

Biography

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The Library Without Walls: Striving for an Excellent Law Library Service Post-Earthquake

Abstract: This paper is adapted from a presentation given by Sara Roberts at the 2015 BIALL Annual Conference. On September 4th 2010 Christchurch suffered the first of a series of catastrophic earthquakes which continued over the next two years and damaged much of the city. During this time the University of Canterbury suffered greatly, both through physical damage to the campus and from a loss of students willing to come and study in Christchurch. Subsequently, the dedicated Law Library on campus was closed and it was necessary to reassess the service in the light of severely reduced resources. More than four years on from that first earthquake, the law collection is situated in the central library on campus, and the number of professional law librarians supporting the service has reduced from four to two. Yet despite the changes the service has not diminished and, indeed, is stronger in some areas.

Keywords: disaster recovery; business continuity planning; academic libraries; law libraries; New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

From 2010 to 2012 Christchurch, New Zealand endured over 11,000 earthquakes¹. The city changed beyond recognition as landmark buildings were demolished and many people moved away to start again. No part of life in the city was unaffected by the disaster and my workplace, the University of Canterbury, suffered badly. This article will address the changes forced upon the University of Canterbury Library, and particularly the closure of the dedicated Law Library.

I will briefly describe the situation in 2010 at the University and the changes that were already underway when the first earthquake hit, how the earthquakes changed our expectations and forced us to take a new approach to the provision of a law library service, and what that service looks like now, five years later.

LAW SCHOOL AND LIBRARY IN 2010

The Law School at the University of Canterbury has around 900 students and 20 academic staff. In 2010 the law library occupied two floors of the Law Building in a custom built library which opened in 1993. There was a Law Librarian who managed three law information librarians, four library assistants, and after-hours staff to cover the extended opening times.

We had dedicated staff to manage the many tasks in the library that were particular to law, for example, the management of bills, statutes, receiving of law reports, parliamentary publications, and the binding of serials. The Law Librarian was still actively developing the monograph collection, which had been much depleted when she took over almost 20 years previously, and our mission was to be the best academic law library in New Zealand.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY LIBRARY IN 2010

In 2010, the University of Canterbury had 5 Libraries:

- Central
- Education
- Engineering and Physical Sciences
- Law
- Macmillan Brown (NZ, Maori, and Pasifika collections).

Each library was an autonomous unit with its own manager, and although there was a centralisation of processes, such as interlibrary loan and cataloguing, many tasks were duplicated across the branches.

In 2009, a new Vice Chancellor was appointed who came from a business background and brought a market driven philosophy to the University with an emphasis on reducing overhead costs. A process of change was initiated to ensure that the University had the resources it needed to best support teaching and research, and this

change process was called “Project STAR” (Supporting Teaching And Research).

In 2010, the library was subject to a Project STAR change proposal, where the changes were aimed at reducing the fragmentation and duplication of effort by centralising processes and addressing the perceived ‘silo effect’ that resulted from having a central and branch library system.

Post STAR

There was an extended consultation period with staff and the Union, and ultimately many of the changes proposed in Project STAR were implemented:

- There was a Learning Resources Directorate created, bringing IT, facilities and library together with the aim of providing a world class learning environment where Library, technology and spaces were seamlessly linked.
- One branch library manager replaced all branch managers.



Figure 1: Collapsed shelves in the Central Library.
Photo: University of Canterbury

- Two Academic Liaison managers had responsibility for all subject librarians across the whole library.
- An entire layer of management within the library was disestablished which, along with attrition, resulted in a 34% reduction in staffing over a five year period.
- Tasks that had involved large specialist teams were now to be performed by library assistants, alongside their regular duties.
- The aim was to create a much flatter structure, and reduce fragmentation of services, with staff who were flexible and skilled enough to carry out a range of tasks.

The changes had started, and with it our expectations of how we would offer our service in the future.

EARTHQUAKE SEPTEMBER 2010

On Saturday 4 September 2010, Christchurch was awoken at 4.35am by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake. There were few casualties, but the chimneys and masonry buildings of the city suffered badly.

The University was closed to students for two weeks, but in that time we all had access to most of our buildings, and we went to work to pick up books and to ensure our systems were working as usual. The Central Library on campus sustained more damage and was to stay closed for remediation until the next academic year in February, so in this time the Law Library became the main library, with all the high demand collections transferred across, and many of the staff now based in the Law Library.

It was a challenging time – inconvenient but nothing we couldn't handle as professionals. We were naïve. Naïve enough to take on two major projects in this time – RFID tagging the entire collection and merging the commerce and law collections into the Law Library.

