opened we have actively sought feedback through a number of channels, including ad hoc feedback via e-mail, visitors' books located in the space, discussions with users and in-depth observations. We are still in the process of building a comprehensive picture of usage, but the difference between the two new levels is quite noticeable, with the floors apparently complementing each other well. For example, typically the lower floor, which houses the catering outlet, generally appears more bustling, with a real sense of movement and short bursts of activity. This particular space is often highlighted by students as 'an area really needed to make studying less boring'.



*The lower-level space, including the catering outlet*

In comparison, on the mezzanine level, students tend to undertake more extended periods of work, with conversations seeming somewhat more

hushed and with the buzz from the lower floor providing a backdrop for activity. Both areas are well used by groups and individuals alike, and our impression is that the co-location of differently sized yet discrete spaces supports fluidity of activity and a sense of community, with many learners frequently commenting that the space is 'bright and refreshing'.

Students are also taking advantage of the abundance of electricity points, with laptop use across the area appearing high at all times of the day. It's quite common to see students integrating a range of resources, for example using the fixed PCs in conjunction with laptops, books and paper spread out across their tables.

It is worth noting that the space is also used by staff, working alone or in groups or simply taking a break from their work. Having staff and students using the space alongside one another is perceived as a positive service development, with anecdotal feedback from both parties suggesting a cultural shift in attitudes and behaviours.

#### ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING CENTRES

Sheffield Hallam is committed to continuing to ensure that their learning centres meet the needs of users. To address this, a robust research programme has been introduced, with the aim of better understanding users' learning activities, behaviours and attitudes. The research strategy involved non-participant observational sweeps over a four-month period to identify learning patterns, relating to how, where and what. Qualitative data were also collected via research events which comprised co-ordinate and photographic mapping; for example, learners were asked to draw on a map where they had been in the learning centre and to tell us why they used particular spaces for learning, or to take a photograph of their favourite space or thing and explain the rationale.

Whilst we are still in the process of analysing the data, early results indicate that we are continuing to successfully align our learning spaces with Sheffield Hallam University's approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Learners have been forthcoming with feedback and if we continue to hear comments like 'We have got a new space in our library and it's fantastic', we believe we are taking a step in the right direction.

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## Reworking the University of Warwick Library

Robin Green

Deputy Librarian, University of Warwick

Tel: 024 765 24678

E-mail: [Robin.Green@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Robin.Green@warwick.ac.uk)

In 2004 the University of Warwick Library opened a new facility, the 'learning grid', an innovative student-focused centre. This is located in a separate building from the main library. The learning grid was a test-bed to explore a number of themes relating to different configurations of learning space, coupled with the availability of learning technology, student ownership of their learning environment, a customised and rich service model and the impact these would have on teaching and learning within the institution.

The immediate popularity of the learning grid – together with student comments such as 'Why can't the main library be more like the learning grid?' – was a strong message to the university that attention needed to be paid to the main university library, the first building constructed on the university campus in the 1960s. A separate extension (linked by a bridge to the main building) was opened in the 1990s, but there had been no significant change to the original building since it opened – the walls had been painted and carpets had been replaced but for the most part the original desks were still in the same places.

In 2006 funding was obtained from the university to enable remodelling of two of the library's five public floors. Additional funding was awarded by the Wolfson Foundation through its CURL/RLUK (Research Libraries UK) libraries programme to support further developments (specifically for researchers) on a third floor.



*The traditional library*

MJP Architects had worked closely with the library in implementing the learning grid concept, and the understanding they had gained of our strategic thinking made them key partners in delivering this project, which would result in a total reconfiguration of around 40% of the overall library space. The value of such a relationship is immense in translating vision into picture and requirements into design.

It was determined that the 'new' entrance floor and second floor would support different modes of individual, social and collaborative working, with the upper floors retained for individual quiet-study learning. Planning for the remodelling was informed by the success of the learning grid and based around the idea of 'the library as third place': establishing an environment that would be between the poles of formal learning and 'at home'. The immediate impression on entering the library would be of a vibrant, welcoming and purposeful space, with the vista quickly opening out to a mix of technology-enabled, fixed and reconfigurable study areas supporting collaborative learning. The next floor up, also remodelled, would be similar but with sufficient difference in layout to cater for individual preferences. An important aspect of the remodelling would be to reduce the impact of library-staff presence, enabling the introduction of a different service model and emphasising ownership of the space by users.



*The remodelled library*

As always, the building work and disruption seemed never-ending, but the two floors were opened by January 2008, and the additional work on the third floor was completed in September. The transformation is astonishing:

- A dark lobby and depressing lecture theatre are now a welcoming entrance area with a stunning reading lounge and dedicated café.
- The monolithic issue desk that created a barrier between staff and users has disappeared, with the space occupied by soft seating and current-newspaper stands, self-issue points and an automated book-return unit in a glass surround, to involve users in the activity that supports their use of the library.
- Staff deal with queries and non-standard transactions at standalone service pods, sitting by the customer for a more personal approach.
- 200 new study spaces in a range of layouts, with access to multimedia resources, support independent and group working; a new steel and glass feature staircase connects the two remodelled floors; bright colours and light wooden panelling encourage creativity and sharing and provide sharp differentiation from the more formal upper floors.
- There is a 40-PC training room.
- User-operated compact mobile shelving houses relocated stock (together with a remote store, this has ensured there is no stock loss).
- The IT services help desk has been relocated to inside the library itself, resulting in a new 100-seat lecture theatre and two PC suites on the ground floor of the library building, each with 85 computers available for teaching purposes and 24-hour open-access use.



*Technology-rich student spaces*

Much of this redevelopment work was learner-focused; however, two new facilities – the 'teaching grid' and the 'research exchange' – have been

introduced to provide targeted support for other stakeholder groups. The teaching grid provides accessible, collaborative support for university staff involved in teaching or training practice, together with an experimental teaching space to encourage exploration of their teaching styles. The Research Exchange – funded by the Wolfson Foundation – is a neutral and shared space dedicated to staff and research students, the first such in the university and intended to stimulate collaborative and interdisciplinary activity.



*The Wolfson Research Exchange*

'Phase 1' of the library's rethinking has positioned library space firmly and deliberately in support of two key elements of the university's strategy: 'to produce a high-quality Warwick student experience of distinction' and 'to double the number of research students across the University by 2014'.

The outcomes of all this work have been very positive, but the up side is also the down side ... footfall is up by well over 50% against a comparable period before the work began and the 'student barometer' rating increased by over 20% this year, but we look at the numbers coming in and wonder how many more we can cope with (though what's to complain about?!).

Has it been worthwhile? Well, the final comment should be from one of our users: 'There is a real buzz in the library – it really makes me want to come here to work. It's so much more than just a library.'