

Michael Heaney

Chapter 12: Staff relocation

1 Introduction

Although the primary focus of the emptying of the New Bodleian Library was on the removal of nearly 3 million volumes from its bowels, the building was also home to more than 150 staff – over a quarter of the Libraries’ total staff complement. Some of these would reach the end of their contracts in the normal course of events before the closure of the building, but we had to find new homes for the great majority. For some of these the relocation was simply that – a standard office move. Others needed specific facilities such as conservation benches, which had to be prepared for them in advance. Yet others were inextricably linked to the building or its contents, and their moves had to be choreographed with the other elements in the timeline for the evacuation of the Library.

2 Staff occupying the New Library

The staff occupying the New Library worked in several departments.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|--|
| Collections and Resource Description | 48 | plus 4 vacancies |
| Reader Services | 9 | |
| Conservation and Collection Care | 22 | |
| Imaging Services | 10 | |
| Special Collections | 55 | plus those who went to the Radcliffe Science Library |
| Facilities Management | 6 | plus 20 peripatetic staff |

Table 12.1: Staff by departments

In addition, staff from the ICT Support Team, providing desktop IT and hardware support to the Libraries, had a base in the New Library as well as in Osney.

3 Identifying the destinations

The Libraries had two buildings devoted primarily to administration and back-office functions, in the eighteenth-century Clarendon Building situated in the centre of Oxford between the Old and New Libraries, and the Osney One building on the Osney Mead light industrial estate 1.3 kilometres (0.8 miles) away.

The Osney One building had been acquired for the Libraries in 2006 and fortuitously the ground floor, which for the three years 2007–09 had housed Google’s staff working on the digitization of the Libraries’ nineteenth-century materials, had just become vacant upon the completion of that programme. This gave considerable scope for relocating staff.

The Clarendon Building was already in full occupation but four offices in it were occupied by tenants to whom the Libraries had offered accommodation. Coincidentally, one of the tenants, representing a European organization, had just left to take up a new post so we asked that his successor be accommodated at another institution as part of the natural process of reappointment. Another was an academic project nearing the end of its lifespan. The third, a long-term non-University local history research project, relocated to the county archives. The fourth office was occupied by staff at the nearby Museum of the History of Science, and they remained in the building.

4 Chronology of the moves

The initial move of special collections material and associated staff to the Radcliffe Science Library has been described in chapter 4. The maps, music and Oriental collections continued to be consulted in the New Library Reading Room. The plan now was to move them into the space in Duke Humfrey’s Library in the Old Bodleian Library partially vacated when the Special Collections Reading Room had opened in the Radcliffe Science Library.

In broad terms, the sequence of staff moves was as follows

- Reader services staff: After the move of special collections to the Radcliffe Science Library, the New Bodleian contained just one large reading room, for Oriental material, maps and music. These moved out in September 2010, enabling us to close the New Bodleian to readers. Also in the building were Reader Services staff working on back-room services such as inter-library loan and photocopying. The closure to readers enabled considerably more freedom of movement in the building during its final months;
- Collections and Resource Description staff: Moved out at the end of September 2010, as soon as Osney had been prepared;

- Conservation and Collection Care and Imaging staff: followed Collections and Resource Description to Osney in October 2010; some elements moved to the Clarendon Building;
- Special Collections staff: Many continued to work on preparing the collections for barcoding and book moves, and moved out of the building piecemeal in the first half of 2011;
- Facilities Management staff: remained onsite until immediately before the building closed;
- Project teams: these were working on the collections until the building was empty.

5 Staff management and communications

A survey of staff was carried out to establish their main concerns. Transport to and from Osney was a major worry, both for staff due to be based there entirely and for those expecting to move between Osney and the central site during the working day. Staff relocating to Osney were invited to visit the building to see their new offices.

