



Bodleian Libraries
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Update from the Bodleian Libraries

Sarah E Thomas

Bodley's Librarian

In the past few years, the Bodleian Libraries have undergone a transformation, and in recent weeks and months, some changes have triggered alarm, and the suspicion that more revolutionary plans were in the offing. It has not been our intention to take people by surprise, but the reaction to proposals to relocate the History Faculty Library to the Upper Camera or to reshelve parts of the collection in the Central Bodleian Library has shown that we need to redouble our efforts to communicate with our readers. We need to employ a variety of ways to get input from our readers, to get our message out to avoid misunderstandings and to gain the best results for our library services. This update is one approach to improving communication, and the Bodleian and the Curators of the University Libraries are developing a plan that will be more responsive to the needs for better information flows between readers and the Libraries and readers and the Curators.

In 2009, the Bodleian published its Academic Strategy, developed following nine months of open discussion and active consultation. The Academic Strategy has informed its direction over the past three years, and many of the changes at the Bodleian are grounded in the goals reflected in it. The Academic Strategy was a reaction to a specific problem, the need to find a solution to the management of its collections following the denial of the University's appeal for planning permission for the Depository in September 2008. It described relatively short-term activities that would be undertaken to remedy the matter of inadequate storage for collections which was a barrier to moving forward on other service ambitions.

The following provides a high-level summary of the goals and what has been accomplished on them. Behind the goals was the intention to improve access to the Bodleian's collections and to provide a safe and secure environment for them. A persistent criticism of the Bodleian had been the time it took for a book to be retrieved and delivered to readers. It seemed less a bad joke than a truism that many people found it faster to go to Cambridge to consult a book than to order it from the Bodleian, and one of the main reasons to favour Osney Mead as a location for the Depository was its proximity to the centre of Oxford. By reorganising the collections to house high-demand items on open shelves and in Oxford, it would be feasible to consider building the Book Storage Facility outside the ring road. Evidence of use of periodicals in the Radcliffe Science Library showed a sharp decline in requests for printed volumes when electronic versions were offered, and studies of JSTOR journal use at other universities produced parallel results for periodicals in the humanities and social sciences. This led to the goal of increasing online access to support immediate and convenient use of journals. Moving a substantial proportion of the collection to the Book Storage Facility in Swindon could therefore be countenanced, as it was accompanied by steps to improve service, locating high-

demand materials for self-service in the centre of Oxford and the substantial expansion of electronic content.

Goal 1: Access to High-Demand Items

Access to high-demand items has been fulfilled through the creation of the Gladstone Link, which houses recent publications of academic interest available for self-service access. Opened formally in Michaelmas Term 2011, the Gladstone Link continues to be a work in progress as we observe patterns of use and make adjustments based on user feedback. Its popularity is high, and concerns that some readers find it frustrating that they cannot find a particular book because it is being used by another reader have led to faster and more frequent reshelving. Other suggestions, such as making the shelving sequence more logical and improving staff support in the Gladstone Link, are being followed up, with improvements to be implemented no later than the start of Michaelmas Term.

Goal 2: Online Access to Materials

Significant funding has been allocated by the University to the purchase of online backfiles of journals, and the Bodleian has acquired an outstanding body of electronic resources, arguably the best in the UK.

Both the Gladstone Link and the e-resources have been extremely heavily used, achieving the desired result of reducing fetching from remote storage. In each case, readers have direct access to high-demand materials, without having to wait for deliveries, and in the case of e-resources, University readers have 24/7 access at any location with internet access. Licence restrictions limit access for people who are not current members of the University to onsite access.

Goal 3: Enhance User Services through Innovation

In Trinity Term the Bodleian introduced the service innovation of Scan & Deliver, a service offering an electronic document delivery solution for items held in the Book Storage Facility. Instead of requesting the physical item to a reading room, readers can request scans of sections direct to desktop. It is necessary, because of copyright regulations, to charge a fee (currently £4.75), but for some users, the convenience is worth the cost. Feedback from one member highlights the value for those working outside the centre of Oxford:

“It’s the most convenient method of quickly getting journal articles especially for those of us based up at the hospitals. I do not have time to run into the city every time I find a journal article that is only available in hard-copy format so this service is perfect for me. I will be recommending it to everyone I know who is based far away from the RSL. Thanks!!”

Goal 4: Improve the Management of Collections

A barcoding operation has vastly improved collection management. Not only are the 7.5 million barcoded items more accurately and speedily retrieved and returned, but the process located several thousand “lost” books and increased the number of items represented in the online

catalogue from 9 million to 11 million, making discovery of material held easier. The Libraries now have better management data on collection use which will enable us to optimise shelving locations for items and categories of materials.

