

HFL move –report on student consultation

1. Timetable of process & communication

- 18 Jan - initial proposal circulated to CoLP members (incl. 2 UHA presidents and 2 PG reps)
- 1 Feb - Circulation of Responses to Responses to CoLP members
- 6 Feb - IH meets graduates
- 7 Feb - IH meets 2 UG and 2 PG reps to discuss survey
- 13 Feb - Survey sent to UG and PG students via Faculty's mailing lists (survey closed 27 Feb.)
- Tues 21 Feb, 23 Feb, 24 Feb (2x) - RadCam tours
- 24 Feb - Open Meeting

2. Survey

- Drafted with CoLP students reps and in consultation with HISPAG members
- Circulated via Faculty mailing lists to UGs and PGs.
- Incentive of £10 PCAS credit offered

a. Participation

326 responses¹ received of which

- 234 (71.8%) were from undergraduates [UG] (22.15% response rate)
- 88 (27%) were from graduates (15.66% response rate)
 - 31 Taught graduates [TAU]
 - 57 Research students [RES]
- 4 (1.23%) were from lecturers, external or visitor

As the survey was primarily aimed at students, the externals were excluded in the subsequent analysis.

b. Summary findings

Have students understood the proposal and the implications?

A small minority of 23 respondents did not read the proposal and Q&A paper, did not know what it was or were not interested. Their replies were excluded from the analysis. See also Appendix.

What are the most important concerns for library services?

Of the remaining 299 responses (216 UG, 29 TAU, 54 RES), the following aspects of the proposal, the following were rated most highly:

1. Improved opening hours: 259 (UG 189, TAU 25, RES 45)
2. More multiple copies of reading list books: 245 (UG 197, TAU 19, RES 29)
3. More desks and varied spaces: 212 (UG 157, TAU 17, RES 38)
4. Able to order HFL stack books via SOLO: 193 (UG 130, TAU 20, RES 43)
5. More digitised: Set Texts 185 (UG 139, TAU 16, RES 30)
6. Self-issue borrowing and books drop box: 163 (UG 115, TAU 15, RES 33)
7. More databases: 140 (UG 83, TAU 18, RES 39)

¹ By comparison the 2010-11 HT *Opening hours survey* received a total of 356 responses of which 309 were from UGs and 39 from graduates.

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Overall ranking	UG	TAU	RES
More desks and varied spaces	3	5	4
Able to order HFL stack books via SOLO	5	2	2
More databases	7	4	3
More digitised Set Texts	4	6	6
Improved opening hours	2	1	1
More multiple copies of reading list books	1	3	7
Self-issue borrowing and books drop box	6	8	5

Aspects which attracted most criticism:

1. Disruption: 220 (UG 167, TAU 21, RES 32)
2. Loss of a separate faculty library / reputation: 201 (UG 150, TAU 20, RES 31)
3. Loss of space in the HFL (post-lift): 177 (UG 130, TAU 15, RES 32)
4. Loss of smaller and more compact library: 173 (UG 127, TAU 19, RES 26)
5. Having to carry books over several floors: 158 (UG 118, TAU 15, RES 25)
6. Loss of HFL atmosphere: 145 (UG 103, TAU 15, RES 27)

Overall ranking	UG	TAU	RES
Disruption	1	1	1
Loss of a separate faculty library / reputation	2	2	2
Loss of space in the HFL (post-lift installation)	3	4	1
Loss of HFL atmosphere	6	4	3
Loss of a smaller and more compact library	4	3	4
Having to carry books over several floors	5	4	5

Comments

197 individual comments were received from undergraduates [UG], 36 from Taught Masters [TAU] and 75 from Research students [RES]. They are of varying length and quality of contribution. Due to shortness of time it was not possible to quantify references to all issues in the texts. Nonetheless, it is clear that the majority of comments are on:

1. concerns over seating capacity
2. much dislike of informal seating
3. dislike of the Gladstone Link as a working environment and usability
4. concern over loss of the more relaxed and intimate atmosphere of the HFL
5. concern over loss of an independent library exclusively of use to historians and associated reputational loss
6. concern over disruption

While some students make a plea not to move the HFL, some are excited about it. The full 37 page compilation of anonymised comments is available upon request from [Isabel Holowaty](#). See Appendix 2 for selected and comments from all 3 student cohorts.