Where entire departments were moving to Osney, it was relatively easy to fix the timetable for relocation and to release it to the staff. The remaining moves, to a variety of smaller spaces, proved more problematic. Although we had hoped to announce the final timetable early in the process – and certainly during the first part of 2010 – in the event this proved more difficult. It was frustrating for our staff who knew that they must move, but to whom we could not provide firm information.

One reason was availability of people – the architectural team was at full stretch and could not turn their attention to planning the later stages before the earlier stages were complete. The other reason was that in the early stages no single person was responsible for delivering the relocation programme. The programme was part of the wider New Bodleian refurbishment project – as a necessary precursor to it – but did not have dedicated teams of staff as did, for example, the bookmoves programme. The bulk of the work was either building work – arranged by the University’s Estates Department – or actual moving, which was contracted out to commercial firms. Individual staff members were asked take responsibility for co-ordinating actions as an additional task to their normal work, but did not feel that they had authority to act on their own initiative. Planning meetings were held at which we brought the various interest groups together, but there was no central management of actions. This situation persisted through the whole of the planning period from September 2009 to June 2010 and was not resolved until,

first, a dedicated project manager was appointed in July 2010 and, second, he was given a reporting line direct to senior staff, and thereby a voice on the Bod Squad. The project manager spent much time working individually with the staff involved, planning the logistics of each of the dozens of individual moves.

Staff were also concerned about transport. A minibus service already ran between Osney and the centre of Oxford at peak hours, and we agreed to extend the service so that it ran through the day from 7:30 am to 6:10 pm, stopping at the railway station (halfway between the sites) on request.

All staff remaining on the central site, not just those vacating the New Bodleian, were concerned about refreshment facilities. Staff in reading rooms and public spaces observed strict rules about eating and drinking, and saw the staff restaurant in the New Library as an essential facility both for refreshment and to relax out of the public gaze. At the same time the provision of refreshment facilities for readers was a much desired improvement in services. These two requirements complemented each other well. The smaller number of staff remaining on the central site made a service only for staff uneconomic. Extending the service to readers meant that it was feasible to continue the service to staff. By moving a small number of staff from the Old Bodleian to Osney we were able to allocate two adjacent rooms as a tea room – the main refreshment room for everybody, with a smaller separate room for staff only. The same provider was also asked to provide refreshments at Osney: the building already had professional kitchen facilities, but these had not been used since the Libraries took the building over in 2006.

6 Preparing the buildings

The first stage of the main move was to prepare the Osney One building for its new occupants. The Systems & e-Research Service, already occupying the first and second floors of the building, vacated the first and reconfigured their offices entirely on the second.

The ICT Support Team, who provided network and desktop support for the Libraries, had premises both at Osney and in the New Bodleian. They needed to remain close to the staff to whom they provided support, which implied retaining a base in central Oxford. The University found alternative premises for them in the middle of Oxford, which had the advantage of uniting the Team on a single site for the first time and freeing library space on the second floor for the Systems and e-Research Service.

We also paid attention to the building's infrastructure: was the data network and the link to the University network spine robust enough and capacious

enough to support the activity of all the new occupants? Initial plans to move the Conservation and Collection Care department to the east wing of the building were changed when we realized that most of the spare water capacity – necessary for the new conservation workshop – was located in the west wing. Staff had expressed concern about the cloakroom facilities, so additional facilities were included in the building alteration plans.

The first estimation of the space required used standard office allowances for desk spaces, but members of the Collections and Resource Description department needed more space for the constant flow of books being processed.

When work on the Osney building got under way in June 2010 the existing occupants of the building had to endure noise and disruption. This was a difficult situation: the systems staff's work was essential to the continuing progress of the bookmoves and barcoding. A plan of work had been drawn up but as the construction progressed the builders began to adapt it to meet changing circumstances. Staff complained of the unexpected changes. Again, communications were the key. We set up regular meetings between the site manager for the construction and a nominated senior member of staff. Weekly emails were sent to all staff in the building notifying them of progress and of changes, with midweek updates if necessary. All staff moving to Osney were given a welcome pack on arrival, providing local information and a guide to the building.