Goal 5: Secure Location for High-Value Collections

The most valuable and important items in our collections now reside in environmentally safe storage created in the Radcliffe Science Library. An ancillary benefit of this new location for special collections is that items stored there are retrieved more rapidly than was previously the norm for retrievals to Bodleian reading rooms from the New Bodleian Library.

Goal 6: Advance a Coordinated Estates Programme

a) Depository

Once the revised plans for the Book Storage Facility (BSF) were approved, the facility was completed on time and on budget in just over a year (September 2010), and a record-breaking 7 million volumes and 1.2 million maps were transferred into it in 14 months without cessation of service.

b) New Bodleian Renovation

The New Bodleian renovation commenced on 1 August 2011 and is on target for completion in August 2014, with restocking occurring in Michaelmas 2014 and a formal opening planned for March 2015. Of the £80.4 m estimated to be required to complete the project, over £70 m is in hand or pledged.

c) Humanities and Maths Library

Plans for a combined Humanities and Maths Library to be incorporated in the Humanities Building on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter progressed to the selection of an architect, Bennetts, and the subsequent attainment of planning permission in 2010. Council took a decision, in light of the sombre economy, to place the initiative on hold and to revisit annually the intention to move forward.

Since 2010 there have been a number of developments which will need to be taken into account in further planning. They are listed below:

Maths Building Moves Forward

Council approved the recommendation to underwrite the construction of the Maths Building on the ROQ, making a further commitment from the Capital Fund. Plans were made to accommodate the Maths Library within the Maths Building, albeit with a reduced footprint, and discussions are ongoing with the Bodleian about the future relationship of the Maths Library with the university libraries.

Oxford Teaching Fund Established

In July 2010 Council established the Oxford Teaching Fund to provide matching funding for fund-raising efforts to support academic posts in the Humanities and other divisions. The £60 m matching funding had previously been committed to the development of the ROQ, and especially, the Humanities Building.

Humanities Renovation of Radcliffe Infirmary Building

In 2011 Council approved plans put forward by the Humanities Division to renovate the Radcliffe Infirmary Building on the ROQ for support for graduates, for space for the divisional offices, and for the Philosophy and Theology Faculties, whose libraries would be merged and moved into the Radcliffe Humanities building. Extensive consultation with the affected faculties took place in the planning for the integrated library.

China Centre Library

In 2011, at the request of academics representing the China Centre, a working group of academics and librarians reviewed library provision for Chinese Studies and recommended that library and information support be provided via a new library at the China Centre. The Chinese Studies Library would be subsumed into the new library, and consequently, it would not become part of the integrated Humanities Library. This decision was taken following consultation with the affected user base and with the full engagement of the heads of division for the humanities and social sciences.

The Blavatnik School of Government

The ROQ Project Board in spring 2012 took the decision to defer the double basement across the ROQ site as an implementation step prior to the construction of the Blavatnik School of Government building and to omit "Library Square" as a defining feature in the plans. Although the double basement could be introduced at a later date, it would be more expensive to create, and it was a tacit acknowledgment that the Humanities and Maths Library, which relied on the double basement for its service delivery, would at the very least, be further delayed.

History Faculty Library

With the Humanities Library on indefinite hold, and a series of developments both on the ROQ and within the Humanities Division altering the original plans for an integrated Humanities Library, the Bodleian, consistent with the direction taken by the University to respond to a changing environment, identified the need to consider alternative routes for achieving one of the elements of its Vision for 2010 document, that of consolidating services to achieve improved access to materials and services in a more efficient manner. During the Long Vacation of 2011 the Bodleian began its initial consultation on the relocation of the History Faculty Library to the Radcliffe Camera. Unfortunately, because of scheduling problems, consultation with the members of the History Faculty did not begin until Hilary 2012. Savings from the release of space, approximately £100,000 annually, will be allocated to the purchase of books and journals and to Sunday opening hours, a high priority for Oxford students.

The proposal came in for severe criticism because most members of affected faculties did not learn about it until Hilary Term 2012 and the consultation period for their review was originally very brief, but it was quickly extended to several weeks. The proposal was the subject of intense consultation with the principal faculties affected by the potential relocation. All faculties signed off on the proposal, and the Curators of the University Libraries approved the plans on 5 March 2012. Since that time subject librarians have been working closely with the Committees on Library Provision, representatives of the Faculties, and interested individuals to shape the detailed plans for the moves of collections and other services.

