

Title:

Grand Designs: Creating an academic law library

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Abstract:

This article looks at the project to build a new academic Law Library at the University of Salford. It examines the tasks involved, resource planning and communication as well as highlighting successes and issues raised during the construction and design process. The conclusion of the article discusses the lessons learned from undertaking a task of this scale, as well as recommendations for others who may be about to embark on a similar project.

Biography:

Nicola Wakefield has been the Law Librarian at the University of Salford since May 2006. Her role in the last eighteen months has been to design, create and open a new law library facility to support the teaching and learning objectives of the new Salford Law School. Prior to this, Nicola worked as the Law Librarian at Manchester Metropolitan University for four years. She is currently a member of the BIALL Professional Development Committee. Previously, Nicola has held the position of Vice Chair of the BIALL Web Board and Chair of the Manchester Legal Information Group.

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Background

In September 2007 the University of Salford opened a new building to house its Law School for its first intake of eighty seven undergraduate law students. Prior to this, Salford taught postgraduate LLM/MA law programmes by distance learning in the areas of health care law and health and safety and environmental law. As there were no dedicated law teaching facilities on campus, weekend teaching sessions were held in a local hotel. In future years it is envisaged that the Law School will grow to deliver two additional postgraduate courses and intake 150 first year undergraduate students.

The main issue at the initial stage was where to locate a school that was anticipated to grow quickly, when all University buildings were fully occupied. As a new venture, a substantial investment was made to create a fit for purpose building. In 2004, £10

million was pledged to the design, build and fitting out the new Salford Law School. The building needed to house a lecture theatre, adequate seminar teaching space, a social area for students and accommodation for staff required to run the full time LLB. There were three possible sites for the new facility however the issue of accommodating a law library was the deciding factor. The University Library, Clifford Whitworth Library, stocked material to support distance law courses and individual law modules. Space however, was extremely limited. Initial investigations indicated that one kilometre of shelf space would be needed to stock all necessary law resources. In a library that was already full to capacity, alternative accommodation needed to be sought.

Planning discussions took place between University management and architectural firms and building contractors bid for the construction contract. In 2005 a Head of Salford Law School was appointed, the design was finalised and building contractors appointed.

The Law School now occupies the Lady Hale Building, a three story building on a plot next to the main University Library. It comprises of eight teaching rooms, a lecture theatre and purpose built moot room on the ground floor, teaching and administration staff accommodation on the first floor and the law library on the top floor. The Law Library creates an extension to existing Clifford Whitworth Library facilities which is accessible from both the Law School and a link bridge from Clifford Whitworth Library.

Tasks

The University of Salford operates a converged library, computing, telephony, reprographics and audio-visual (AV) service known as Information Services Division (ISD). Key members of staff from each ISD area were involved in developing services and facilities for the new building. The team were responsible for installing all computer, telephony and AV technology. My role as Law Librarian was to project manage the creation, design and resourcing of the law library in a fifteen month time scale, for completion in August 2007.

My tasks involved:

- Ordering and purchasing print and electronic resources to support the teaching, learning and research objectives of the Law School
- Reprocessing of existing law materials
- Updating systems such as library catalogue changes, changes to e-library the University of Salford's electronic library and the website
- Designing furniture layout based on anticipated library use
- Purchasing furniture and materials with University purchasing and tendering guidelines
- Installing AV equipment in legal resource training and group rooms
- Managing changes to library service with ISD staff
- Training ISD enquiry team staff in new subject matter

I had limited previous experience of creating a library. My knowledge lay in moving existing law library facilities to new premises. To gain an insight into what was involved, I found the following invaluable:

- Visiting new law and non-law libraries
- Drawing on individuals' experience within and outside the University
- Attending training days in the area of library design

- Reviewing relevant literature
- Reading internal project documentation from building projects, examining recommendations and lessons learned

Resource Planning

Before purchasing new stock, an enormous amount of planning was undertaken between July and December 2006. Separating the £450,000 budget into sections, enabled the purchase planning for databases, textbooks, annual serial subscriptions, establishment of a serials collection and collection management.

The *Library for a Modern Law School: Statement of Standards for University Law Library Provision in England and Wales* (Winterton 2003) document was key in creating a resource list, as well as drawing on academic input and my own experience. Although my initial budget allowed for materials to be purchased in electronic format the on-going electronic subscription costs could not be supported. It was therefore decided to purchase material in paper format. This impacted on the purchasing timescale as suppliers needed time to source journal and law report back runs. Serials orders were placed in December 2006 and textbook orders in May 2007. Delaying textbook ordering reduced the risk of purchasing stock that became obsolete before use. Academics provided module reading lists which informed the basis of the textbook stock list.

