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Chapter 14: Underground Bookstore and Old Bodleian Access Project

1 Brief history of the Old Bodleian Library, Radcliffe Camera and the Underground Bookstore

The buildings of the Bodleian Library date back to 1488 when Duke Humfrey's Library was completed above the Divinity School, whose construction had commenced in 1427. Most subsequent centuries have seen significant development, principally around the time of the founding of the Library in the seventeenth century with the construction of the Proscholium (with 'Arts End' above) and the north, east and south ranges of the Bodleian Library which completed the Bodleian or Old Schools Quadrangle, named after the 'Scholae' which occupied the ground floor. These buildings, together with Selden End at the west end of Duke Humfrey's, form what is now known informally as the 'Old Bodleian' or 'Old Library'.

The Radcliffe Camera library was built in 1737–49 immediately to the south of the Bodleian Library, but was initially a rival to the Bodleian; it introduced such innovations as scientific books and evening opening hours, since artificial lighting was allowed in this building. In 1861, the books were moved to a new Radcliffe Science Library in the University Museum and the Radcliffe Camera became part of the Bodleian. At this stage, the upper floor was used as a reading room and the lower floor was converted from an open arcade to a closed bookstack to cope with the rapidly increasing flow of acquisitions, necessitating the addition in 1863 of an external staircase and new doorway. The Underground Bookstore was built between 1909 and 1912 underneath the part of Radcliffe Square which lies between the Bodleian Library and the Radcliffe Camera. It served to provide further expansion of the closed-access capacity. Its two levels were filled with the famous 'Gladstone' shelving, a type of mobile shelving developed from an idea of Prime Minister William Gladstone.¹ (Figure 14.1)

¹ Edmund Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library, 1845-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 234–35.



Figure 14.1: The Gladstone shelving

Stairs led from the Bookstore to the lower room of the Radcliffe Camera, and a tunnel led to another staircase providing access to the Old Bodleian. The final phase of historic transformation came in 1941 at the time of the building of the New Bodleian Library and the book conveyor from the New Library to the Old. (Figure 14.2) The Underground Bookstore remained a closed stack, like the main bookstack in the New Bodleian, but the lower room of the Camera was cleared and converted into a reading room. The tunnel alongside the conveyor connected with that coming from the Camera. However, this link between the buildings remained closed to readers, who still had to enter each building separately. Apart from some minor refurbishments, this arrangement continued largely unchanged until 2011 and the completion of the Underground Bookstore and Old Bodleian Access (UBOB) Project.