EARTHQUAKE FEBRUARY 2011

On the second day of first term (22 February) 2011, at 12.51pm Christchurch was hit by a 6.3 magnitude earthquake. In the city centre, there were catastrophic building collapses, ultimately killing 185 people. There was serious liquefaction in residential parts of the city, and many people had no power, no water, and no sanitation for weeks.



*Figures 2: Collapsed shelves in the Central Library.
Photo: University of Canterbury*



Figure 3: Law books shaken from the shelves.
Photo: University of Canterbury



Figure 4: Sink holes in a road caused by liquefaction.
Photo: Matthew Journee, used with permission

The University was closed for three weeks. We returned to work as soon as our domestic situation allowed us to, but this time there was no picking up books – it was deemed too risky without hardhats and safety training. The smallest branch library was the only library open and we found spaces to work around campus wherever we could find a desk and a power point.

When the University re-opened 3 weeks later, there were large tents in carparks for lecture rooms, and we were offering a limited library service based on a live chat reference service, retrieval from closed libraries and reliance on electronic resources.

DISASTER PLANNING AND RECOVERY

“The goal of disaster recovery is to facilitate the library to resume its operation and delivery of services”²

In 2010, the University of Canterbury Library had a disaster preparedness plan, and a business continuity plan. There was a library disaster response team, and

each library possessed a ‘disaster cart’ which contained the items necessary to start preserving collections that had been damaged by fire or water. A quick scan of the literature indicates that these processes and documents had been established according to good practice and as documented by Wong and Green³. We had planned carefully, put preventative measures in place and created a -disaster preparedness plan.

The aim of the UC Library Continuity Plan was articulated thus: “This plan has been developed as a catalyst to encourage library staff to think about and document how they might deliver critical services if these systems, process or facilities are not available for any reason.”⁴

The University of Canterbury has a two pronged disaster response team, including the UC Strategic Emergency Management Group which focuses on strategic decision making, communications, and recovery; and the Incident Management Team which focuses on the immediate incident response to limit the loss of life, harm, and property damage.

Because the Canterbury earthquakes were a regional disaster there was a University-wide response, and the



Figure 5: Level 6 Law, Music, Fine art.
Photo: University of Canterbury

disaster planning team in the library were subsumed into the wider team. All our planning had been for small scale ‘incidents’ and nothing had prepared us for the scale of response needed for in this situation. The library was represented at the disaster response meetings immediately after the earthquakes, but responsibility was largely taken out of our hands, as the highly trained University-wide disaster management team took control.

However, this does not mean that our planning was not critical to the library’s response. Probably most crucial for the library was the work that had been done around the essential systems and processes; where we had created a vulnerability matrix for our core services. This allowed the Library to identify the areas where being prepared would have the greatest impact and which core services needed to be the first priority after the disaster. Consequently, the library’s first priority was to get the servers, catalogue and learning management system up and running.

The continuity plan also had a detailed response for a scenario in which we had restricted access to buildings. This outlined how we would relocate service desks, find alternative work spaces, and redeploy staff where required. It also provided suggestions for use of the library system for requesting items as well as possible relocation of core collections to safe areas.

The top priority in such times is the safety of the staff and the security of buildings.⁵ This meant that the University took a very conservative view about whether our buildings were safe enough for staff to work in, and consequently most of our libraries (and hence our collections) were inaccessible for months. Therefore our focus

quickly moved to what we could do with our limited capacity, including offering a daily retrieval service for items in closed buildings, putting teaching materials onto our Learning Management System (Moodle), and offering an online chat reference service through our AskLive service. We also opened negotiations with our vendors, who were immensely generous to us at this time. They often provided access to their entire databases at no extra cost for a limited time while we had no physical access to our collections.

THE LAW LIBRARY SERVICE POST-EARTHQUAKES

Ultimately, the Law Library was closed from February to July – we opened on 26 July (a day late due to heavy snowfall). We had had six months without a collection, and we were forced into offering an altered service, which would form the basis of our new service in the year ahead:

- We had, of necessity, become much more embedded in the teaching of the Law School. There was no library for the students to come to, so we focused on presenting to them in their lecture spaces.
- We had begun to rely very heavily on online resources, using our collections and the interlibrary loan service only when necessary.
- We had also made all of our legal research teaching materials available online, with detailed instructions, database screen shots, and assessment via online quizzes.