Does the proposal address their concerns or create new ones?

No new concerns were raised by students.

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Are there any significant difference between UG and PG views?

There is no statistically significant difference between undergraduates, taught masters and research students. They share the same criticisms but, not surprisingly, rate the benefits slightly differently and according to their needs. Should the proposal go ahead, graduates are naturally more concerned about disruption to their research and deadlines over Long Vacation.

Based on comments, it seems that a number of students still assume that Theology would stay in the Radcliffe Camera, that books cannot be taken from the Gladstone Link to e.g. the Lower Camera and don't understand that the entire Lower Camera would be given over to historians.

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History Librarian

29 February 2012, rev. 1 March 2012

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APPENDIX 1: Responses by college

	UG Responses	UG TOTALS	Response rate	PG Response	PG TOTALS	Response rate
All Souls		0		0	1	
Balliol	8	49	16.33	7	34	20.59
Brasenose	5	32	15.63	0	5	0.00
Christ Church	2	40	5.00	5	20	25.00
Corpus Christi	4	29	13.79	2	20	10.00
Exeter	2	24	8.33	2	10	20.00
Green Templeton				1	13	7.69
Hertford	16	42	38.10	2	14	14.29
Jesus	8	30	26.67	1	15	6.67
Keble	12	41	29.27	2	9	22.22
Kellogg				4	15	26.67
Linacre				1	17	5.88
Lincoln	8	35	22.86	2	19	10.53
LMH	21	41	51.22	4	13	30.77
Magdalen	9	47	19.15	0	9	0.00
Mansfield	9	32	28.13	1	11	9.09
Merton	10	45	22.22	4	23	17.39
New College	6	35	17.14	4	16	25.00
Nuffield				0	6	0.00
Oriel	3	28	10.71	5	19	26.32
Pembroke	4	36	11.11	0	8	0.00
Queen's	14	38	36.84	2	9	22.22
Regent's Park	1	15	6.67	2	3	66.67
Somerville	7	46	15.22	0	7	0.00
St Anne's	8	35	22.86	1	15	6.67
St Antony's	1	0		3	52	5.77
St Benet's	1	10	10.00	0		
St Catherine's	4	39	10.26	1	13	7.69
St Cross				4	25	16.00
St Edmund's Hall	13	27	48.15	2	15	13.33
St Hilda's	5	28	17.86	1	12	8.33
St Hugh's	9	36	25.00	3	11	27.27
St John's	6	36	16.67	0	13	0.00
St Peter's	6	30	20.00	0	3	0.00
Trinity	7	24	29.17	3	10	30.00
University	13	38	34.21	6	23	26.09
Wadham	9	35	25.71	2	12	16.67
Wolfson				5	25	20.00
Worcester	4	28	14.29	4	17	23.53
Other				2		
TOTAL	235	1055	22.27	88	562	15.66

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APPENDIX 2: Selected comments

The full 37 page compilation of anonymised comments is available upon request from [Isabel Holowaty](#).

In favour of the move:

“The History Faculty Library collection is simply wasted where it is. I know a lot of people who don't go simply because it's far away and because they dislike the library as a whole. The Radcliffe Camera does not have a similar problem - by moving the collection it would be more widely, and more conveniently, used by all history students.” [UG]

“Every historian is already using the radcliffe camera and the gladstone link for, in many cases, more than half of the texts required. The extent of material required by a historian has rendered the point of an HFL defunct and it would be far more sensible and simple to move them all into the same building. I don't know why everyone's making such a fuss about it...” [UG]

“I think that the poposals have taken into account many issues and thought about them carefully. Although it is nice to have a Faculty Library, and I prefer working in the HFL compared to the Bod, I understand that practicality is a key issue. Students should not be too far entrenched in the idea of maintaining a faculty 'status'. Ultimately, we will all have to adapt.” [UG]

“People are scared of change, just move the god damn library its obviously a far better thing for students. People fetishize tradition so much in oxford that the loss of a unique HFL space is worse to them than gaining the better but subject neutral lower read cam space. Even if democratically people want to stay in the HFL its because they are idiots, take an executive decision !” [UG]