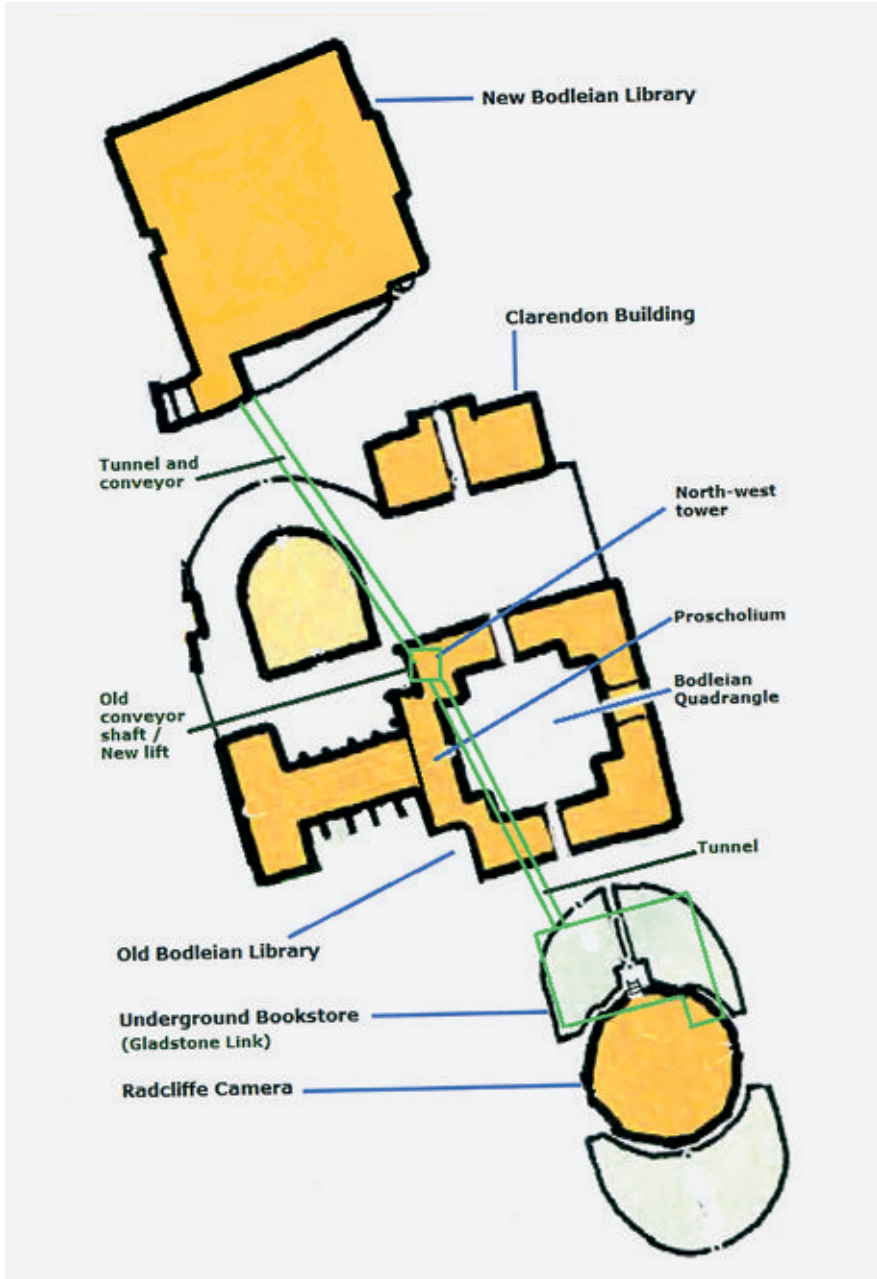


Figure 14.2: Old and New Bodleian Libraries and Radcliffe Camera (underground elements in green)

2 Context and strategy: earlier plans for the space – rethinking – interaction with other parts of the strategy

After the creation of Oxford University Library Services (now the Bodleian Libraries) from the University's centrally run libraries in 2000, and the introduction of a premises-related infrastructure space charge (PRISC) a few years later, there was a move to review and rationalize the space occupied by the various libraries which had either developed within their historic sites or had moved around the city with their respective faculties or departments. Perhaps inevitably, there was a tension between trying to continue to run heavily used services within much-loved historic buildings and 'cutting and running' to new buildings which could be purpose-designed for contemporary arrangements and legal requirements, or indeed for further transformations.

We began to formulate an estates programme for the Libraries whose essential elements were:

- the development of a major new complex for the Humanities on the recently purchased site of the former Radcliffe Infirmary;
- consolidation of science libraries in the Radcliffe Science Library and of social sciences libraries in the St Cross area;
- redevelopment of the New Bodleian Library as a dedicated facility for special collections;
- removal of closed storage and library support services to Osney Mead;
- and a withdrawal from as many as possible of the other library sites.

There was much, sometimes fraught, debate about the future of the Old Bodleian and Radcliffe Camera and of the Taylor Institution Library. The view was expressed at the very highest level of the University that the last should be abandoned entirely and that, in the case of the Bodleian, the Underground Bookstore should be rendered unusable for any purpose. Otherwise the future of the Old Bodleian and the Radcliffe Camera remained unresolved, although a feasibility study had been carried out to look into improving access to the Old Bodleian.

With the appointment of a new Bodley's Librarian in February 2007 and the subsequent development of the Academic Strategy,² a fresh look was taken at the

² 'Academic Strategy for Oxford University Library Services', *Oxford University Gazette* (26 June 2009), accessed 29 June 2012, <http://www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/2008-9/weekly/260609/notc.htm#5Ref>.

central Bodleian Library and its role within the Bodleian Libraries. This look was more actively informed by a desire to retain the Old Bodleian and Radcliffe Camera as working libraries and not just to let the site drift into becoming a museum or curiosity.

