


Build It and They Will Come: What to Consider When Building Library Based Learning Spaces for the 21st Century

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Slide 1 – Introduction

- Although the title represents the outcome of this ACU Building Project, my paper will actually focus on the *process* of creating a library building as a shared space and outline examples of the level of planning that goes on behind the scenes
- When most people visit libraries – particularly new library designs - they usually respond to
 - what they see
 - how it makes them feel
 - they notice what might be a new concept and
 - they observe the way in which the spaces are used
- When planning a building for the future none of this is clear, so the degree of imagination needed for planning goes beyond one's comfort zone
- When you realise you are responsible for creating a new Library that will meet the requirements of teaching and learning needs out to 2050, one feels this might be more challenging than exciting in the first instance as we don't often get too many opportunities to do this and you want to make it as successful as possible

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- I'd also like to thank BVN Architects and Sandrick Project Directions for the images of the floor plans and any internal concept designs
 - Elton Consulting for the exterior concept designs of the new building and Library staff for the wonderful progress photos they took during the installation of the interim library facility

Slide 2

Where to Start?


- Where does one start when looking at what is required before committing any concepts to paper?
- Architectural designers will continuously present concept drawings
- But concept drawings are what people respond to and suddenly they move from being concept drawing to something more realistic after the Library's input. The drawings Library management saw initially indicated the planning was well advanced (which caused some concern) but these turned out to be conceptual designs and were not meant to be regarded as detailed interior designs
- What did we need to know to help with developing the design concepts?
 - What space had been allocated?
 - How many and what different learning spaces need to be catered for in this single building?
 - How many and what different functions/uses need to be included in the space provided?
 - What does the research say about exciting concepts used world-wide and also alert future planners of the *impact* of modern learning facilities on the learner and the workflows for staff?
 - What are the advantages and the limitations of some concept designs?
 - What problems do we agree to live with as restrictions and limitations of design features become more of a reality with each iteration of the design process
 - When is it time to be innovative, exciting *and* practical?
 - When do you make the compromises that are inevitably needed along the way?

Slide 3

What information did we use as part of the planning process?
Just a bit of background about ACU Canberra initially....



- ACU – Canberra has
 - More than 1,000 (EFTSL) students with a growth projected to be 1200 by 2020
 - Over 50 international students in 2016
 - Undergraduate and post graduate courses in education, nursing, social work, exercise science, paramedicine, theology and science (from 2017)
 - Is 5km from Canberra's city centre
- So why the need for change?
- The need for interactive, collaborative and multifunctional spaces for staff, students and the wider community
- Changing learning requirements now and into the future
- The need to improve the look, feel and function of the campus as part of the higher education sector
- Growth in student numbers
- The growing realization that the current Library was proving increasingly inadequate to serve the needs of the campus
- So, to the planning....
- Serious conversations about the building began in May 2015 (with previous discussions taking place as early as 2013)
- I came into the role of Campus Library Manager in March 2015 and knew from the outset what my accountabilities were in relation to building the new Library
- What wasn't immediately obvious was that due to a high demand for existing Library space, an interim Library would be created until the final library was completed.
- I guess the obvious question for most was why not wait until the new Library Building is completed before relocating the Library?
- Due to the desperate need to build new Nursing Labs to cater for the growth in student numbers enrolled in Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor Paramedics, this resulted in an Interim Library facility to ensure the continued provision of library services to students and staff
- So, what was first thought to be a case of *build it and they will come*, suddenly became *build it (sort of) and they will come (temporarily) in the first instance*
- Phase 1 was establishing a fully operational interim Library facility and the New Library Building was now Phase 2
- Phase 1 - Interim Library Modular Facility
- What were the absolute essentials for the interim Facility and what could we do without?
- We had to shrink 913 to 845sqm, of which 430 was allocated to the collection and the group study facilities

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- The facility had to take into account the extremes of the weather conditions in Canberra and that the majority of the academic year in Canberra is during the colder months
 - As the main reading room for the Library remained intact as part of the interim facility, it meant that throughout the relocation period the Information Commons and High Demand resources remained accessible to the clients
 - The relocation to the interim facility was for the collection and Group Study facilities only
 - Because of the detailed planning that went into building the interim facility, only 4 business days of access to the main collection was lost – of which 2 of these days were a weekend
 - Broad communication to the stakeholders of the direct impact of change was shared on a fortnightly basis

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What were some of the surprises?