“While disruption is not desirable, it is simply the cost for what I perceive as a wise, well-thoughtout move with tremendous benefiting potential. To clarify: the loss of space in HFL (post-lift installation) - is not desirable so staying in the OII is not desirable. Loss of a smaller, more compact library - I'm okay with the loss due to the tremendous benefit and breadth of the larger Bodleian collection - also, prevents me from having to walk between Rhodes House, Social Science, HFL and Bodleian throughout the week. At least this move condenses two of those stops. I'm okay with the loss of the HFL, as I find the space fairly cramped already and a fairly confusing labrynth to navigate from one room to the next and finding material.” [TAU]

“I am generally hugely in favour of the move!” [TAU]

“I think that the HFL move is a good idea- it will be much more useful to have all the books in one place- apart from all the history books at the RSL!” [TAU]

“I'm really excited about the HFL move and think it is the right and wise thing to do. I do wish there wasn't so much opposition to it so that it could move ahead. :-)” [RES]

“I am currently on leave to do archival research and am returning in Michaelmas, when the proposed move will be completed. While I certainly sympathise with those for whom the disruption of the proposed move will cause major problems, for myself the advantages heavily outweigh the disadvantages. It will be much more convenient to have all the History books in the same library and to have longer opening hours” [RES]

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Against the move:

“Please do not close the History Faculty Library. It is very useful.” [UG]

“Nothing is more important to me than keeping the HFL.” [UG]

“Don't move to the RadCam! The History Faculty needs its own library!” [UG]

“Please do not go down the road of getting rid of separate faculty libraries.” [UG]

“Please do not do this. History Faculty should be important enough to have its own separate library.” [UG]

“I love the old History Fac Library building. It has a huge amount of character and is situated in a fantastic location. Please don't move the collection!” [TAU]

“I do not support the move of the HFL and I am very unhappy for the HFL collection to be moved to the Bodleian Libraries. This will not only cause considerable disruption to the History students and Faculty, but this will also lead to further disruption for Bodleian readers.” [RES]

“Please, please keep the HFL open!!!! It is a valued resource in the lives of history students and its loss would be a tragedy.” [RES]

1. On seating capacity (60+ comments)

“I am very concerned about the seating arrangements. The proposal keeps mentioning that there will be more seats available. I fail to see how this will be achieved because the Gladstone Link is almost always full and the Rad Cam is always very busy.” [UG]

“Whatever your statistics say, the Upper Camera is packed and finding a seat there very difficult. If you move English and Theology there will only be worse.” [UG]

“As I write this I am sitting in the last available seat in the Lower Camera, having tried and failed to find space in the Gladstone Link. How you think this can be good enough with the additional influx of HFL users, is a mystery to me.” [UG]

“For colleges in the centre of the city, it is a simple matter to pop in to the RadCam to check if there is available seating for work and heading back to college if not. For us students at the further removed colleges, it is at least an hour round trip.” [UG]

“Unless you get into the Rad Cam before 10am, there are rarely seats available.” [UG]

Etc.

2. On Informal seating (47+ comments)

“If I wanted to have informal seating, I would go to a cafe or my JCR.” [UG]

“It is much harder to work in informal style seating anyway because you end up having to balance things on your knees and bend double to reach your laptop on a coffee table”. [UG]

“The so called informal seating in the Gladstone Link is huge, bulky and not functional. One armchair takes the space of two chairs and is half as efficient.” [UG]

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“Informal seating - cafe style, lounge as found currently in the Gladstone Link - is very impractical in a library. The vast majority of people seem to use these libraries to read AND to take notes, on paper or with a laptop. This is very uncomfortable in a lounge or armchair! As no talking or discussion is permitted, there is very little use in having groups of informal chairs clustered together around a coffee table. I think that unless proper desks are provided, 'adding' seats like these isn't really adding seats at all - nobody wants to use them.” [UG]

“I find the Gladstone Link a fine place to work. I know that many dislike its clinical design and decor as well as the casual seating, but I don't mind it.” [UG]

“There are not very many informal seats considering that the Link is supposed to have this different, more relaxed atmosphere.” [UG]

“The range of seating is welcome, but the adjustable chairs are surely more desirable than the cafe style chairs for users with laptops (accordingly, the adjustable office chairs are always the first to go). The more comfortable lounge chairs are a welcome addition though.” [RES]

“Comfortable seating would be nice- but comfortable seating fit for purpose and with accompanying desks of a suitable height.” [RES]

Etc.