The aspects of the Academic Strategy relevant to this project were generally:

- (3) Enhance user services through innovation;
- (6) Advance a coordinated estates programme;

and specifically:

- (1) Increase direct access to high-demand items in the collections;
- (4) Improve management of the collections.

Specific mention is made of the Old Bodleian, Radcliffe Camera and Underground Bookstore in the Strategy:

(under 6) The Old Bodleian and the Radcliffe Camera will also remain at the heart of OULS's services for readers. These are iconic buildings and OULS is committed to maintaining the very special atmosphere afforded to scholars by the opportunity to study in working libraries in such historic surroundings.

(under 1) Further research is being conducted on the New Bodleian collections, with an eye to moving approximately 250,000 volumes, chiefly recently published monographs in the English language, to the Underground Bookstack serving the Radcliffe Camera. The benefits of such a move would be substantial in terms of increasing user satisfaction, eliminating the delays inherent in fetching, and reducing costs. The feasibility of accommodating these titles in a renovated Underground Bookstack is still being evaluated, but the principle of giving priority on open shelves to the most heavily used stock is guiding the Libraries' strategy.

Enhancing user services through innovation was a pervasive but not explicitly identified goal. This became a benchmark against which to test ideas as they emerged in detail, and a tool to generate new ideas. Improving management of the collections through, for example, barcoding stock and ensuring appropriately detailed cataloguing was essential to allow readers to identify and find both stock moved offsite and stock put on open access.

These simple expressions of our objectives overlay a complex web of opportunities, constraints and interdependencies with other elements of the Academic Strategy and its associated estates programme. The core elements of the project became:

- removal of the existing 600,000 (estimated) volumes of stock from the Underground Bookstore;
- refurbishment of the Underground Bookstore as an open-access space for housing 'high-use' material with appropriate access arrangements for readers and a modicum of seating capacity for in-space consultation of the material;
- installation of a lift in the Old Bodleian to give access to the two main reading room floors and to the tunnel connection to the Underground Bookstore and Radcliffe Camera;
- creation of a Consolidated Service Point in the Old Bodleian.

There were a number of dependencies which affected both overall planning and the timetable, requiring painstaking analysis of figures and timetables.

The building and bringing into operation of the Book Storage Facility was the key enabler without which it would have been impossible to clear the closed-access stock.

Conversely, we intended to reduce the demand for requests from the Book Storage Facility by up to 50% by identifying the high-use stock and transferring it to open access in the Underground Bookstore. This reduction was also essential since the loading bay in the New Bodleian Library (not to mention the conveyor transferring material under Broad Street to the Old Library) would no longer be available in its reincarnation as the Weston Library.

The change in the pattern of use of material also had a two-way connection with plans to reduce the number of service points in the buildings by two, from five to three.

Installation of a lift was essential to replace the conveyor as the means of delivering off-site material to the Old Bodleian – and would in turn provide the opportunity to make the reading rooms accessible to people with restricted mobility

The only viable means of delivering to the Old Bodleian also required vehicular access across the Bodleian Quadrangle. It was fortuitous that the University's Estates Directorate already had a plan to restore and repave the Quadrangle. Following historical evidence, the level of the Quad was raised to its original level, allowing access to all the ground-floor rooms which lead directly off it. Raising the level allowed the paving to be relaid on to a stronger substratum, sufficient to withstand regular vehicular transit.

The staff canteen in the New Bodleian, though to be replaced in due course in the Weston Library, would be unavailable for four years during the rebuilding project and the UBOB Project made good this loss by creating a tea room in the Old Bodleian. This was desirable for staff morale and comfort. At the same time it allowed us to provide refreshments for readers.

At the beginning of the project we had not assumed that opening the Underground Bookstore to readers would necessarily mean allowing readers to use the tunnel linking it with the Old Bodleian. As we modified this stance, with potential knock-on effects for other policies, we had to reassess the physical capacity and suitability of the tunnel.

