

**LHSA Decant
Progress Report for LHSA Advisory Committee
Update for meeting 11th December 2006**

Executive Summary

Edinburgh University's Main Library Redevelopment Project (MLRP) requires in its first phase the refurbishment of the fifth and sixth floors, currently housing Special Collections and Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) staff and services. The decant of stock, ongoing since July, has just been completed: roughly half of the LHSA stock is currently stored in the basement of the Library with the remainder housed at a new storage facility at South Gyle. Staff and services will be moved in February to a suite of rooms on the second floor. This equates to a fairly significant change from the present situation where the reading room, repository and office space are situated in close proximity on one floor.

Post-refurbishment, staff and services will be accommodated on the sixth floor, with storage of stock on the fifth floor, although a proportion of LHSA stock will remain in an external store. Planning for the decant has been ongoing since summer 2005, with staff and services expected to move into the new sixth floor space by the end of 2007, and stock returning to the fifth floor at the end of the entire MLRP (estimated 8-10 years). As well as the logistics of the move of stock and staff, there are service implications to be considered.

Introduction

LHSA has just completed the process of relocating its stock as part of the preparations for refurbishment of the fifth and sixth floors of the Library. Planning for the move has been ongoing for some months, with staff and services moving to their new location in February 2007.

Planning

Planning for the move began in summer 2005, after proposals for the Library building were produced. LHSA staff had already undertaken some initial scenario planning relating to the operation of the service in a variety of possible situations during and after the refurbishment, and regular meetings have continued throughout the project.

The first phase of the project would see work being done on the fifth and sixth floors together, therefore it would be necessary to temporarily relocate stock, staff and services until the floors could be reoccupied (possible estimates at the time ranging from 1-10 years). Three groups within Collections Division were set up to look at Fifth/Sixth Floor Decant, Service Continuity and Fifth/Sixth Floor Design. The LHSA Deputy Archivist, who was given project management responsibility for aspects relating to LHSA, attended all three of these groups, with the Conservator attending the Decant and Design groups.

Decant

It was originally envisaged that the decant of stock from the fifth and sixth floors would take place over the summer of 2006, with some material remaining in the Library in existing basement stores. The remainder would be split to a temporary outstore and a permanent one. Decisions were made based on current and expected levels of usage as to which collections should be kept on site, which should go to the temporary store (to be moved back into the refurbished fifth floor) and which should be transferred to the permanent store. For instance the object collection and the majority of the case note collection were identified as being most suitable for permanent off-site storage as their overall use was relatively low, whereas the more intensively-used LHB (institutional) collections were earmarked for storage in the basement.

A database was produced giving information on sections of the Archive, their desired location (Library, temporary or permanent storage), the metreage of material and the shelf depth (400 or 600 mm to ensure all sizes of material could be stored safely) and the drop (the useable space between upper and lower shelves) required for each. This allowed staff to calculate the metreage of shelving required in each location, which in turn would allow Estates and Buildings to find suitable outstore accommodation.

This search for an outstore quickly revealed that it would not be possible to procure two stores – mainly on grounds of cost and the unsuitability of existing University-owned buildings – and therefore the project managers settled on one larger temporary store for the duration of the refurbishment project, with longer term storage options to be decided in the future. After some weeks of visiting various warehouse accommodation around Edinburgh a site at South Gyle was finally chosen to be rented by the University. This Library Research Annex (LRA) is a warehouse which has since been fitted out with office and consultation space, adequate security and environmental controls, and compact mobile shelving for the storage of selected LHSA, Special Collections and General Collections material. LHSA's shelving is located at one end of the space, with locks on the shelving units to ensure security, particularly for the case note collection.

The Library itself has three basement stores of different sizes, each one fitted out with compact mobile shelving for the storage of low-use Library stock such as journals and archival copy theses. Meant for the storage of fairly standard sized books, most of this shelving has a depth of 240mm, which means some archival material has to be shelved across both sides of a mobile unit (two "rows") where supporting cross-bracing allows, thus reducing the capacity of the stores. However one store, L15, contains some deeper shelving (290, 490 and 590mm) which appeared to suit LHSA's oversize volumes.

The task of planning the relocation of LHSA's collections into L15 was a time consuming one, since it was necessary to make the best use of the varying sizes of shelving to fit as much as possible into that store. This necessitated the breaking up of series within collections and a move to a random location system based on size. Even so it was apparent from the outset that not all the material would fit into L15 and an overspill has been created in the adjacent store L14. This latter store is shared with other Special Collections material, but access by staff will be controlled and security will be maintained. This material was moved to its new temporary home from 14th to 21st August; the move was successful and completed a day and a half ahead of

schedule. A batching system was used so that the number of volumes and boxes could be checked before and after the move, and this checking process is now complete with no problems found. The random location database is near completion.

