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## *Planning a Legal Resource Centre for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

**Ruth Bird**

Law Librarian, The University of Melbourne

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### ***INTRODUCTION***

The University of Melbourne Law Library moved into its present space in 1959 when the rest of the University Library relocated to the newly built Baillieu Library. For those of you who have not visited the Law Library, let me assure you that we are in a very unsatisfactory configuration for a library – spread over three floors in two adjoining buildings with different ceiling heights, creating six different levels with two mezzanine floors and an annexe. Half of the library is in part of the original Quadrangle building, which was erected in 1857 to house the first two lecture theatres of the University. Despite the cramped quarters, there is an inevitable attraction in being at the historic heart of the University.

### ***SEVERAL FALSE STARTS...***

Various Deans have made efforts to have a new library built, including Professor Zelman Cowen and Professor David Derham. Major building modifications in 1971 added some space, as did some further remodeling in the 1980s and 1990s. A very strong push over the past decade has come from the current Dean, Professor Michael Crommelin. He initially worked with architects Crone Ross on several plans for the existing site, and is now presiding over the new law school building, construction of which commenced in February 2000.

I became involved in 1996 when I commenced as Law Librarian. At that stage we were dealing with **Plan No. 1** – not its official title, but it will do for our purposes. This involved building downward with two underground levels of 1400 square metres each. For the first twelve months all the planning

revolved around this configuration, which would mean a staged building program, with the spectre of moving most of the collection off site for up to eighteen months

This option was finally rejected on the grounds of cost and a modified plan was drawn up. **Plan 2** had one level underground, and that only in one small section, and utilized two floors of the Gothic North section of the Quadrangle building. It seemed a more achievable option and the library staff liked the idea of greater natural light. A further twelve to eighteen months was spent planning the floor layout and space requirements of Plan 2. During this time there was some talk of the Law Faculty extending into the nearby Old Physics Building. It was a variation on Plan 2 and almost became Plan 3.

By mid-1998 it was easy to feel cynical about the whole planning exercise and to believe that the Law School's efforts to convince the University that it needed its own building would never succeed. The light on the horizon was the notional commitment of funds to the Law Building project by the University in its 1997 budget.

### ***A REAL PLAN LOOMS***

It was during 1998 that the Vice Chancellor announced the development of University Square, a site south of Grattan Street, home to the Melbourne Business School and the Graduate Students Association among others. The site was to be developed to accommodate a new underground car park, two new buildings for Melbourne University Private, and a multi-storey building for the University. The latter building was offered by the Vice Chancellor to the Faculty of Law. At a special meeting on 25 August 1998 the Faculty approved the proposal to relocate to the new building.

In the early stages the plan was for a narrow twenty-three storey building. The architects, Metier3, made a presentation to the Faculty in August outlining their vision for the University Square development. The next eighteen months were to see modifications, changes and redrawn plans as

various issues and objections from local residents, the National Trust, and others, arose.

This was a very unsettling time in the planning process because deadlines were being set, met, extended and abandoned. Along the way it was not always clear at what level, and by whom, the decisions were being made. I will not dwell further on the nature of University politics in this article, other than to say that sometimes there appear to be wheels within wheels; the great relief is that the building has actually been signed off and the first sod was turned in February.

I have lost count of the number of meetings I attended throughout 1998-99, but towards the end of last year there were three to four lengthy meetings every week. Over the course of the year the equivalent of more than one day per week was spent on building related matters, an increase from the half a day a fortnight previously.

The Law Library staff was kept up-to-date with the general developments. In order not to raise hopes too high in the early stages they were involved more in the space planning later on, as the likelihood of a new building increased.

In the final plan the layout of the Legal Resource Centre reflects use of the library. At the entrance level are the most heavily used sections - circulation and reference desks, the open and closed reserve collections, the three computer labs, the reference collection, and the staff work room and offices. On the next level we have the legislation, law report and journal collections, both open shelves and compactus shelving, the microfiche collection, postgraduate carrels, discussion rooms, and casual reading areas. On the third level we have the monograph collection and rare books room, together with the remaining post-graduate carrels and discussion rooms.

### ***SPACE PLANNING: LOCATION AND STYLE***

Now to the substance of this article. As librarians we have all been involved in some way or another with the issue of space, or lack of it, for our

collections, and many of us have had opportunities to plan a new facility have planned two new libraries over the years: at a secondary college at then at a law firm. The requirements differed for each library, and lessons learnt from both projects stood me in good stead for this larger project.

