
A TALE OF TWO DOORS

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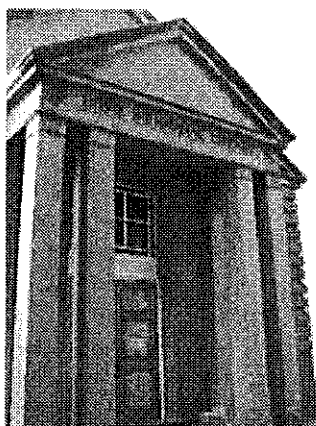
Once upon a time, there was a set of wooden library doors, very solid, heavy, high, unshakeable, hard to move. Their message was solid, reliable.

But the doors kept many people out - those who couldn't lift them, those who found them too intimidating. Their message to many people was - you don't belong, you are not welcome here, you can't come in. This is not a place where you will feel comfortable.

One day five men lifted the doors off their hinges, and took them away.

A glass door was set in place, safe for small children, easily opened.

The building suddenly looked different, more light came in, people could see inside and outside.



A relatively minor structural change can alter the ambience of a building.

The doors are one of several alterations which have had a major impact on the the look and atmosphere of the Löhe Library, in North Adelaide since 1999.

The lighting was upgraded from dingy gloom to industrial strength, with the help of a lighting expert. Now users can read spine labels on the bottom shelf on a winter's afternoon without shadow.

Tinted film has reduced glare from high west-facing windows in the public area.

Compactus units have been installed, and 12,000 older and German items were transferred into storage, at the back of the library. Current material on the main shelves is now more accessible and there is more room to browse.

We cut the top three shelves off with an angle grinder from 14ft. high shelving bays. Now the top shelf can be reached by everyone, without needing stools, steps or ladders.

Shelving was aligned in eleven rows for the first time, creating a wide central aisle, and it now has a spacious, airy feel downstairs. Disabled access to the ground floor has been much improved.

The Reference area was tripled in size, with decent seats and bright lights. Since being restored, the large oak table used by ANZTLA legend, Trevor Zweck, is now the most popular spot in the library. There has been an increase in the use of Reference works, especially now shorter students can reach top shelves.

The photocopier, sale books, free brochures and noticeboard were relocated to a new home in a different part of the library. This has given a much cleaner streamlined look at the entrance to the library.

The installation of the security system required large gates at the door, which has defined the entrance and heightened user awareness of protecting the collection.

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Most recently, the wooden doors were removed and a glass door installed at the entrance to the library.

So what was the response?

Staff really enjoy seeing the weather and activities on the lawn outside. Library users really appreciate the light touch of the door and its improved safety, particularly with small children in tow.

I have had significant positive feedback from library users. They feel that the library is 'different' even if they can't work out how!

This doesn't resolve all the problems of a dysfunctional building.

But such measures have been really worthwhile! Building a new library is rarely an option, but small changes and lateral thinking can greatly improve any library.

My challenge to you is to look around at your library's entrance and lay-out.

- How can you make some small changes which will yield big results?
- What could you do to upgrade a problem area?
- Have you identified the key design flaws?
- How could you change your physical facilities to
improve traffic flow?
create more space, improve lighting?
give library users more room in public areas?

Talk to people who use your library! Find out why non-users won't come in. In my case, it was because some of them couldn't get through the doors!

I encourage you to these matters carefully. You would be amazed at the difference that such changes can make.