The University had been working for some years to achieve compliance with requirements of the Equality Act relating to disabled access and the Old Bodleian and Radcliffe Camera were both particularly problematic, not only in existing layout but also because they are Grade I Listed Buildings so requiring permission for every alteration. Accessibility became another pervasive theme

which informed the development of detailed planning around the core elements. The new lift in the Old Bodleian was therefore sized to take readers in wheelchairs.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the project was that the physical changes would enable us to review and revise policies with a view to providing a better service to readers – the ultimate goal. So, for example, the ability to allow readers to move freely between the Old Bodleian, the Radcliffe Camera and the Underground Bookstore, and the expectation that the majority of readers would prefer to read their selected material in the reading rooms, led to our deciding to permit the movement of books by readers throughout the reading rooms (within certain constraints for older material). Previously, even moving material from one reading room to another in the same building had been subject to special procedures.

There were inevitably some losses along the way for those with a nostalgic affection for the buildings. The principal one was the ‘Sovex’ conveyor which had served admirably to deliver stock from the New Bodleian to the Lower Reading Room and the Upper Reading Room of the Old Bodleian for sixty-five years. Transformative technology in its time and a charming auditory experience, the conveyor had become rather unreliable in recent years and the estimated cost of giving it a thorough overhaul or replacing it was approximately the same as installing a new accessibility-compliant lift. It would also be unavailable for the four years required to rebuild the New Bodleian Library. The vertical shaft of the conveyor, up through the north-west corner of the Old Bodleian, was removed to make way for the new lift.

There was in fact already a lift in the Old Bodleian which had been inserted into the void space of the staircase in the north-west tower. However, as well as being too small for a trolley, or for more than one person, it served only three of the four main floor levels, bypassing the Lower Reading Room on the first floor. Its removal allowed the staircase to revert to its original form and for the flights between the ground floor and the tunnel to be rerouted to make them more easily passable by readers, as well as affording a magnificent sight line up the central stairwell (Figure 14.3).

Finally, the dedicated lavatories for male readers had to make way for access to the new lift on the ground floor and for space for an accessible lavatory. Male readers now share with male staff and, although they still have two sets, women readers and staff also share.



Figure 14.3:
Old Bodleian stairwell
(picture by Rosario Ivan
Glorioso)

3 Increasing open access – high-use material

To most libraries, open access is the touchstone of good reader service; the vast majority of stock has been individually selected and paid for, and one day will be weeded from the collection. With its more than 400-year history of legal deposit, a wondrously rich tradition of donation, and long-standing policies of retention and non-lending, the collections of the central Bodleian Library had grown and been managed in unusual ways.

Crudely speaking, the provision of open-access shelving had not kept pace with the inflow of new material for at least two centuries and one can see, in the history of the major changes to the central Bodleian Library estate, an expansion of reader space and open shelving dwarfed by the addition of closed storage

in the Radcliffe Camera, then in the Underground Bookstore, the New Bodleian bookstack and most recently in the repository at Nuneham Courtenay. Before the current project, the open-shelf capacity of the non-special collections reading rooms in the Old Bodleian was about 92,000 items and the Radcliffe Camera held about another 46,000 volumes. This was complemented by deliveries of any of up to 7 million items from closed storage in various locations.

The material already on open shelves was a combination of reference material supporting research in Classics (literary sources), English, History, Patristics, Philosophy and Theology, together with non-lending copies of material selected for undergraduate studies in the same subjects. We estimated that the Underground Bookstore could give open access to up to 280,000 volumes (depending on the eventual shelf layout and the size mix of the material). With this and the opportunity to connect and serve the reading rooms of the Old Bodleian and the Radcliffe Camera, we could transform a pair of primarily closed-access libraries into a single library with up to 500,000 volumes on open access, more than double the previous provision, and put this on a par with the other major research libraries of the University (compared to the Taylor Institution Library with c.450,000 volumes over two sites, c.280,000 each in the Radcliffe Science Library, Sackler Library, Social Science Library, c.260,000 in the Bodleian Law Library).

Readers repeatedly expressed their desire for more open access and had identified it as one of the highest priorities in all recent reader surveys, hence its inclusion in the Academic Strategy. So, as well as reducing the number of deliveries from remote storage, the conversion of the Underground Bookstore would be a key enabler in the fulfilment of that strategy. However, success depended on our selecting the appropriate material that readers would actually want to have on open access – the ‘high-use’ material.