Stock issues that need to be considered:

1. What material was already stocked in the Library?
2. What needed rebinding?
3. What stock needed an updated edition?
4. What needed to be withdrawn?
5. What needed reclassifying?
6. What stock needed purchasing?
7. How many years of journal back runs were required?
8. Where should new stock be stored?
9. What contingency plans were needed if building handover was delayed?

In order to deal with these issues the following small projects had to be completed:

1. Withdrawal of obsolete stock
2. Rebinding of law report and legislation stock
3. Reclassification of existing stock
4. Reprocessing of stock with 'Law Library' location labels
5. Catalogue changes to reflect new location
6. Clearing of ISD storage facility for holding new stock
7. Re-spacing of Library stock when existing law stock moved to new location
8. Improving signage in Clifford Whitworth Library with directions to new facilities
9. Staff training to be developed and delivered for new subject matter and any law library procedures

Six temporary staff members were needed between January and September 2007 to assist with these projects. Two assisted with clearing ISD storage facilities to hold new stock. Four prepared stock for move to the Law Library, straightened new materials and re-spaced the main University collection. Permanent staff worked on the reclassification project and ordering and processing of new stock.

In addition, other issues that needed to be considered were:

- How to move existing stock and new stock to its new location
- How to process new stock and move it to storage when it arrived in the Learning Resource Management Centre (LRMC)
- What future processes were needed: dealing with new stock; shelving responsibilities; library tidying; printer and photocopier maintenance; health and safety guidelines; additional security patrols and evacuation procedures
- Which, and what amount of, furniture needed to be ordered
- What extra items were needed (book trolleys, kick stools, bins, shelf labels, notice boards, photocopying and printing facilities and numbers of computers)

Communication

The key to the successful completion of this project was communication. To aid this, a clear line of communication was devised. I met monthly, increasing to fortnightly, with team leaders from the LRMC, Space Managers and members of the Services and Operations sections of ISD. This helped to ensure that the collection management projects such as reclassification, organisation of storage facilities and stock ordering and processing were progressing smoothly. To ensure that any collection management related issues were dealt with promptly, I worked three days a week in the LRMC which ensured that I was accessible for queries.

To co-ordinate my project with the ISD Law Build Team, a formal monthly meeting led by the ISD Law Build Project Manager was held. The ISD team discussed the progress of IT, reprographics, AV and telephony related projects. Along with all building project stakeholders, I attended monthly site and client meetings where construction issues and building change requests were made. Monthly reports were needed from project managers which highlighted points for discussion at the Project Executive Group. All internal and external meetings were documented to ensure actions were completed, changes were noted and communication lines were open.

Design

Planning the library layout design took from September 2006 to January 2007. When creating a layout design it is useful to gather ideas by:

- Visiting new or newly refurbished library spaces
- Consulting furniture and library suppliers catalogues
- Meeting with furniture suppliers and visiting suppliers' warehouses. This is useful as opinions on furniture chosen from brochures can change when viewed in reality
- Using scaled images of furniture and library plans to optimise accessibility

It is important to check if project purchasing is bound to tendering and purchasing policies. The University of Salford tendering process can take over a month and has to be factored into a project timescale. For contingency planning it is useful if the tender includes a contract clause that furniture suppliers must store items until needed, at no extra cost, if you are unable to accept delivery due to building delays. Previous University experience had resulted in large amounts of furniture needing to be stored as the contract specified a delivery date which could subsequently not be met.

Successes and Issues

The major success of the project was that it was completed on time and to budget with no major problems with the building process or the fit out of technology and furniture occurring. This can be attributed to the constant communication that occurred between all stakeholders and suppliers. The construction of the Law Library was a design and build project therefore smooth communication was imperative so change requests could be resolved at short notice. This was essential as a number of layout and furniture designs were considered during the last six months of the project. Each required a different location of electric sockets and communication with the building team ensured that all plans were up-to-date.

Another success was learning from experiences of previous building projects by reading internal end of project documentation. In 2006 a large scale project to build a new health faculty was completed. Problems with this build had arisen such as the incorrect positioning of floor boxes and electric sockets for IT equipment and furniture; inappropriate positioning of presentation furniture and the inaccessibility of AV equipment in locked lecterns for teaching staff. Being able to read about these experiences meant that I benefited from best practice recommendations and ensured that each element was planned for and correct before the point of change passed.