- The interim facility was a demountable that we assumed would have many limitations but when fitted out, carpeted, painted and installed with heating and cooling enabled was far more comfortable than we had ever imagined
 - Building the walkway between the existing main reading room and the interim Library facility to maintain security of the collection and retain a single entry/exit to the Library created the biggest impact on the building works
 - The interim facility was originally planned for a period of 15 months but is now looking to be more than 2 years
 - An added challenge in creating the interim facility included changes to the Building Codes, placing additional pressure on the space allocated (e.g. the space between the shelf runs is much more than the original set up to take into account the changes to Building Codes for wheelchair access)
- How did we resolve it?
- a well needed and slightly overdue deselection exercise, which we saw as an advantage rather than a limitation
 - A continuous run of the main collection, reducing vacant space around some of the collections
 - Integrating the reference collection into the main collection, thereby reducing duplicates
 - All-in-all a good outcome from our perspective



Slide 5 – Interim Library Floor Plan

- Layout showing how we fit into the space available

Slide 6 – So what might the interim facility look like?

- Concept design of the look and feel of the Interim Library

Slide 7 – Creative Storage Design

- This meant we had to apply creative management of the collection to fit in the space available
- Storage of the teaching resources was resolved as staff came up with excellent solutions in meeting some of these challenges


Slides 8 & 9 – Before and After Photos of Interim Facility

- End Phase 1

Slide 10

What did we learn from this?


- We learned to look at the opportunities rather than the limitations
- We actually have been gifted with 2 attempts at looking at what works and more importantly what doesn't work for the future design of the building
- Shared expectations of all stakeholders (including staff, students, and all those engaged in the building design)
- We used as much client survey data we had access to including
 - Trends around space requirements evident in the results of the biennial Library Client Surveys (InSync) of 2012 and 2014
 - 2016 is another Library client survey year for ACU so it will be interesting to see the formal feedback about the interim facility from Library clients
 - We used the CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians) stats from the past 3 years to observe trends of increases and decreases to types of learning space and its impact on client survey data

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- We also conducted an independent Client survey in Sept/Oct 2015 which helped inform concept designs for the new Library building
 - An added tool we used was to establish a Tmlr site for staff to share building design concepts used elsewhere

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Phase 2 – Planning the New Library

- The new building design process needed to incorporate the range of requirements identified within the space allocated with no reduction in space from the original Library building, as well as having flexibility of design to reconfigure internal spaces to accommodate changing learning needs for future
- Information of the building requirements was prepared for the building brief and negotiated over 6 meetings with the Project Architects (BVN) and Project Managers (Sandrick Project Directions)
- Close consideration of *types of learning spaces* that included
 - silent study zones
 - break out areas in open spaces
 - Group study rooms – had to compromise on number of small GSRs due to space allocation for the Ground Floor with large GSRs to go onto Level 1
 - Design feature includes ability to turn small GSRs into large GSRs with concertina walls
- The *Staff Work area* included a great deal of feedback and discussion with Library staff to accommodate
 - An open plan work area
 - a single small meeting room to be used by staff for online meetings, training and small team meetings
 - The *returns chute* design requires PC access within the Work Room to support the RFID set-up. We have aimed to reduce the current 2 returns facilities into a single return chute available both within and outside Library opening hours
- An *afterhours Learning Commons* adjacent to the Library space will be a shared space with facilities available within and outside Library opening hours including
 - Campus Café,
 - pop-up service kiosks for various campus functions
 - Main Reception point on campus
 - PC and laptop bench facilities
 - Student disability work station
 - Printing/copying/scanning facilities