The Future of the Humanities and Maths Library on the ROQ

Changes in the University and in the Humanities Division have affected the plans for the Humanities and Maths Library. Almost two years after Oxford City Council approved planning permission on the Humanities Building, a joint Humanities/Bodleian working group was established to take stock on where the current status of plans for the Humanities on the ROQ site and to open up a wide consultation and discussion about this in Michaelmas Term 2012 and Hilary Term 2013. The group includes Professor Shearer West, Head of Humanities Division, Dr Bryan Ward-Perkins and Dr Seamus Perry for Humanities, and Dr Sarah Thomas, Richard Ovenden, James Legg and Dr Wolfram Horstmann from the Bodleian Libraries. The working group will liaise closely with Paul Goffin, the new Head of Estates, Professor William James, PVC (Planning and Resources), and Professor Roger Ainsworth as Chair of BESC (Building and Estates Sub-Committee of PRAC). As the plan for Humanities on the ROQ site was delayed due to both the economic downturn and the diversion of available resources to the Teaching Fund in order to support academic posts, it is opportune to consider what the future plans should be. Open discussions on the current status will take place in the new academic year, and a revised programme will be developed which takes into account changes which have taken place in the ROQ environment and input from University members. This revised programme will be discussed in Michaelmas 2012 and Hilary 2013.

Changes in the Radcliffe Camera, the Gladstone Link, and the Old Bodleian

Delivering the many changes of the past few years has been exhilarating and exhausting, particularly since they have been accomplished whilst trying to sustain excellent service. Users of the Libraries have been very patient about the steady stream of changes that have affected their work. Recently, however, there has been some turbulence. There are a number of different strands of activity that are occurring simultaneously, but which should not be conflated.

As part of the Academic Strategy to increase direct access, the Gladstone Link was created. This project was part of a larger Estates initiative, the Underground Bookstore/Old Bodleian project, which included the refurbishment of the tunnel connecting the Old Bodleian and the Underground Bookstore (now Gladstone), the installation of a lift in the north corner of the Old Bodleian, a new staircase and platform lift connecting the Radcliffe Camera and the Gladstone Link, and a relocated, unified service desk for the Lower Reading Room of the Old Bodleian. These changes were designed, among other things, to improve access to some of the University's most iconic buildings for the mobility impaired, to lay the groundwork for the improved utilisation of the various components of the central Bodleian in anticipation of the opening of the Weston Library, and to organise the delivery of services in a way that was more efficient in terms of the use of the space and more helpful for users.

Because of the pressure of all the various projects under way, the unified service desk element was delayed from the Long Vacation 2011 to 2012. In addition, the planned movement of periodicals from the Old Bodleian to the Gladstone Link and the BSF was also delayed a year. These changes had been discussed within the Committees on Library Provision and were known to the Faculties from the inception of planning in 2009 and were reviewed annually. Nonetheless, when shelves were emptied in Trinity 2012, there were many users who were unaware of the plans for the relocation. We regret this unfortunate occurrence. It is useful, therefore, to explain the rationale for the changes. There are three goals. First, by collocating a critical mass of periodicals in the Gladstone Link, the space there and in the Old Bodleian can be used most efficiently, leading to a

higher number of direct access materials in total. In a further effort to increase direct access shelving, about 30% of titles which are lower use and which are available online have had print versions transferred to the Book Storage Facility. Subject librarians have worked with individual academics to review lists of titles and have made a number of exceptions to those intended to be transferred based on need. In addition, a list of all journal titles slated for transfer and their proposed destination has been available in the Old Bodleian at the reserve desk since mid April, and readers have been invited to comment and contact subject librarians to discuss revisions. Secondly, the shifting of collections enables the Bodleian to bring together related material which has been previously been separated. Thirdly, the unified service desk is intended to facilitate delivery of materials from the BSF, eliminating the clatter of trolleys through the reading room, to introduce self-service, and to place the service desk in the Upper Reading Room close to the entrance.

These changes have been in the works for several years and have no connection to the plans to relocate the History Faculty Library. However, there are other changes which have been bundled with plans to adapt the Radcliffe Camera and the Gladstone Link to accommodate the HFL. Changes directly attributable to the HFL move include the creation of acoustically separated consultation space for readers and staff, and staff workspace in the Upper Camera, addition of power and wireless access in the Gallery of the Upper Camera, and the decluttering of unused bays in the Camera and their furnishing to gain 48 additional seats. Other changes include the refinement of the selection of books shelved in the Gladstone Link to focus more explicitly on high-demand materials for Humanities and the shifting of Classics, English, History, and Theology collections to create logical sequences at the same time as additional books in history were moved from the Old Indian Institute. The various permutations of where collections would be shelved have been the subjective of constant and intensive discussion with the affected Faculties since February and detailed information is available on the History Faculty website.

Whilst developing the plans for the HFL move, staff hoped to address simultaneously three other design issues that would result in improvements in the Radcliffe Camera. They proposed to provide access at ground level that would permit entry for mobility impaired individuals, something about which they had had repeated requests. Discussions with English Heritage led to a preferred entrance/exit at the south side of the Camera, where a gentle walkway would suffice, whereas on the All Souls and Brasenose sides the shorter area would require handrails and a steeper and more complex ramp.