Two major issues did arise, firstly relating to contingency planning. Plans had been arranged for delays with building construction, however two unforeseen problems occurred. Due to flooding in England in June 2007, the main book supplier was unable to send stock and invoices as their premises closed for two weeks. This resulted in invoices not being received before the end of the financial year and internal negotiation was needed to carry forward the budget to the next financial year. A technical fault with the seventy-three computers ordered for the Library meant delivery was delayed by six weeks. This had a knock on effect for technical staff on a tight summer schedule to install the computers and complete their other summer project work. By drafting in temporary staff the timing problem was resolved.

The second issue was that operational issues surrounding the staffing and servicing of the law library and its integration into existing library services was not thoroughly agreed and documented. Signage, guides and training need to be improved to fully inform all users that the Law Library is not a stand alone library service but an extension. The only part of the Library project not yet completed is signage in the main Library to the extension. The access bridge on the top floor and is not visible from the main stairwell. Students are often lost trying to access the new facilities. All Library signage will be overhauled in early 2008 and signage to the facility will be erected which should help resolve this issue.

Lessons Learned

Frequently, I am asked what I would have done differently if I knew now what I didn't know then and what lessons have I learned:

- Order back runs of journals as early as possible. Although ordering began in December 2006, not all resources have arrived yet. Allocating six months for delivery was not sufficient. Ten months in advance would have been practical.
- Resolve all budget queries immediately. A miscommunication with University finance managers resulted in £100,000 spending occurring in two months. Initial indications were that all monies could be carried forward to the next financial year. Eight weeks before year end this changed. To avoid similar stresses in the future I would iron out any unresolved issues earlier.

- Consult design specialists. Originally an interior design team were to be employed to design the layout and select furniture for the Law Library in consultation with ISD staff. With no team in place the role of interior designer fell to staff. Over 500 hours were spent on design, limiting time for staff training in the field of law enquiries. This left some Library staff feeling unprepared for the new subject enquiries. In any future project I would argue that it is more cost effective to consult with specialist designers.
- Finalise all health and safety issues before opening. The Law Library had to run at reduced opening hours for the first six weeks of term as fire evacuation procedures had not been finalised with the appropriate University department.
- Document and agree all procedural issues before opening. Not all procedural issues were fully outlined such as the number of security patrols, dealing with noise complaints and how the Law Library reception desk would be staffed. These issues will be revisited as part of the project review.

Recommendations

- Before starting any project, plan a critical pathway of work
- Consult experienced individuals who have worked on similar projects both within and outside of your organisation
- Establish lines of communication for each area of project work and meet regularly to update on progress
- Allow as much time as possible for stock ordering. External suppliers will work to different deadlines or forces of nature may impact on your project
- Arrange removal companies at the earliest possible date
- Plan a spending timeline and adhere to it so excess capital need not be spent in a short time period
- Review plans and ideas with relevant members of staff within your organisation, such as furniture layout
- Include departments such as Health and Safety, external relations and marketing in discussions as they may not be automatically consulted
- Research design concepts, visit new library spaces for ideas
- Talk to current students about what they feel a library needs
- Hold regular update meetings for all staff so they are aware of developments in their workplace and what effect they may have
- Include contingency planning
- Review the process at the end of the project, drawing up recommendations and lessons learned for use by future project groups

Conclusion

The Law Library has now been open for six months. Future challenges for the facility will include accommodating all law students when the school is at capacity as many students prefer working in the modern facilities and using the new technology. Education and training needs to be increased to ensure the Law Library is not viewed as a separate facility to the University Library. Signage needs to be improved so students know where to access key facilities in Clifford Whitworth when working in the Law library and how to access the Law Library from the main Library building.

The project to establish a modern Law School and Library facility has been highly successful. The key to the smooth running and the successful outcome of the project has been clear communication, consulting with experienced individuals and learning

from mistakes made in previous build projects. The feedback regarding the Library is encouraging and positive. The Law Library is a busy hub for learning, staff and students alike enjoy studying in the new library and using the new facilities.

On a personal note, participating in this project has give me experience in wearing many different 'hats' at one time in terms of the skills and roles I have needed to use and undertake. Just some of the skills it's necessary to use are:

- Project manager
- Designer
- Communicator
- Diplomat
- Negotiator
- Peacemaker
- Promoter
- Visionary
- Finance manager
- Organiser
- Leader
- Influencer
- Trainer

The chance to create a law library from scratch is not one that comes along often. Although it has been hard and challenging work, it has been highly rewarding and provided me with a unique opportunity to further develop my professional skills

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