This identification was problematic for two key reasons. Because of the particularities of the central Bodleian Library’s collection management history and policies, all general (i.e. non special collections) material in closed access enjoyed an equal status and, with some exceptions such as Oriental vernacular material, was from 1988 simply housed by size and then in order of accession. Moreover, the pattern of use of material by Humanities researchers, and even students, was not straightforward to predict by the usual parameters. Academics at any world-class university want to study the *recherche* rather than the mundane, and at Oxford this approach also characterizes the highly individualized undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses.

Nevertheless, some early brainstorming on existing statistics suggested that this was not a pointless exercise. The two major categories of material to explore were identified as material which had already been called from closed access frequently and the ‘new academic intake’. We consulted with the relevant Faculties.

Because most remote requests had been tracked on the library catalogue for the previous twelve years, the Systems and e-Research Service (SERS) was able to provide extensive lists of all items requested according to certain parameters. Use by multiple readers rather than repeated request by the same reader was a better (though still far from perfect) indicator of subsequent demand. From initial trawling of material acquired up to and including 2008, we established that just over 80,000 items had been requested by five or more readers over the twelve years or by three or more readers over the previous three years (to capture material which been acquired more recently). This confirmed the notion that a relatively large number of items is used very infrequently against a relatively small number experiencing repeat requests. The spread of publication date of the material confirmed that material published right through the twentieth century was still in regular use.

Sorting the spreadsheets by publication date also established that, in spite of the long historical tail, the pattern of requests was weighted somewhat towards recent publications. It would therefore be worthwhile developing the idea of the new academic intake or ‘jumbo new books display’. It was also fortuitous that the Underground Bookstore would easily accommodate a significant quantity of this material along with the high-use material. With the bulk of fiction and other non-academic material acquired by legal deposit filtered out at an early stage, the remaining intake would be just under 30,000 items a year. We agreed that we could accommodate three years of intake, giving a reasonable period for the material to be on open access. Consultation with the library users’ committees elicited great enthusiasm for this overall approach.

3.1 Consultation – planning

Although one of the smaller elements of the academic and estates strategy, the Underground Bookstore and Old Bodleian Access Project had complicated direct and indirect effects on many groups of people and arguably lay at the most sensitive heart of the Bodleian Libraries. Consultation and planning were therefore required on a number of fronts.

We had carried out a feasibility study in 2007 leading to some initial improvements in the Proscholium (entrance hall) of the Old Bodleian and feeding into plans for improving access for readers generally and for people with restricted mobility in particular. The architects Purcell Miller Tritton prepared further studies in October 2008 and June 2009. These were updated following advice from the library planning consultants Shepley Bulfinch in September 2009 and further consultation with the University’s Safety Office and its Disability Team.

Following approval of the outline plans by the Curators of the University Libraries and the University's Buildings and Estates Subcommittee in the autumn of 2009, we were granted a project budget of £5,336,000 (to which was added £406,783 for the associated refurbishment of the Bodleian Quadrangle). At this stage, the Underground Bookstore gained its new name – Gladstone Link – in allusion to the 'Gladstone' shelving and in anticipation of its new function of connecting the two historic buildings. The application to alter a Grade I Listed Building required a public consultation. An exhibition of plans and images showing past, present and prospective arrangements was displayed for two weeks in the Proscholium and an early evening event was organized to which neighbours and other interested parties were invited. There was an inevitable tension between aspiring to keep the buildings in use as a contemporary library facility and preserving a particular point in the development of the buildings, which had already seen a great deal of change throughout their history. We therefore had to demonstrate that any changes were to good purpose, were kept to a minimum and were sensitive and of a high quality in their design. Perhaps the most contentious element was the design of the balustrade to surround the new staircase and lift from the Lower Camera reading room to the Gladstone Link. The architects had produced a very minimal and elegant design consisting almost entirely of glass with the intention of opening up the vista of Bay 1 in which it would be located, whereas a representative of an architectural society was firmly of the opinion that the structure should be panelled in oak to match the surrounding book casing. In subsequent discussions with Oxford's City Conservation Officer and the architects, the eventual very successful final design involved ironwork, to reflect the adjacent window grilles but also to achieve a degree of the transparency promised by the glazed solution.