The Collections and Resource Description department moved to Osney over a weekend at the end of September 2010. For them this was a permanent move: the department would remain at Osney even after the New Bodleian's reopening in 2015. Although some office furniture moved with the department where necessary, the opportunity was taken to re-equip with new furniture in most cases.

Again, standard estimates were insufficient to cater for the amount of material to be packed for moving; 880 crates were used in the move, against an initial allocation and delivery of 96. Packing crates were delivered only a few days before the move, so the deficiency had to be remedied quickly.

Some staff expressed worries about the health and safety risks of packing until the Libraries' Health and Safety Officer came over to go through the process with them.

Building works at Osney overran by a week but not so as to require us to defer the move. Heating was not available in the east half of the building for the first two weeks. The new catering service was operational from the day of the move, but because of the building works only cold food was available for the first week.

The Conservation and Collection Care department moved to Osney in the first half of October 2010. This completed the two largest moves. Subsequent moves were all on a smaller scale, and the emphasis was now more on the logistics of co-ordinating the staff moves with the requirements of the other projects.

7 Smaller moves

The projects which impinged upon the further moves were the barcoding project and the Bodleian Quadrangle changes. Staff in Special Collections had to remain close to the collections in the New Bodleian in order to advise on barcoding. Facilities Management staff and staff working on the commercial operations had to await the completion of stages in the reconstruction of rooms around the Quadrangle.

Many of the smaller moves were plotted on a spreadsheet which related the area of each room to the occupancy. (Figure 12.1) The spreadsheet automatically calculated the current personal space each member of staff had, based on room area and occupancy, and calculated the new occupancy and personal space as staff were re-allocated to new offices.

Several staff working in small offices either alone or with one other had now to share larger offices in the rooms vacated by tenants in the Clarendon Building. Care was taken to keep departments together as far as possible, and not to assign staff from different departments to the same new shared space. In one case in the Clarendon Building we found that the resulting allocation was too overcrowded. An office that had been earmarked as a hotdesking room for staff visiting from Osney was redesignated as further office space; the hot desk was moved to a desk in another office already occupied.

The Historic Venues and Retail Operations teams had shared offices and staff in the Old Bodleian, but the Retail Operations also had a store and mail-order department in the New Bodleian. The mail-order operation was outsourced off-site to eliminate the need for space, and the staff moved into the Old Bodleian premises.

The Historic Venues and Retail Operations staff themselves had to move within the Old Bodleian in order to accommodate the staff and readers' tea room. The timing for the fitting out of the tea room was the first three months of 2011. However, late in 2010 it became evident that plans for the Facilities Management staff were inadequate, and this impinged upon the Old Bodleian plans.

Facilities Management operated from a base on the ground floor of the New Bodleian, where deliveries were received and sent. There was a staff office of 20 square metres housing the senior team members, and a general room of 43 square metres which acted as a delivery and despatch hub and as a base for twenty further staff members on duties throughout all of the central site's buildings. We had intended that the senior team members should relocate to a room in the basement of the Clarendon Building, where they would be joined by the two maintenance staff. (A third member of maintenance staff was redeployed as the workload diminished with the closure of the New Bodleian.) (Figures 12.2, 12.3)

| Old location | | | | New location | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|----------|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Room area | Occupancy | Personal space | Sur-name | Room area | Occupancy | Personal space |
| 51.6 | 5 | 10.32 | Gxxxxxxx | 42.21 | 7 | 6.03 |
| 51.6 | 5 | 10.32 | Wxxxxxxx | 41.11 | 5 | 8.22 |
| 51.6 | 5 | 10.32 | Cxxxxxxx | 41.11 | 5 | 8.22 |
| 25.48 | 2 | 12.74 | Hxxxxxxx | 41.11 | 5 | 8.22 |
| 48.8 | 8 | 6.1 | Hxxxxxxx | 41.11 | 5 | 8.22 |
| 48.8 | 8 | 6.1 | Mxxxxxxx | 41.11 | 5 | 8.22 |

Figure 12.1: Staff moves spreadsheet (adapted)

There were several deficiencies in the plan:

- The designated room was not close to a roadway for receipt of deliveries;
- It was too small to accommodate both facilities and maintenance staff;
- It was already in constant use as a meeting room, the only one available to staff on the central site ;
- No provision had been made for a base for the twenty further staff members.