Having the experience of Plans 1 and 2 above, I had undertaken the pre-planning which is necessary in order to be able to talk with some authority when dealing with architects and other specialists. Appendix 3 is an example of one exercise which analysed growth in different parts of the collection over an eighteen month period.

It is vital to know your library, the collection, the way the collection is currently used, the way the users prefer to use both it and the library, and the strengths as well as the shortcomings of the current facility. It is only when you have these matters in hand that you can confidently specify necessary requirements.

#### *Number of levels*

Between August and December 1998 the size of the proposed building was lowered to eleven storeys, and the footprint (the area covering the ground) nearly doubled. This was immensely important for the law library. The current size, approximately 1700 square metres of usable space, 2100 square metres in total, will more than double to 4355 square metres. In the twenty-three storey proposal this would have covered six levels. In the new footprint we now have a manageable three levels. Covering entire floors and restricting access to one central location was an important requirement. Fewer floors is a management issue as well – easier to keep an eye on activity, easier for shelving of materials, and current staffing levels are adequate to manage three levels.

#### *Relationship of the LRC to the Law School*

Within the multi-storey Law School tenancy the issue of location of facilities became very important. Relationship between functions, press of bodies, usage of elevators, undergraduate and graduate teaching, experiences of law

schools overseas – all these issues and more were considered. It was desirable for the library, now known as the Legal Resource Centre (LRC), to be as accessible as possible to all users. Constraints on library plans included the need to place larger teaching spaces, including lecture theatres, on lower levels.

A key requirement was for the LRC to be located as near as possible to centres of high student activity, such as lounges, Law Students Society offices, the Law Review office, etc – the library must be part of the action to remain relevant and informed. The Legal Resource Centre has been located on levels 3, 4, and 5. We share level 5 with a state-of-the-art Moot Court. Level 3 is the entry level, and from the ground floor through to Level 3 there is a very wide (8 metre) staircase to encourage students to enter and move around the library by foot rather than use the lifts. The lower levels of the building house the undergraduate teaching spaces and facilities.

On the levels above the LRC are the Graduate and JD student facilities; and above them are the academic and administrative offices. There is a staircase from level 5 to level 9 for use by academics, who will have controlled access to the LRC at this level, although the exit will still be on level 3. Information Services (IT) are on level 2.

## SPACE PLANNING: PREPARATION

### Visits

A great deal of investigation, consultation and reading was undertaken over the years leading to the final plan of the library. I have visited dozens of law libraries in the past ten years in law firms, courts and law schools, in Australia, New Zealand, the US, Canada, Italy and the UK. Each visit was a learning experience – seeing what works, what doesn't, looking at layout, finishes, facilities, speaking with staff about strengths and shortcomings of the libraries, for users as well as for the library staff. I have been fortunate to have firstly a General Manager, and latterly a Dean, who are very supportive of such activity. I have photo albums filled with images of law libraries. For

anyone else, possibly the most boring photo collection imaginable, but a very useful resource for memory-jogging.

### *Email*

When the height of the building was determined emails were sent to colleagues in the US who may have had experiences in multi-storey law schools, seeking advice and opinions. The detailed responses from Law Library Directors and academics, sharing experiences and concerns was very valuable. The list of 'dos and don'ts' included ensuring there were enough lifts and/or stairwells to enable mass vertical movement of bodies ('you can never have enough elevators'), and lots of advice in relation to location of lecture theatres, wiring, etc.

### *Conferences*

There was a very useful conference run by the AALL at Duke University in North Carolina in March 1999.<sup>1</sup> The speakers included specialist architects and interior designers who only work on law libraries, several Law School Directors who have planned law school libraries over the past thirty years, and technical specialists who deal with audio-visual as well as technology issues. Interesting approaches included the concept of looking at retail store planning when thinking about layout, signage and walking pathway patterns in a large library.

### *Reading*

The usual literature search was useful, although there are only about half a dozen titles of substance and many of these are very dated. The one book I bought for myself, and have lent to several architects since, is a wonderful architectural reference called *Library Builders*.<sup>2</sup> This book is full of excellent photographs, as well as some architects' drawings, of thirty-nine recently completed library buildings around the world. It served, together with my own photos, to illustrate concepts which were difficult to put into words.