At about the same time, discussions were held with and tours offered to the Chairs of the relevant Faculties and of the relevant Committees for Library Provision before presentation to the Committees themselves. At this stage we had discussed the broad outline of the plan but still had to elaborate and communicate the implication for each subject affected.

In the *mêlée* of building planning and consultation with readers and external bodies, it is easy to overlook the interests of the staff affected by the changes. Clearly it was crucial to engage the staff to harness their ideas for improving the service plans but also to ensure their understanding of and commitment to the changes. To the great credit to members of staff they engaged positively with the changes. The only change which failed to gain favour and consequently has not yet been implemented was a proposal to introduce an area for drinking coffee and the like and eating cold snacks into the Gladstone Link; this remains on hold.

Thereafter followed a cycle of reiteration in which feedback informed further detailed development of the plans and significant further development was reported out as appropriate. Further conversations were also required with the Safety Office, the Disability Team and others with a particular interest in the unfolding scheme. These included facilities management staff within the central Bodleian Library not involved face-to-face with readers in the reading rooms but nevertheless underpinning service delivery through their management and maintenance of the space.

4 Estates – construction

Physical transformation was managed by the University's Estates Directorate under governance from a Project Sponsor Group. There were already considerable constraints and the buildings threw up further difficulties as construction proceeded. Access to the site was the most problematic aspect and this would affect both the building works and the plans for the biggest single move of books into and out of the buildings since the opening of the New Bodleian, and possibly ever. None of the existing routes out of the Underground Bookstore had sufficient capacity to allow us to empty and rebuild it quickly, and so we decided that the only viable method would be to cut a hole in the roof of the Underground Bookstore, through the lawn of Radcliffe Square, and to build a temporary hoist under a structure providing weatherproofing and security. This structure required Listed Building Consent in its own right. Our Project Manager for Library Logistics had to devise a particular methodology for the site involving timetabling moves around the building work before the removal of this temporary structure.

Everyone involved had to manage an extremely complex set of interactions working in various areas of the site – Underground Bookstore and Radcliffe Camera, north-west tower of the Old Bodleian, the entire Bodleian Quadrangle – whilst maintaining access for library readers and visitors and ensuring compliance with health and safety standards. Inevitably the place 'looked like a building site' for many months but various measures mitigated this situation. The earlier consultation both within the University and with the public meant that there was a certain level of understanding amongst readers, neighbours and other interested parties and that there was a source of texts and images to explain the works on panels, and to include on the website and in circulations. The hoist was surrounded by a neat hoarding and painted in a subdued colour to blend in as much as a large wooden box could in Radcliffe Square. The movable mesh screening used to separate readers and visitors from excavated parts of the Bodleian Quad-

range was used to mount information panels and directional information to help people navigate the rapidly changing routes.

Some elements of the design were developed fairly late in the project. We had identified the tea room both as an aspiration for reader provision and an essential replacement for the lost staff canteen in the New Bodleian. Various options were considered on the basis of operational need and of convenience alongside early thoughts about where there might actually be plumbing and drainage, and informed by the need to keep the cost, listed building implications and disruption to a minimum. A number of these factors suggested the use of the offices of the previous Bodley's Librarian and his deputy situated off the Bodleian Quadrangle and not directly connected to the reading rooms. We devised an arrangement for a joint reader/staff servery and seating area as well as a separate seating area and basic facility for staff only, with the plumbing eventually located in the ideal place.

There were persistent concerns about the size of the spaces, especially in relation to the use by readers who had never had such a facility before, which made it difficult to gauge the take-up against the adjacent college common rooms and the commercial competition. As so often with this project, the novel elements were the most difficult to plan and assess but have proved the most rewarding once implemented.

