

InFire conference October 2004. Notes on moving a library / by Judy Ballantyne

King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women - Library had to be moved to renovate and enlarge the floor space. It was relocated to a spare wing for a period of 3 months. The move was painless with a team of helpers and two library staff either end loading the trolley's and unloading them at the other end. Planning the location of all materials also allowed for an easy move both ways.

Department of Resources Development - I came to the Department at a time when a permanent Librarian had been absent for sometime. The library needed a good clear out, redesign and some innovative solutions to some ongoing problems. I drew up a plan to optimise the space available to the library and to make the collection as accessible as possible. I also wanted to promote browsing and self-help. In a busy departmental library with one librarian and a library technician this concept was imperative.

I also finished what had been started, that was cataloguing the entire collection from UDC to DDC a decision made by a Librarian on contract and only half completed.

State Development

One of my most challenging moves was the amalgamation of two libraries to create a State Development collection. With the Government of the day moving to creating super Departments, the Department of Regional Development was amalgamated in the Department of Economic Development and Trade to create the super department of State Development. The libraries were included in this amalgamation.

The process was easy, but the issue of conflict between librarians was another issue and had to be handled with much more diplomacy. There was considerable duplication and while it was impossible to amalgamate the regional development library immediately, it took a process of assessment and inclusion or discards over a 6-12 month period, the original move was undertaken over a couple of days.

Amalgamating two collections into the space of one as well as accommodating staff was a challenge. I drafted a detailed plan consulted with the staff and my superior but at the end of the day it was going to happen and I had to drive it. The library

shelving needed to be arranged to take advantage of the space provided and to give the illusion that there was still space for library users to come and work in the library as well as to accommodate extra staff work stations.

Planning was the key to a good transition and rolling sleeves up and getting down and dirty packing and unpacking ensured the move, relocation and amalgamation went reasonably smooth.

Parliamentary Library of Western Australia

I came to the parliamentary library at a time where the inertia was at a stage as to make it irrelevant to the parliament. There were staff issues, collection issues and a library that needed a good make over. I assessed the situation, undertook a survey of users and members of parliament. These results gave me the support I needed to make the necessary changes.

These included

- ❖ redesigned layout to make the collection easier, more accessible and user friendly,
- ❖ increase the number of staff that could work in the library from two to four,
- ❖ replace old sagging wooden shelving and increase the shelving capacity by 160 shelves
- ❖ increase the seating capacity for clients and provide quiet study areas
- ❖ increase the number of public access terminals from 2 to 4
- ❖ Ensure a safe environment for both clients and workers
- ❖ give an illusion of space

Before the move we weeded the collection. All materials had to be taken from the shelves and housed somewhere for a period of four weeks while the renovations took place. A team of librarians did all the removal, we filled up offices and rooms that were not being renovated running the books on the floor in classification order which meant we could re-shelve easily. After a minor hiccup with the shelving not arriving on time we were able to re-shelve within the required time having the library ready for the return of members and the commencement of the 1998 Parliamentary year.

One of the key issues of this move and all subsequent moves is the library still maintains a service to clients, even though it is reduced. This may not be possible for all libraries and it will depend on the size and staffing.

While the redesign and renovation of the library improved the provision of information other initiatives allowed for a total make over. These included automating the collection by purchasing a library management package - Amlib. We used Kinetica (ABN) to download MARC records for items that had not already been catalogued and undertook original cataloguing for items not found in either the old catalogue or ABN. Items already catalogued in the old system were up-loaded into Amlib and barcoded. I also had to up-grade all the library equipment purchasing new PC's and a server.

Giving staff a sense of ownership and purpose helped create an improved attitude. I was also able to expand services. Creating new Librarians and Technician positions has enabled us to introduce new services.

When I first came to the Parliamentary Library the culture of the library team was lack lustre, down trodden and they felt under-appreciate. While the changes made have been over many years the most noticeable difference is in staff attitudes. We now are a 'can do library' with staff taking a pride in their work and working at a very high standard. There has been some pain, but the gains have been worth it. Developing a team environment has allowed me to improve the services further. This has made it easy for two subsequent moves and the final move to our current new location. These moves have been relatively smooth with all staff pitching in where necessary and those staff not involved staying out of the way. The old adage that *many hands make work lighter*' does not always apply.

Having a plan that indicates who will do what is a must. The plan should be developed in conjunction with the team and communicated to all involved. Give them the whole picture and get feedback.

- ❖ Delegate tasks and encourage the library supervisors to do the same.
- ❖ People that are not required to participate should stay out of the way.
- ❖ Trust your team to do their part, but have regular meetings to ensure that you're all aware of the issues and there is a coordinated effort.
- ❖ Don't get involved in issues you don't need to be involved in.
- ❖ Have a back-up team to follow-up once the collection is shelved to ensure the collection is in order and the workload is evenly shared

Some general advice

- ❖ Don't procrastinate - Get on with it.
- ❖ Do your homework before the move,
- ❖ Weed the collection,
- ❖ Don't take anything that you don't need,
- ❖ Talk to the movers and builders so you know the timetable,
- ❖ Coordinate all parties so the move happens in the way you have planned and at the arranged date and time and confirm it with the movers,
- ❖ If arrangements fall through cancel the movers, you don't want them standing around costing you money,

Over the last 8 years the Parliamentary Library has gone from better, improved to fabulous. There has been some hard lessons learnt along the way, however, through subtle negotiation and persistence the many moves have been worth it with the current library meeting all expectations. The Library is now on the guided tour rounds. Members of Parliament are very proud of it and like to show it off to their guests, even if they are not regular users.

Happy Moving!