<sup>1</sup> *Bricks and Bytes: Space Planning and Technology for Academic Law Libraries* March 12-13, 1999, Duke University School of Law

<sup>2</sup> *Library Builders*, 1997, Academy editions, London.

## ***SPACE PLANNING: THE VISION***

There is a vision, and there are assumptions, behind any building plan. Our vision was of a space which met the varied information needs of students and faculty, in pleasant, spacious and purpose built surrounds, maintaining a balance of paper and electronic resources. We wanted to make good use of natural light, increase the number of discussion rooms, and provide casual meeting areas. We believe that as students spend more and more time studying and using the Internet at home, the LRC will be a focal point to gather together when they need to discuss and plan their work.

We have to accommodate the different needs of undergraduate, post-graduate, JD, PhD, local and international students, as well as criminology and legal studies students from Arts, business law students from Commerce, and students from all other Universities in Victoria offering law degrees. We need to accommodate our Faculty who have been used to a Staff library which they will no longer have. We have students undertaking junior and Jessup moots, law review editors and research assistants, all with diverse needs. In addition, we are open to the public and the profession.

## ***SPACE PLANNING: ASSUMPTIONS***

### ***Paper based materials***

This is an academic law library. The assumptions for growth and space needs are very different to those of a law firm library. We have much more in common with the court libraries in terms of the nature of the collection. Key factors are that

- we will retain one paper copy of all Australian primary sources for the next ten to twenty years until we are guaranteed the ongoing reliability, as well as viability, of electronic sources;
- when the Internet goes down, or the power fails, resources need to be on hand - a power cut in the week before exams does not bear thinking about;
- a great deal of material held is either unique to our library or not easily available at other locations and must be retained;

- we lend extensively to the Bar and law firms downtown. As they continue to down-size their collections, there is an expectation that the Law School will hold on to, and provide access to, a great deal of material;
- we hold international materials not available electronically, or else available free of charge on the Internet;
- we hold over 55,000 monograph titles which we think will never be available electronically;
- our journal collection will continue to grow in paper for some years. Apart from the law reviews, many of the titles are not available electronically in full text, and the back sets certainly are not; and
- much of the legislation we hold is historical, such as sessional acts up to several centuries old from various jurisdictions. It includes Bills and extrinsic items which will never be available electronically.

So our core assumption is to allow for a further ten years of expansion and then aim to achieve steady-state growth. The Law School has placed so much material off site and in storage over the past thirty years that the prospect of bringing it all back together in one convenient and easily accessible location is one of the very exciting prospects for the LRC.

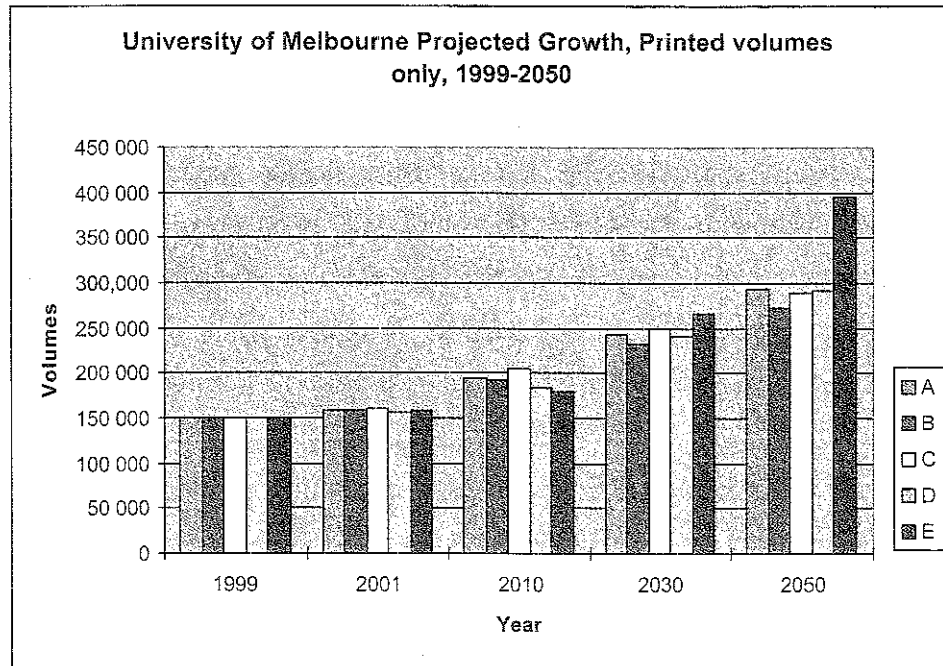
The rate of growth for the print collection was modelled on a spreadsheet using assumptions of different rates of decline in print volumes. The starting point was related to the total number of volumes we add annually, including serial volumes, and the results were graphed (figure 1).