Furthermore, the implications for Facilities Management of moving large numbers of staff and operations from the central site to Osney had not been fully worked through.

At the main entrance to the Bodleian Quadrangle (also known as the Old Schools Quadrangle) was a room which was in use as little more than a passage-way: it consisted of a vestibule leading to a small, old lift to the reading rooms above. The lift was in temporary use for book deliveries between the closing of the conveyor belt between Old and New Bodleian in August 2010 and the opening of a large new lift in the Old Bodleian as part of the UBOB project in April 2011. The room was 23 square metres but the reduction in size was acceptable as so many activities had relocated to Osney One. We agreed that this should be refitted as a base for Facilities Management staff and as a reception point for deliveries. This work had to be fitted into a three-month window between the completion of the new lift (so freeing the room from use for book deliveries) and the closure of the New Bodleian.

Nearby was an office of 22 square metres occupied by two Imaging Services staff who had remained when the rest of the department moved from the New Bodleian to Osney. This had kept them closer to the source for much of the material used by Imaging Services, the special collections in the Radcliffe Science

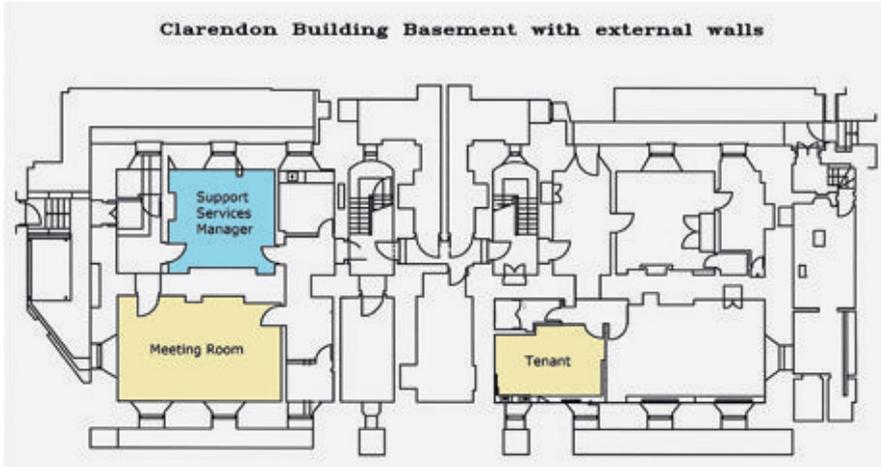


Figure 12.2: Clarendon Basement before the moves

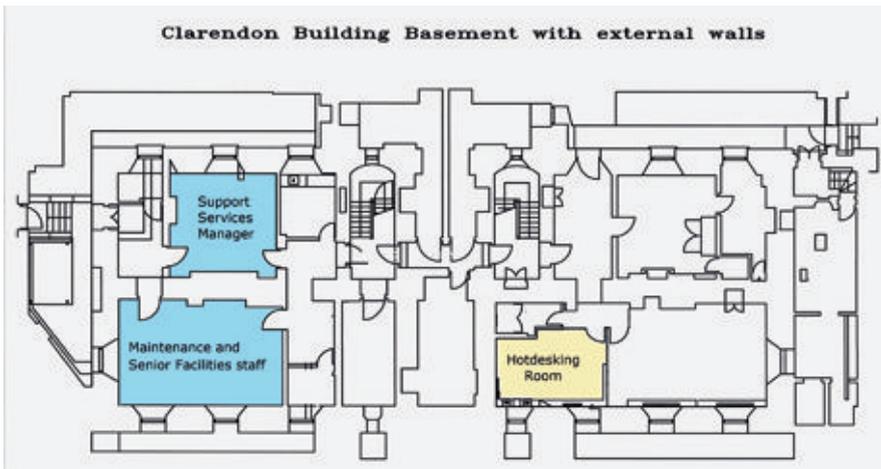


Figure 12.3: Clarendon Basement initial plan

Library. We determined that this office would be better used for Facilities Management senior staff, because their need for office space on the central site was absolute. Space was found for the Imaging Services staff at Osney, but this was less convenient for access to the collections and the move was made only reluctantly. (Figures 12.4, 12.5)

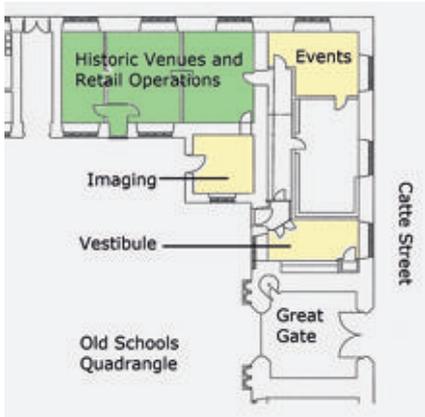