The move material to the LRA was originally scheduled for 19th October to 3rd November, however some setbacks meant that this move began on 2nd November and is only now nearing completion at the time of writing. The first fairly major setback was a problem with the manufacture and installation of the mobile shelving, which did not affect LHSA directly.

However a much more serious incident occurred on 6th November during the removal of the casenote collection, when a large section of LHSA's shelving containing c800m of casenotes, gifts and deposits and accessions collapsed. Two days were lost while Health and Safety and Estates and Buildings staff surveyed and secured the collapse and LHSA staff worked on a written method of recovery. The recovery itself, involving LHSA staff working in pairs on a rota basis, plus two to three Crown Relocations staff, took two and a half weeks. Casenotes were sorted into their individual series, although the order within each series could not be re-established in the time available and will be done at a later date. Gifts and deposits and accessions were much more easily identified and were completely reordered. The LHSA Conservator assessed the condition of each box, volume or series of casenotes as they were extracted (a separate report will be made available). All shelving was dismantled and discarded.

The move to the LRA was scheduled to be completed by 17th November. The recovery of the collapsed shelving was completed on 27th November, leaving some other unaffected material to be decanted. At the time of writing one or two days' work remains to move the last of this material.

Conservation

At the initial planning stage a survey was made of boxed items in the three largest collections (LHB1 Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, LHB7 Royal Edinburgh Hospital and LHB37 Lothian Health Board). This involved a stock-take of items plus an assessment of any special packaging requirements for boxes during the decant. It showed that information recorded in the catalogue relating to numbers of loose items in boxes was for the most part accurate. In the immediate run-up to each move collections were surveyed to take account of any loose items which required more secure storage, for example boxing or removal to plan chest drawers. The Conservator also worked with Crown Relocations staff in deciding the best ways to move different types of materials in crates and/or cages.

Service Continuity

It was important to plan early on how the services to users would be maintained throughout the planning, decant and refurbishment stages of the MLRP. Due to the nature of the public service, in that LHSA shared reading room and related facilities with Special Collections, much of this was driven by Special Collections themselves. For instance the department closed for a week at the end of May so that Special

Collections printed books could be stock-checked, although a limited service ran from the Seminar Room.

During the period of the fifth/sixth floor decant, until 20th November when the majority of Special Collections material had been removed, the reading room was open on Mondays and Tuesdays only, since Special Collections staff were required to supervise movers in various locations. This again was a decision which was outwith LHSA's control, but there were no problems with this arrangement, with only one known researcher requesting use of the LHSA stack on closed days.

The part-time Assistant Archivist was involved to a much lesser degree in MLRP planning, which allowed her to concentrate on keeping enquiries running and dealing with visitors. The service continued as normal up until the first stock move: once these more heavily-used collections had been moved to the basement and broken up it took slightly longer to retrieve material to research enquiries, but this should be rectified once the random location database is completed and familiarity with the new locations grows. As for collections removed to the LRA, it will obviously take longer to respond to enquiries since the material is in a remote location.

The post-decant service is still in planning. Special Collections/LHSA staff and services are to be relocated to an area on the second floor of the Library, hopefully at the beginning of February 2007. Existing staff there are to be moved to their own new location. It is anticipated that the service will be able to run much the same as previously on the fifth floor. There are consultation facilities at the LRA, and this service begins to operate on 4th December. Although it is possible for some LRA material to be returned to the Library for consultation, it is likely that most LHSA material stored there will be consulted there. All LHSA material will continue to be serviced only by LHSA staff, and so it will be necessary for a member of staff to produce items and supervise researchers at the Gyle site.

Design of the new fifth and sixth floors

The majority of the planning for the design of the newly refurbished fifth and sixth floors took place in late 2005/early 2006. In general terms, the staff and services will be located on the sixth floor, with most of the storage of material on the fifth floor. Storage areas will have compact mobile shelving and be environmentally controlled to a greater degree than at present. The exact positioning of individual staff will be decided at a later date. It is anticipated by the MLRP project managers that the refurbishment will begin in early 2007 and be complete in approximately nine months. This should mean staff and services can be installed on the sixth floor in early 2008. The fifth floor will be used as decant space for the rest of the Library refurbishment, and so stock may not move back to the fifth floor until the end of the project, that is in five to ten years' time.

Conclusion

The first phase of the LHSA decant took place without any major problems, which in part is due to the high level of planning which took place over a relatively short period of time. Any minor problems have been overcome satisfactorily. More serious problems during the move to the LRA made this phase much more challenging, but

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again any problems have been overcome, and although this phase will be completed one month after the original estimated date of 3rd November, the decant project as a whole, including Special and General Collections, should finish only one week beyond the original plan.

A more important issue, and one which will become more apparent when the moves are complete, is the increase in the time it will take to respond to enquiries and reader requests. This is inevitable given that the collections are split over three stores, making retrieval more complex.

A more detailed report will be produced at the end of the decant of stock and staff.