THE POST-EARTHQUAKE ENVIRONMENT

There were a number of issues both at University and Library level in the disaster aftermath:

- Student enrolments had decreased dramatically since the earthquakes, particularly international and postgraduate student numbers, leading to severe financial pressure on the University.
- 1.6 million dollars was cut from the library's information resources budget over 14 months in 2011 and 2012.
- The Law School had recently been aligned with the College of Business.
- The building that housed the College of Business was the subject of a long dispute with the University's insurers and could not be used.
- And there was a requirement to reduce the relative size of the library's physical footprint – at that time 17,000 square metres was occupied by all the libraries.

As a result of the above factors, it was proposed in September 2012, that the Law Library be closed and the collections moved into the Central Library. This would reduce the footprint of the libraries, save the University money, and provide space for the law and business academics to be housed together, bringing them back from their temporary offices dispersed across campus.

This was not a popular decision. The law students stated: "There is a growing lack of trust between students, the university, administration and executives. We feel abandoned by the university"⁶.

The Dean of Law spoke publicly of his displeasure, and there was a petition aimed at keeping the library open. However, despite the strength of opposition to the plan, the library closed in February 2013.

WHAT MAKES A LAW LIBRARY?

During the protests about the closure of the Law Library, the students and staff identified the following things about what the Law Library meant to them:

- A special, character-filled space
- A place to gather ("our place")
- A place to study (quietest library on campus)
- A physical collection
- A place to find help from a specialist
- A teaching space

By understanding the different ways that the Law Library was important to our staff and students, we had a strong starting point from which to develop our new law service.

WHAT HAS IT MEANT FOR LAW LIBRARIANS?

We have lost our easy access to both our students and faculty members – those serendipitous encounters that one has on the way to the tea room when everyone is in the same building. I used to know all the law students' faces and often also their names, but now I have no idea who many of the law students are.

We still have a physical collection, but increasingly our electronic collection is more sought after than our dusty volumes (earthquake dust lives on). This has come from both a preference from our students to be able to access resources wherever they are, and a new cohort of young academics who prefer to access their information in this way.

We have made an effort to create a character-filled law space within the Central Library with the use of glass partitions, more study desks with many power points and bright modern seating.

The Librarians are based on level 5, whereas the collection is on levels 6 and 7. We are therefore far less visible than we were, and students have to make an effort to come and find us.

WHAT DO WE OFFER NOW?

Our main focus now is on relationships and all our services are born from consultation with the Law School and listening to what they need from the library service. We have endeavoured to create aspects of a boutique law service, where we offer both the staff and students targeted services when and where they require it. Tilley⁷ identifies a number of factors that are distinctive about a boutique service:

- Having a clear customer focus: the customer matters
- Having subject and/or local expertise and knowledge
- Ensuring that users have easily accessible physical and virtual resources
- Establishing a responsive and flexible staff in dealing with issues and problems so that when things do go wrong, the impact on the user is minimal
- Imagination and innovation: a creative approach to developing services
- Knowledge of users' needs and activity – their preferences, the irritants – and their methods of working
- In-depth, specific, and constant service evaluation

We have these factors at the heart of our law service. We endeavour to deliver on all of these, but the reality is that we are often only successful with some of the people some of the time.

These are some of the ways that we try and predict and fulfil the needs of our customers:

1. Much of our energy at the beginning of each year goes into showing ourselves at lectures and presenting a friendly, smiling, approachable face and exhorting our students to come and see us, ask questions, and to pester us. We also offer chocolate to those brave souls who actually make it up to see us.
2. We are available to our customer group at any time in business hours – they can request us, make appointments to see us, live chat with us, find us at our desk and we will always answer their request, reassure them, and provide tissues as required.
3. Both law librarians are members of Faculty, and we attend regular meetings of other committees in the department, so we know the issues facing the School, and what their priorities are.
4. We have legal research embedded into the curriculum at first year (330 students), and honours level (24 students). We teach legal research skills in a workshop environment and set and mark a legal research assignment for each of these groups. We also teach legal research skills at 200 and 300 level and lead assignment-targeted sessions but these sessions are voluntary, do not carry any credit and are held outside structured lecture times.
5. We constantly review our collections in both paper and electronic form to make sure that we are serving the teaching and research needs of the School of Law. The library as a whole is moving to a 'just in time' collection, and this means being well informed about current and future teaching and research. The base document that will guide this is our Subject Level Collection Statement – a document currently being negotiated that outlines the direction of the School, and the library collections to support this.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Our law service is a work in progress and we are open to any changes that might mean offering a better service within our current resources. We have identified some areas that we will focus on in the next year:

Embedded librarians

We intend to roster ourselves in the School of Law for part of our working day – roaming the corridors or

in the tea area with a laptop. Experience has shown us that when Academics catch sight of us, they invariably have something they wish to discuss.