3. The greatest fear is that there will be fewer books that can be taken away.

“The fact that we would even lose some of the books on shelves is very difficult as it is already hard to get the books before other people, let alone having to order them, which will never work.” [UG]

“My second concern is one of book availability - the current library provision is so excellent as there are three layers (college, faculty and bod). Will there certainly be the same number of confined copies of books (i.e. those in the Gladstone link and the upper and lower cam) available to those who cannot get books to withdraw?” [UG]

“Every time I go to the Gladstone link the book I need is being used by another member of my course as there is only one copy. This is the biggest advantage of the HFL, I rarely have any difficulty getting the books I need, and I'm concerned that this problem is only going to get worse.” [UG]

“With all of the books from the History Library coming into the Rad Cam and maybe Gladstone Link I am worried that some of the books will be moved into stacks and therefore there will be limited access to some of the books that are currently on the shelves.” [UG]

“My main concern about the proposed library move is the rumour that there would be a loss of copies instantly available (i.e. not in a closed stack); it can be difficult enough locating books under our time constraints and I feel that the heightened use of closed stack books would only add to these problems.” [UG]

Etc.

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4. Common Room:

“Also a common room etc is good because it gives historians a chance to meet each other, again with no lectures this is more difficult.” [UG]

“If we wanted to work in a cafe culture, we'd go to a cafe... The same may be said for a common room/social space. It is exactly to avoid this that many students use the building in the first place.” [UG]

“What the history faculty [library] has, and the bod lacks, is a common room - there is nowhere to eat your lunch or have a drink or take a break without going outside (the bod cafe does not fulfil this criteria as it sells food, rather than being a place one can feel comfortable to sit in without any obligation to purchase).” [TAU]

“I see no need for a common room, social space or informal seating, since this tends to encourage socialising and conversation, all of which is extremely disruptive in a working library.” [RES]

“I'm a mature student and travel from Warwickshire and so I have used the Common Room as a place to sit and have sandwich. Without the common room facility I would have to waste time by going to the History Faculty Common Room or pay for a meal in the Bodleian library coffee shop.” [TAU]

“Having a common room is fine, but turning parts of the library into a common room is not. The informal area in the Gladstone would be more useful if it had real desks.” [RES]

Etc.

5. Staff & specialist support

“A vital part of what constitutes HFL is its staff.” [UG]

“I really like the atmosphere of the HFL and the way that friendly staff recognise individuals. My main worry would be if the staff at the HFL were to lose their jobs as a result of the move and if personalised service (e.g. help finding books) was to go.” [UG]

“I recognise and have talked to all the staff, some of whom know my name and even my taste in books.” [UG]

“A vital part of what constitutes HFL is its staff. In many other libraries I have had really bad experiences with staff nearly shouting at people who dared to have questions. This never happened in HFL. I do not really care about the location as long as the staff remains there.” [UG]

“It is vital to retain a specialised library for History. In particular, it is important to have knowledgeable, specialist staff, to retain an identity and a place for students to meet colleagues in their subject.” [TAU]

Etc.

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6. History at Oxford needs own independent library / Identity

“Secondly the possibility of ‘perhaps’ funding Sunday openings, longer opening hours and the potential ‘annoyance of disruptive building works’ are not sufficient reasons to deny us our own library.” [UG]

“The loss of the history-specific space is inevitable as Oxford are merging libraries in the long-term anyway.” [UG]

“I think it's totally unfair that the largest department in the university is being stripped of its library... I would not have applied to Oxford if the faculty didn't have its own library and a space for historians alone. It's also a matter of principle, making history seem unimportant compared to other subjects.” [UG]

“Not only does it contribute to the university's reputation as being a centre of expertise and excellence for the academic study of history, but it also ensures that history retains its status as a distinct school of study. This is something that would be lost my merging collections together in one library.” [UG]