To accommodate the hard copy collection, we have extensive compactus shelving (seven shelves per bay) to store lesser-used materials. We plan to have six shelves per bay on the open shelves, enabling a future librarian the option of installing an extra shelf in each bay should collection growth



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Figure 1



A = 4000 volumes for 20 years, 1000 volumes for 30 years  
B = 4000 volumes for 10 years, 2000 volumes for 40 years  
C = 5000 volumes for 5 years, 3000 volumes for 10 years  
2000 volumes for 35 years  
D = 3000 volumes for 25 years, 2500 volumes for 25 years  
E = 2% increase per year for 50 years  
NB: Current rate of growth is 4000-5000 volumes per year

warrant this. An additional 0.9 kilometre of shelving can be accommodated in this way without the need to erect any more stacks.

### Technology

While we allow for some growth of the paper resources, we are also acutely aware of the massive growth of electronic resources and the requirements of technology. We have therefore allowed great flexibility in the cabling, ensuring there are data and power points throughout the LRC with close on 400 points on every level. There are three laboratories which will have computers in them initially, but within ten years the situation could have changed. Palm-sized computers may be the tool of the time, still needing network access for Internet and printing, but so personalised that the generic PC is obsolete. We examined wireless networks, but at this stage there is not

enough positive experience to make us take that leap. In ten years students may well be talking to the computers and keyboards may be obsolete

Currently just about everything an undergraduate student requires is on the Internet: audio taped lectures, lecture notes, self-paced flexible learning packages, reading materials, multiple volumes of law reports, legislation the list grows daily. And it is borderless. A library planned ten years ago would not have been able to anticipate the ubiquitous nature of the Internet so in some ways scenario planning has a somewhat limited value

### ***THE INTERIM STAGE***

In late 1999 there were extensive discussions with lift engineers; prevention specialists; heating, air conditioning, ventilation and acoustics engineers; audio visual experts; security, CCTV (closed circuit television), alarm specialists; project managers and interior design architects. There were some battles at these stages, reinforcing the importance of keeping an eye on everything. We had drawn out discussions on relatively minor details, but major matters were agreed unchallenged.

Some of the 'issues' for us included

- reinforced floor thickness to accommodate the weight of shelves of books and compactus shelving;
- stairs covered with a sound absorbing material rather than stone;
- a back entrance to the goods lift to facilitate ease of movement of new materials to work room areas;
- windows in the staff workstation area,
- herringbone layout for computers in the laboratories;
- data and power points at all tables and casual seating areas;

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- separate internal lift for moving books for shelving, etc; and
- a Rare Books room

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All the above were successfully negotiated, but we lost out on a couple of matters: there are no separate staff toilets; and, ideally, the entrance should be opposite the circulation and reference desks

The floor plan was settled and signed off in January 2000

The next stage in the project will include

- fit-out matters, including the finishes for tables, shelves, carrels, the signage, etc;
- some fund raising efforts to enable us to equip the LRC as fully as possible for commencement of the academic year 2002; and
- planning the actual move: mapping the collection so that all our books, etc, from all the various storage areas, as well as that on the shelves (all 170,000 odd volumes) can be placed directly in the correct spot in the LRC, to avoid double handling at the end

We will be placing photographs on our home page to track the progress of the building project You can check it out at

<http://www.law.unimelb.edu.au/lawlib/lrc/lrc.htm>.

### **CONCLUSION**

Are we happy with our floor plan? – generally, yes I wake at nights worrying about some aspects and hope that the right decision has been taken. It can be pretty sobering to think this is the one chance we have to give Melbourne a world class facility, and it may not work. But being an optimist, I think it will work; I think enough thought and pre-planning has taken place to anticipate potential problems.

The staff of the Law Library at Melbourne has endured substandard conditions for many years. Efforts over the past few years to make cost improvements, upgrade furnishings, and revamp some student areas, made some difference, but we now plan everything in the knowledge that we are finally on the count down to a wonderful purpose built Legal Resource Centre. In a couple of years we will no longer need to apologise for our lack of space and cramped facilities. Our wonderful collection will finally have a suitable home.