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- strong *Wi-Fi* connection planned on the basis of 3 devices per user
 - an ATM and student card machine
 - *Community consultation* is also a critical success factor. This project had separate consultation sessions with
 - Students and Staff on campus
 - the adjacent School and Parish Council
 - local residents
 - The basis of communication in the *consultation process* included
 - Building Construction will take approximately 15 months
 - ACU will work with the community, staff and students throughout the construction program
 - Final design aims to minimise tree removal
 - We will maintain a fully operational campus and a full learning environment over this time

Slides 12-14

- As with all building design exercises, people are always most interested in what it will look like in the current setting

ACU Master Plan (12)

- Aerial view

Building Context (13)

- Linking the building

Building Concept (14)


- Entrance view

Slide 15

Planned Library Layout

Ground Floor – Library and General Campus Facilities (left image)


- 1000 sqm secured after a fair deal of discussion for Library space

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- Emphasise the 3 distinct areas configured to manage the way in which the spaces will be best used by the ACU community
 - Provided a *detailed spreadsheet* of the specific features/spaces required for an increased EFTSL of up to 1200 (from the current 900) and its potential impact on Library services and learning facilities
 - Possible *option of securing the Library terrace* as an outside study space being explored
 - *Collection space*
 - *Learning spaces* include
 - Silent Study spaces = 18
 - Additional Individual study spaces = 42
 - Break Out spaces = 16
 - Group Study Rooms = 4 x 5 seats = 16-20 + possibility of an additional equivalent in Learning Commons area = another 4-5
 - PC enabled (which crosses over all of these categories) = 34
 - *Staff Work Area*
 - Staff Work stations = 10
 - Meeting room for up to 4
 - includes CLM office
 - kitchenette
 - Generic Work station – sit/stand option for end processing/sorting tasks
 - *Single Service Point for Library* = 3
 - (1 x Library staff; 1 x Academic Skills staff; 1 x IT Support) – all rostered over various times enabling the work stations to be used flexibly as needed
 - *Cafe* with internal and external seating
 - Male and female *toilet blocks* accessible from outside Library but adjacent to Library so can be accessed by those using afterhours facilities
 - *Learning Commons/Cafe* seating (internal)
 - *Campus Reception/Campus Security/AskACU*
 - Hoping for *Digital Signage*

Slide 16

Floor Plan for Both Levels

Level 1 – Main lecture theatre and other areas


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- *Main Lecture theatre* will have seating up to 300 that can be split into a larger lecture theatre and a smaller lecture theatre (200 and 100 ppl capacity)
 - *Storage capacity* for lecture theatre furniture aligned to final configuration of the lecture theatres
 - *Office of the Campus Dean*
 - *Marketing Office*
 - *Flexible Meeting Room* that can be a single large room or 2 x smaller rooms
 - *Kitchen Servery* for when lecture theatre converted to a function room
 - *Additional Learning Commons* and overflow for Café seating
 - *Student kitchenette*
 - *Comms Room*
 - *External Balcony* for use for Campus Events and Functions

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Final Take Home message

- Build it for now and the future
- Need to remember we are not just establishing a structure for current services but spaces for generations of students and staff not yet born who may have different learning preferences
- Critical success factors
- Communication with your stakeholders which requires highly developed negotiation skills
- What are the possibilities?
- Learning to accept what set of problems you are prepared to live with
- Understand that the final plan will have many iterations
- Keep abreast of what is being published about learning spaces – and in particular what has previously been very popular which now shows to be a limitation as learning delivery techniques and learning styles evolve over time
- Keep in touch with emerging technologies and their potential impact on learning environments

Keeping all that has been said in mind I would like to close with a letter to the Editor by Richard Orlando in a recent issue of *The Guardian Weekly*, quoting the educator Gilbert Highlet



“...real libraries also provide a place to rest, be quiet, step off the moving platform of the Moment and think, [therefore] the library of nature in the raw, like libraries of bricks and mortar, needs to be protected.”¹

We need to keep this in mind when we build it – for those who come – now and in the future.....

¹ Orlando, R (24-30 June 2016) Briefly, *The Guardian Weekly*, p23.