“It must be made known to both history and non- history students, that the space ‘belongs’ to historians. This could be done through a simple plaque entitled, ‘History Library’, for instance.” [UG]

“I chose to apply only to Oxford for a D.Phil, rather than applying for any of the other Universities which I had considered. [...]The Wellcome Trust application form has a specific section on library provision [...]I am worried that perceptions of the Oxford History Faculty in the light of this policy will damage my chances of securing funding for research” [TAU]

“It is vital to retain a specialised library for History. In particular, it is important to have knowledgeable, specialist staff, to retain an identity and a place for students to meet colleagues in their subject.” [RES]

*“I think it is extremely important and necessary that the *identity* and academic/cultural institution of the History Faculty Library remains blatantly visible in addition to being nominally intact. I know that the proposal argued that the HFL wouldn't be, in effect, dissolved by this move, but in reality the HFL as an institution would be marginalised because it would be subsumed into areas in the main Bod structure that already have powerful identities.” [RES]*

“HFL atmosphere - undefinable. [...] The fact that there are other historians around you. Knowing that, like members of other faculties (philosophers, literary scholars, social scientists) historians too have their own library where they can go.”[RES]

Etc.

7. HFL is exclusive for historians, BOD isn't

“I am concerned that more seats in the Rad Cam does not mean more seats for historian. Very often when I am in the Rad Cam I am sitting next to science students or others who do not study history. I am concerned that other subjects would take up desk space and there would not be enough space for historians.” [UG]

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“...as I do my finals, competing for library space in the Radcam and Gladlink with students from every single faculty and subject.” [UG]

“The Radcliffe Camera and Gladstone Link are commonly used by students across a broad range of subjects; odds are these students won't be historians, whereas the HFL is much more exclusively for the use of historians, with a specialised staff, availability of seats and desks, and a quiet atmosphere (without the whispering , photocopying and undesirable aspects of working in a space claimed by the entire university).” [UG]

“I hope that the sciences will contribute some of their budget to the RadCam and Bod as I often see scientists using the facilities on a day to day basis.” [UG]

“The idea that restricting the GL to mainly humanities books will somehow mean that all the non-humanities students just leave, leaving lots of lovely space for historians, seems optimistic at best; I have several friends studying science subjects who tell me they already work in the GL and are unlikely to stop, because they value the environment more than it having the books they need.” [UG]

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Etc.

8. Opening hours:

“Having said all this, I think the idea of longer opening hours would be enormously appreciated and long overdue (this is the major disadvantage of the HFL as it is now).” [UG]

“The opening hours proposed are exactly the same as the opening hours already in place at the Radcliffe Camera, there is no improvement in them at all.” [UG]

“If the Rad Cam opening hours do not remain extended, then often, it is effectively impossible to work on weekends. However, the suggestion that this is only possible by moving out of the HFL is not only unwelcome, but seems to have been presented as an ultimatum by this body, which is entirely unappreciated by myself and my fellow students. Perhaps this is an incorrect interpretation, but I have encountered this view many times.” [UG]

“The second major issue is then the opening times; it would be very useful if the library could be open for more hours.” [UG]

“The limited opening hours of the HFL at the weeking currently is incredibly frustrating - I would be supportive of the move to the Rad Cam if this meant longer opening hours on Saturday and opening on Sunday. “ [UG]

“I think that opening hours should be extended past current bodeleian hours further” [UG]

“Hours are not a real issue for me. If one does a little advanced planning, there is generally no need to collect books on a Sunday.” [TAU]

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“On the whole I'm happy with the current opening hours; HFL and Bod. As far as the HFL is concerned the only change I would like to see is an extension to Saturday opening hours. I would not support Sunday opening in any of our libraries if that were to be detrimental to other aspects of the library services.” [TAU]

Etc.