Figure 12.4: Bodleian (Old Schools) Quadrangle before the move

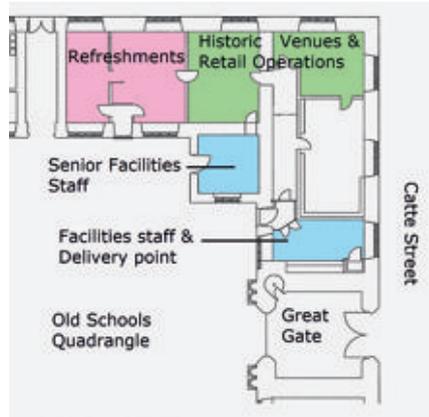


Figure 12.5: Bodleian (Old Schools) Quadrangle after the move

This office had a doorway direct to the Quadrangle, which was not currently in use but had to be opened in the new office configuration. To protect the office from draughts and the weather a small new vestibule was needed, but because of the importance of the building even this small change needed Listed Building Consent from the city council before work could start, and the process took most of the three-month window.

The Support Services Manager occupied an office in the basement of the Clarendon Building; he moved into a hotdesking room nearby which had been made available to staff and the maintenance staff moved into his vacated office. This enabled us to keep the meeting room, at the cost of the loss of the hotdesking space: analysis had shown that the room had only been in use for 25% of working time, so the effect of its loss was minimal. (Figure 12.6)

Facilities Management staff moved their base of operations in the third week of July. They were among the last groups of staff to leave the building. Another group of late leavers was the barcoding staff. Most barcoding staff working in the New Bodleian left employment as the barcoding task was completed. Although the barcoding project leader had indicated earlier that some staff would need to continue, based in Osney, in the second half of 2011, how many staff would need workspace had not been determined until near the end of the New Bodleian operation, when it became clear that three extra staff workspaces would have to be found. Barcoders working on the other bookmove stream were occupying, on a temporary basis, a warehouse adjacent to the Osney building. A potential office space was identified within the warehouse, but the provision of IT services to

