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Redeveloping the world's largest Social Science library for the 21st century

Keynote Item

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Redeveloping the world's largest Social Science library for the 21st century

LSE

Library

British Library of Political
and Economic Science

Jean Sykes

Librarian and Director of
Information Services

Feasibility and fundraising

- 1916 former book warehouse
- Became LSE Library in 1978
- By 1990 needed major changes
- 1994 feasibility study by Foster
- 1994 to 1999 lots of fundraising
- Money received from government, heritage lottery fund, and many individuals

Early planning

- Project manager and architects appointed summer 1998
- Steering group and Library Planning Group set up
- There were two large projects:
 - Redevelopment
 - Temporary move out

Planning the move

- Work around or move out?
- Search for temporary building(s)
- “The Library is closing” rumour
- Persuading the academic community
- Department by department
- Two buildings found
- One nearby and the other not

Moving out

- Planning was difficult
- Less used materials went further away
- Move took 14 weeks at twice normal speed (June-September 1999)
- Library staff assisted at both ends
- Full library service was maintained

Maintaining library services

- Lots of consultation with users
- Services parameters agreed
- Extra money required and agreed
- Communication plan was essential
- Explaining constraints and managing user expectations
- Involving all library staff
- Publicly available action plan agreed

The redevelopment

- Aims:
 - Modern research and learning environment with much more IT
 - Redesigned circulation around the building
 - Expansion space for print
 - Improved storage conditions
 - Improved environmental conditions

Building features

- Library on 5 floors covering 15,000 square metres
- 8% increase in floor area but much higher increase in space efficiency
- Central atrium with spiral stepped ramp and two glass lifts
- Glazed north-facing dome at the top

More building features

- Double-height lower ground floor
- Computer-controlled natural ventilation
- Presence-detection lighting
- Staff offices arranged in vertical stack with goods lift and loading bay for deliveries

Services and facilities

- More of the space is for users
- 95% of the library is open access
- 1600 study spaces, including 500 IT spaces and 226 laptop points
- Service counter, course collection, and copy shop (ground floor)
- Archives and IT helpdesk (lower ground)

More services and facilities

- Information desk and visitor PCs (first floor)
- Two IT training rooms
- 14 group study rooms, 2 for disabled students
- 50 kilometres of shelving – enough to stretch the length of the Channel Tunnel

The planning process

- Weekly meetings with architects from July 1998
- Many library sub-groups set up
- Architects visited library departments
- Much consultation with users
- Final plans ready February 1999

Major issues

- Shelving; choice and layout
- Design of service points
- Heating and ventilation
- Lighting
- Acoustics (open plan building)
- Study space and IT zoning
- Signage and colours
- Furniture and fittings
- Layout of staff offices (18% less space)

Construction

- Began in September 1999
- All internal walls demolished
- Most of ground floor removed
- Full internal construction according to design
- Fitting out the building
- Completion March 2001

The move back in 2001

- January/February move from one temporary building
- To save money on rent
- New building not yet ready
- March to May: main book move with dual site operation
- Very close to exams
- 12 March: switch to new library as main site

Was it worth it?

- £30 million and two massive book moves
- There were lost of problems along the way
- The project went over budget, mainly because of structural defects
- There had to be compromises

Was it worth it (2)

- Sorting out the problems after the move takes a very long time (we are still doing it...)
- But library staff quickly settled in
- And usage by students doubled in the first year
- It is a wonderful building
- One of the most photographed in London (also featured on BBC TV)

Some words from users

- *'First rate...I use the library about twice as often as before'*
- *'It not only looks terrific but it is also very well organised and user friendly'*
- *'A wonderful energy efficient space'*
- *'Great building ...but not enough toilets' (true)*

















