More embedded teaching

We currently teach into the curriculum at 100 and Honours level, but would like to expand this to 200 and 300 level classes – these would take the form of assignment targeted classes, taught in a tutorial round.

True 'just in time' collection

We have a large weeding exercise before us. We are in the process of agreeing with the Law Faculty our criteria for withdrawal of material. The criteria will be based on the current teaching and research needs of the School, and take into account the library's role as provider of primary legal material for our students and staff. Once the criteria are agreed, we will undertake the weeding exercise that will ensure our collection is useful and relevant.

Achieving a balance between electronic and paper-copy primary resources

The NZ Government has begun publishing their publications primarily online, and charging for access to paper copy. With our financial and space constraints, this has huge implications for us. We are hopeful that our subject level collection statement agreed with the School of Law will formalise our approach in this area.

CONCLUSION

Due to the earthquakes, the process of change at the University of Canterbury's law library was rapid and largely accepted as inevitable because it was the result of a natural disaster and not driven by management philosophy. Ordinarily such a great change would have been fought, resisted and diluted over time. The change was unwanted and the transition was not always smooth – at times the process was not well managed, resulting in unhappy, disillusioned staff. However, though these changes were unwished for, they have allowed us to reimagine and reshape the services we provide, and we have built a law library service that we are proud of and one that is highly valued by the Law Faculty, students, and our library colleagues alike.

Footnotes

¹ Anna Turner, "11,000 quakes since Sept 2010" *Stuff* (17 January 2013) <<http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/christchurch-earthquake-2011/8190585/11-000-quakes-since-Sept-2010>> accessed 3 September 2015.

² Yi Ling Wong and Ravonne Green, 'Disaster Planning in Libraries' (2007) 4(3) *Journal of Access Services* 71, 76.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ University of Canterbury Library, *Continuity Plan* (version 2, May 2009) 3.

⁵ H. Frank Cervone, 'Disaster recovery and continuity planning for digital library systems' (2006) 22(3) *OCLC systems and services: International digital library perspectives* 173, 174.

⁶ Charley Mann, "Sudden change shocks law students" *Stuff* (6 September 2012) <<http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/7624294/Sudden-change-shocks-law-students>> accessed 3 September 2015.

⁷ Elizabeth Tilley, 'Personalized boutique service: critical to academic success?' (2013) 19(1) *New Review of Academic Librarianship* 78, 82.

Biography

Sara Roberts is a Law Liaison Librarian at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. Sara has worked in public, academic and special libraries for the last 20 years. She is closely involved with the New Zealand law librarian profession, and has been the secretary of the New Zealand Law Librarians Association for the last five years.

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Moving or Relocating a Library

Abstract: In this article Ruth Bird examines the issues around moving, or relocating, a library. Drawing on her experiences of moving, relocating and renovating, and in the context of current work that is happening at the Bodleian Law Library (BLL), she compares the issues in relation to both law firm libraries and academic libraries. The article examines space management and collection management issues, planning, allocating roles and how the burden of moves can be shared in a collaborative way. Ruth also looks at the 'people' issues and the implications for collections.

Keywords: collection management; space management; moving libraries; law libraries

EVERY LIBRARY MOVE IS UNIQUE

In 2000 I wrote an article entitled *Planning a New Legal Resource Centre for the 21st century*¹, and included this appendix:

Some hints for librarians planning new libraries:

- Learn the jargon
- Know what a square metre means – try to visualise spaces
- Ask for more than you need initially – you can always cut back graciously when pushed later on
- Keep a copy of every piece of correspondence, and file notes of phone calls
- Take notes at meetings, check minutes
- Learn the difference between base building and fit-out
- Learn about data sheets
- Pay attention to HVAC – heating, ventilation, air conditioning

- Check elevator capacities, goods lifts, loading docks, if relevant
- Discuss security, data points, lights, fire safety, washrooms, windows, wall finishes, flooring, cables, wireless, humidity, etc
- Think about functional relationships between spaces
- Visit, visit, visit – the more law libraries you see, the more you can refine your thoughts and plans
- Read the IT pages of newspapers, *Wired* magazine, etc to pick up on trends in technology which could be applicable.

In the intervening 15 years, would my advice differ? Not a lot...

Let us face it, most of us are not designers, architects or building planners by nature. But we are all involved in space related issues every day, and somewhere down the track we may well be asked our opinion on the current and future space needs of our libraries. That is, if we are lucky. The way space allocation is dealt with in the private sector can differ quite markedly from the public sector,