9. Usage

“Students are fairly lazy and do not want to have to travel far for their books and resources which includes a common room/informal area.” [UG]

“The benefit of the HFL building is the speed with which. Books can be taken out - this convenience will be destroyed if it moves the Gladstone link which involves about 4 flights of stairs/security systems/a tunnel” [UG]

[On Gladstone Link] *“It feels more like somewhere I would go to retrieve books, not somewhere I want to stay and work and I find I cannot work for prolonged periods with recycled air and no natural light.” [UG]*

“The point of the hfl is convenience in taking out books not in providing seating space.” [UG]

“I felt ill being underground [in Gladstone Link] in an enclosed space the first time I visited the GL. I have made myself get over that in order to get books but I do not want to work there. So it's a trek down there and then up to the URR and I find that all rather inconvenient.” [TAU]

“I think the Gladstone link is an unpleasant place to work, due to its subterranean nature and the attempts to disguise its grim functionalism with colourful chairs (I can't understand anyone who thinks they can do productive work sitting in a "lounger") and ceiling fixtures. As a resource, however, it is fantastic and has revolutionised my degree work. I will, though, always remove books from it to work in the LRR, URR or LC and UC.” [TAU]

*“It is not acceptable to expect students to gather books up and run around the library complex *every day*.” [TAU]*

“I prefer to locate myself in one work setting each day and having to switch between S. HIST in the Radcliffe Camera and the HFL has always been an inconvenience.” [TAU]

“While I find it acceptable to have a reading room like the Gladstone Link, I do not like the fact that books in there cannot be requested to other reading rooms. When conducting research it is often very important to read texts alongside each other: if all of your books are not in the Gladstone Link, then this is now impossible, and you have to stop everything that you are doing, walk to the Gladstone link, find your book, then attempt trying to find a seat in the Gladstone Link, photocopy selected passages from your book, then leave. It is a lot of trouble.” [RES]

“The most important feature of this move which has not been addressed in your proposal is the fact that the History Faculty collection (which is quite private) is due to move to a place that is extremely accessible to the rest of the student body. That means that all the postgraduates that can borrow from our collection will be more inclined do so, thereby reducing History students' access to the collection. I am aware that presently, the History

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Library building is in a central location, and some will argue, not inaccessible to other postgraduates who want to borrow anyway. However, the fact that it maintains a distinct identity removed from other Bodleian buildings promotes a sort of mystique that detracts other postgraduates from venturing into it, thereby maintaining/guarding increased availability of books for History students. One should keep in mind that, although there is a core of students who use the History Faculty Library as a study space, most History students only go to the History Library in order to check out books.” [RES]

Etc.

10. Atmosphere

“The HFL has always been my favourite place to work due to its relaxed setting, spacious work areas and friendly, helpful staff.” [UG]

“The architecture and design of the HFL are unique and it certainly adds a huge amount to each and every trip I make to the library.” [UG]

“The history faculty library provides a quieter and more intimate space than the Radcliffe Camera and the loss of this is unfortunate.” [TAU]

“The Rad Cam is an extremely intense working environment. The HFL offers a more relaxed, quiet environment to work in. I am currently sat in the Gladstone Link and instead of peace and quiet, I can hear the constant droning of the water pipes; hardly a relaxing or distraction-free place to work.” [UG]

“The HFL atmosphere is, to me, very linked up with its reputation, as a friendly environment where no historians have any advantage over any other in terms of resources or space. Another important element is the abundance of natural light in the HFL.” [UG]

“With the HFL being a lending library, the majority of visitors are passing through finding and borrowing books. I'd worry that the Radcliffe Camera would become far noisier and a less peaceful and undisturbed place to work - even if the non-lending collections are on different floors, readers will still be carrying books from one to the other to work.” [UG]

“Loss of HFL personal library for historians would only be an issue if the system in the Camera didn't work. If the 'atmosphere' is replicated - i.e. there is always availability to work, kind, helpful staff, the same check-out borrowing system and the collections are kept reasonably in the order they appear now (the Camera tends to have a more random order because of the greater variety of books) then this should not pose further problems.” [UG]

“By 'atmosphere' I mean the location of the building, its surroundings and its interior. The current HFL and Rad Cam both have very similar atmospheres in this sense. My concern is with the Gladstone Link which, for me, is a very uncomfortable place to work, not least due to the lack of efficient seating space.” [UG]

“The HFL has a far superior atmosphere to the Rad Cam/Gladstone Link, which really can feel quite intimidating.” [UG]