Timetabling was an abiding concern as the work would take up most of an academic year, and one in which other changes described elsewhere were also proceeding. There was certainly no question of closing. Various elements were pervasive: the Quadrangle repaving generated noise and dust in a space onto which all the reading room of the Old Bodleian face; the construction of the lift not only affected all floors of the Old Library but took out of use one of the two staircases to the reading rooms. Our intention was, of course, to keep disruption to a minimum and to restrict noisy work to the vacations. Somehow this never quite worked out and assurances that only a very severe winter would push the repaving back into Hilary (Spring) Term preceded one of the harshest winters on record. Nevertheless close liaison with the University's Estates Directorate and the contractors meant that we knew at all times what was going on and why, so we were able to push back where appropriate and to explain to staff and readers why any disruption had occurred. Dust protection was applied extensively but the only area where specific acoustic shielding was used was round Bay 1 of the Lower Camera reading room where the staircase pit had to be substantially enlarged and a concrete box constructed for the lift and new staircase. Readers were in fact surprisingly resilient and became adept at finding the quieter parts of the building, although some were seen working on unperturbed in their usual places of study.

5 Completion and opening

Planning and listed building consent had been granted on 24 May 2010 for the temporary hoist and on 13 July 2010 for the main works including the lift, tea room and repaving of the Bodleian Quadrangle. Apart from the hoist and the new staff accommodation and service point in Bay 2 of the Lower Camera reading room which was completed on 10 September 2010, the other elements continued through the academic year 2010–11. The lift in the north-west tower of the Old Bodleian was handed back to the Libraries on 18 April 2011 as was the Gladstone Link (Underground Bookstore), at least in part. The move of books into the Gladstone Link proceeded from that point. 3 May saw completion of Quadrangle repaving and the tea room. 20 June delivered the Radcliffe Camera staircase and lift down to the Gladstone Link and the handover of the remainder of the north-west tower. Finally the removal of the hoist and associated reinstatement work was completed in the middle of July 2011.

The need to carry out such a complex set of works in a delicate and peculiar building while maintaining library services throughout was undoubtedly very challenging. Adding an extra layer of operational and service changes, from relatively minor to fairly major, might be thought to be foolhardy. However, some of these changes were intrinsic to the physical transformation and some were key elements in transforming the service.

It would have been very easy for the project team to focus on the building changes and to forget that users of the building, staff as well as readers, would not have the intimate knowledge of the changes and their aims. It was essential at all stages to keep the purpose of the changes and the primacy of service at the heart of all discussions. This was useful in constraining design changes from acquiring a momentum of their own rather than relating back to the original, or revised, purpose. The Head of Bodleian Library Reader Services was instrumental in maintaining the strong reader focus and translating the plans into practical arrangements on the ground. All the while, staff kept the service points running and the books coming to readers from closed access.

Even with extensive planning and discussion, it had not proved possible, particularly in such a short timescale, to cover every level of detail. The book move proved to be especially difficult as we had to move the books back in while the temporary hoist was still in operation; but until the hoist was removed the Gladstone Link was still a building site. And because the books had to pass through the residual building site, maintaining effective dust proofing proved impossible. Health and safety issues threw up many last-minute glitches. It was unfortunate that a review of previous documentation threw up a previously overlooked concern about using trolleys on the metal grid flooring in the Bookstore

– unfortunate as this was one of the main historic features of the Gladstone Link and was instrumental in the ventilation strategy, as well as mitigating the effect of the very low ceilings. Some quick thinking allowed us to revise the suggested solution of reflooring the entire space and we acquired a new set of trolleys with suitably soft wheels and foam padding on the handles.

Although an important element, this was a distraction from final preparations: checking the finished spaces, labelling, preparing signs and introductory leaflets, briefing staff, checking arrangements, establishing security. The lesson learned was to ensure that the health and safety issues are thoroughly covered in the early design stages.

Nevertheless, the Gladstone Link was opened for business on Tuesday 5 July 2011 with a formal opening by Bodley's Librarian and distinguished benefactor Po Chung following on Wednesday 5 October.

6 Reader (and staff) response – ongoing development – the future

'Have you seen the tunnel? It's really cool!' was an encouraging comment picked up on Twitter in the first few days after opening, and on the whole feedback on the Link has been extremely positive. It is always interesting and pleasurable to show people around a new or newly refurbished building. In the Gladstone Link, the most striking reaction was astonishment first that such a contrasting space was there and second that the transitions between it and the two historic buildings that it joins are so delightful in their entirely different ways.