With the proposal for an entrance for the disabled came an idea for a solution to another challenge in the Camera, that of providing security at the pinch point of the present north entrance, which coincides with the cantilevered staircase connecting the Upper and Lower Reading Rooms of the Radcliffe Camera. The porters, perched on a metal platform added about 15 years ago, have their hands full trying to control visitors from entering and searching bags upon departure whilst readers transit between Upper and Lower. The security gates cannot be heard well from this vantage, and in inclement weather, the placement is very uncomfortable. Consequently, staff proposed that the main entrance of the Camera become the entrance at ground level on the University Church side. This would have several advantages, principally, that the security gates would operate with greater effectiveness and that circulation on the staircase would be unimpeded.

To increase the efficiency still further, staff proposed a unified service desk, similar to what was planned for the Old Bodleian, to be created at the new entrance of the Camera.

These proposals are open for consultation to Michaelmas Term 2012 and may be viewed in the Proscholium or online at <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/notices/public-consultation-the-old-bodleian-and-radcliffe-camera-consultation-update20120620>.

The Curators of the University Libraries have approved the submission of the proposed plans for Listed Building Consent but have only approved implementing certain aspects of the proposals which are essential for the HFL move—the acoustically separated spaces, the power and data enhancements, and the additional seating. Other elements, such as the proposed change in access and the unified service desk, will only be considered once the results of consultation are gathered and assessed.

Lending

There has been some confusion about lending occasioned by a paper which described the Bodleian's currently inconsistent policies and practices across its various libraries. In general, what is important to determine whether or not an item is lent is the category of material, rather than the building in which it is housed. Although it has been common to hear that the Bodleian Library is not a lending library, the Bodleian *Libraries* are in fact a major lending institution with approximately 1.6 m volumes available for borrowing and over 1.8 m loans in 2010/2011, mostly from Faculty Libraries. For example, the Social Science Library holds both circulating and reference (or non-circulating) material. In September, books currently available through the History Faculty Library for borrowing will continue to be able to be borrowed according to the same policy in their new locations, the Radcliffe Camera and the Gladstone Link, as in their former location, the Old Indian Institute. Books that are restricted from borrowing will remain restricted. We had initiated discussion about reconciling the different policies across libraries, but we have deferred consideration of this until 2013. In the meantime no changes will be made to the categories of stock which are eligible to be lent or the categories of borrowers to whom books may be lent.

Strategic Planning

In the past few weeks there have been calls for the Bodleian to provide updated plans for its reorganisation and to present to Congregation short, medium, and long-term plans for its strategy. As described above, much of the Bodleian's efforts have focused on achieving the goals of the Academic Strategy, a plan which was prepared with widespread input, and with one notable exception, that of the creation of the Humanities and Maths Library, has been followed without deviation. The need to review the status of the Humanities Library became apparent as decisions made elsewhere in the University had an impact on the Libraries' plans, and a working group and consultation plan was established in April 2012 to accomplish this review, as described in "The Future of the Humanities and Maths Library in the ROQ" section of this paper.

The Libraries' longer range strategy has been updated frequently since 2005, reflecting the rapidly changing environment of the Internet Age. The Vision for 2010, dating from 2005/2006 morphed into the Vision for 2011 in late 2006, and subsequently OULS (now known as the Bodleian Libraries) issued a Strategic Plan 2009/2010-2014/2015 (http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/48410/Bodleian-libraries-strategic-

plan-v2-6.pdf) in 2009 which it updated in 2011, taking into account further changes that had occurred, notably progress on the Academic Strategy. During 2011/2012, the Bodleian, the Curators, and representatives from the Divisions have been engaged in scenario planning as a precursor to strategic planning that will align the Bodleian's plans with the University's Strategic Plan for 2013 to 2017, an effort that is now under way. The plans have been developed in consultation with staff and readers in the framework of the Libraries' approved governance structures. However, recent comments make it clear that there is heightened interest in the Libraries' plans, and consequently both the Curators of the University Libraries and the Bodleian intend to increase opportunities for wider consultation and input by readers, including academics, University researchers, students, and staff, as well as external users. Opportunities for contributing to the plans for the Bodleian will be numerous. At present we are planning town meetings in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, as well as the use of the LibQual+ survey instrument, and the continuation of the meetings with Faculties, Departments, Divisional Boards, Committees on Library Provision, and the Curators of the University Libraries. In the future, there will be a termly newsletter to update readers on what is happening and to invite feedback. In addition, Bodleian Libraries' staff welcome direct interaction on topics such as those discussed above and indeed, on other issues that you wish to raise. It is hoped that these measures will enable the Bodleian to provide outstanding service that is aligned with the goals and requirements of its community of readers.