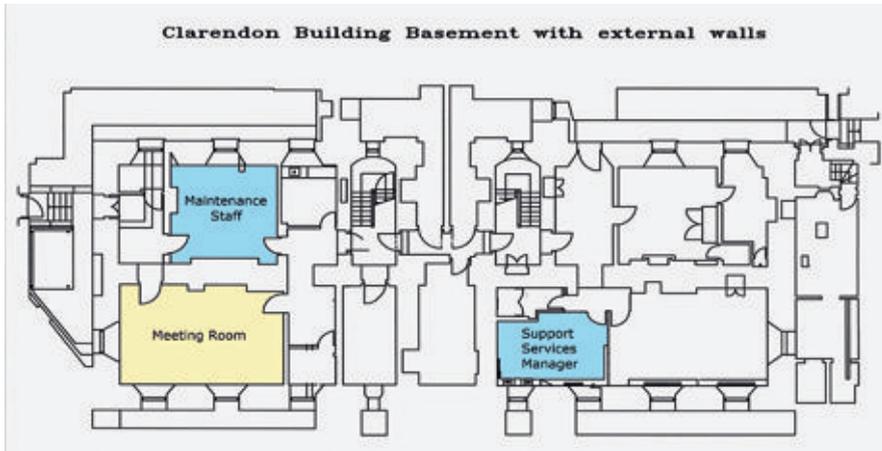


Figure 12.6: Clarendon Basement: final configuration

it threatened to delay the move – in the end the ICT Support Team were able to provide the network infrastructure just three weeks before the closure of the New Bodleian, and the staff moved the following week.

The very last staff member to move was a member of Special Collections staff who had been working on the barcoding of a particularly challenging set of material until the final week. An office had been prepared and most of the office furniture moved six weeks previously, but the staff member moved on the completion of the barcoding on 29 July, two days before the closure of the building.

8 Furnishings

Linked to the staff relocation was the less sensitive, but nonetheless challenging, task of moving some of the furnishing and contents of the building. Furniture was divided into three categories: for discarding, for relocation along with staff, or for temporary removal and eventual return to the building. The New Bodleian was a Grade II Listed Building so there was a duty to retain as much of the original furniture and *décor* as possible. ‘Heritage’ furniture was therefore identified and put into store. The Bodleian Libraries have a large collection of portraits: many hung in the New Bodleian, and had to be expertly rehung in other buildings. One item proved especially problematic: filing cabinets used by Sir Winston Churchill during World War II and afterwards. These were strongly reinforced so as to be bombproof, so were extremely heavy. Their contents had long been removed to

the Churchill archives in Cambridge, and we agreed that the cabinets should be donated to the Conservative Party. The problem was that the cabinets were on the lowest floor of the building, three floors below ground, and initial calculation indicated that they could be too heavy for most of the lifts. Moreover, the strongest lifts were in constant essential use for the bookmoves. The specialist removers responsible for the bookmoves brought in special equipment to weigh the cabinets on site, and in the end we were able to extract them; but the whole process took several weeks.

9 Conclusion

The staff relocation project was not a standard office move in a variety of respects. First was the interlinking with the other projects. Second was the movement to a variety of locations, some requiring preparatory work and/or a chain of moves. Third was the need to accomplish the moves with little or no disruption in service.

The first lesson – obvious in retrospect, but not obvious when this was just one element within a larger project – was the need for a dedicated project manager with logistical skills. Until a manager was appointed the project struggled. Direct input to the Bod Squad for inter-project communications and decision making were also vital.

Second, staff communications were crucial. Even where we could not be certain about timings and locations, staff needed to be told as much as possible about the current state of play. Communications needed to be frequent wherever activity was under way – weekly updates were very useful while building works were in progress. Communications included staff visits and surveys as well as news distributions. The staff survey was very useful in uncovering staff worries and concerns.

Third, preparation of infrastructure: in our case this involved third-party elements within the University, not just the contractors, and it was important that they shared the sense of critical timing and urgency. In addition, it was important to allow for the greater than normal storage needs of most library staff.

Finally, the planning had to be accompanied by frequent walk-arounds of both old and new premises, not just with the contracting staff for the preparations and move, but with the affected staff themselves. It was important to recognize that moving office is a disruptive experience for most staff and can be a source of stress.