The tunnel between the Underground Bookstore and the Old Bodleian, previously an evidently leaky and rather dismal affair, was clad in white, black and blue panels cleverly arranged to give a sense of progress down the otherwise featureless 30 metres or so from the new foot of the north-west tower staircase. (Figures 14.4 and 14.5) The staircase from the Radcliffe Camera is an altogether more luxurious affair, stone clad with understated details such as the lighting incorporated in the handrails. (Figure 14.6)

Lighting is the key to the success of the Gladstone Link itself. The system mainly uses LEDs so that the fittings consume very little energy and are very compact, which is useful when the ceilings are only 2 metres above the floor. As the Gladstone Link mixes a number of distinctive areas, lighting each of them appropriately was difficult. Beyond the main through route and seating area on the upper level, seats and stacks are intermingled in various permutations. However, extensive use of passive infrared (PIR) and graduated switching



Figure 14.4: The tunnel
– before
(picture by Nick Cistone)



Figure 14.5: The tunnel
– after
(picture by Nick Cistone)



Figure 14.6: The stairwell to the Radcliffe Camera (picture by Rosario Ivan Glorioso)

achieved two significant benefits. Instead of flashing on rather harshly and distracting readers sitting nearby, the lighting in the stack areas comes on gently and goes off gently again at the end of its cycle. In turn the gentle and irregular change of lighting level serves to give a natural, random feel which disguises the fact that no natural light at all penetrates this underground area.

Harmonious contrast is evident in other aspects. The original paint of the Gladstone shelving, the variously coloured backs of some of the alcoves, the bright red ‘air socks’ (fabric ventilation tubes running across the low ceilings) and the strong colours of the loose furniture contrast with the otherwise stark white of the walls, girders and ceilings. The rigid grid of the girders contrasts with the informal layout of the furniture in the main reading area.

The overall aim was to give a degree of informality which would cater to readers who might find the formality of the historic reading rooms rather overbearing. In the end, we managed to incorporate 120 reading spaces of various types, from round tables seating one, three, or up to seven people, through shared rectangular tables to a fair number of regular desks for one. (Figures 14.7 and 14.8) It has been interesting to see how often there are two chairs left at a single-person desk suggesting that readers do feel empowered to interact more freely. Quiet conversation is possible without disturbing or outraging

other readers. Anyone who does prefer the historic reading rooms (for whatever reason) is free to collect books from the open shelves of the Gladstone Link and take them there.

This brings us to most contentious aspect of the Gladstone Link, the selection and arrangement of material. After years of calls for more material on open access, this seemed like an easy gain in spite of the difficulty of testing our notions of what would be highly used when on open shelves. Although there was in fact widespread delight, it soon became apparent that the subject parameters had been set too broadly and there were for example complaints from scientists who had in fact been in the habit of calling books from closed access to read in the Radcliffe Science Library, but now had to come to the Gladstone Link to find them on the shelves. The parameters have now been adjusted for the ongoing intake to focus more narrowly on Humanities, and the opportunity of the first session of weeding has been taken to bring the existing stock into line.

Classification had been a known problem: 20,000 pre-1988 acquisitions classified to the in-house Nicholson scheme and 160,000 post-1987 acquisitions shelf-marked without classification, but with a year designator, size designator and running number. Although most readers are able to work it out (and some positively celebrate the serendipity), there is a significant minority who, probably correctly, identify this as a hindrance. Again, work is ongoing to improve this situation probably by introducing Library of Congress classification to future intake, though we have ruled out a comprehensive reclassification, on the grounds that this collection will change fairly rapidly over time.

Not all the details might have been right first time but by concentrating on the underlying principles, the project team was able to create new spaces and connections in the Bodleian Library and Radcliffe Camera, which have allowed a transformation in the management of the buildings and the services provided in the early twenty-first century and should allow subsequent evolutions and transformations to maintain the Library not only as a symbol of the Bodleian's long and highly esteemed history but also as a working library able to continue to support the scholarship of future generations.



Figure 14.7: Informal study area (showing air socks and retained Gladstone shelving)
(picture by Rosario Ivan Glorioso)



Figure 14.8: Quiet study area (picture by Rosario Ivan Glorioso)