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#### *Appendix 1: Some Statistics of the LRC*

The LRC is a multi-function facility providing 180 PCs and seating for over 60 students in various locations. It includes:

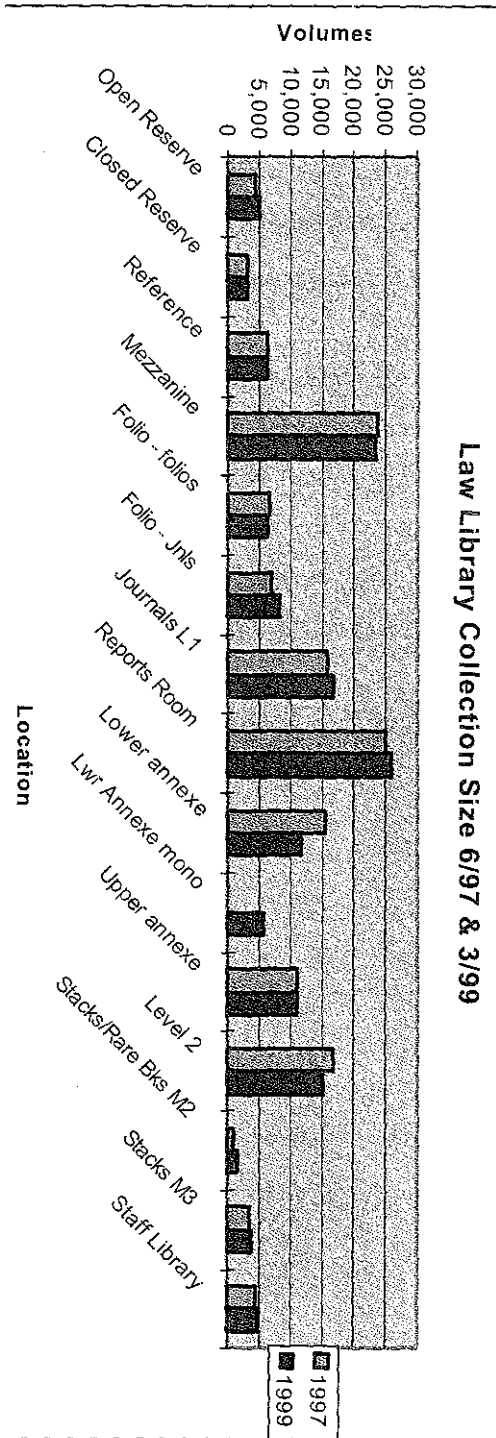
- 3 teaching laboratories containing 20, 40 and 60 PCs respectively
- Laptop access via data points at every table, carrel and casual seating space.
- Meeting space with 14 discussion rooms available for student bookings.
- 40 postgraduate lockable study rooms
- 58 individual carrels.
- 41 tables for four persons
- 10 tables for eight persons
- 10 'computer pods' of six spaces at each.
- 18 coffee tables with casual seating for four persons at each

Other facilities include:

- Open stacks – 894 bays with six shelves per bay – 4 83 km of open shelves.
- Compactus – 246 bays with seven shelves per bay – 1 55 km of shelves.
- A Rare Books room with separate humidity control and 29 bays of 4 – 6 shelves.
- 4 photocopy/computer printer rooms
- A dedicated room for the microfiche collection.
- A staff area with office, or workstation space, for up to 28 staff, with a couple of offices for librarians on upper floors.
- An internal lift dedicated to the LRC only.

## *Appendix 2: Some Hints for Librarians Planning New Libraries*

- Learn the jargon
- Know what a square metre means - try to visualise spaces
- Ask for more than you need initially - you can always cut back graciously when pushed later on if you have allowed some slack in the first place.
- Keep a copy of every piece of correspondence, and file notes of phone calls.
- Take notes at meetings, or check minutes if provided.
- Learn the difference between base building and fit-out.
- Learn about data sheets
- Pay attention to HVAC - heating, ventilation, air conditioning
- Check elevator capacities, goods lifts, loading docks, if relevant
- Discuss security, data points, lights, fire safety, washrooms, windows, wall finishes, flooring, cables, wireless, humidity, etc.
- Think about the functional relationships between spaces.
- Visit, visit, visit – the more law libraries you see the more you can refine your thoughts and plans
- Read the IT pages of the newspapers, *Wired* magazine, etc, to pick up trends in technology which could be applicable



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