

This is a preprint of a chapter accepted for publication by Facet Publishing. This extract has been taken from the author's original manuscript and has not been edited. The definitive version of this piece may be found in **Privileged Spaces: Academic Libraries in University Estates Strategy, Everitt R, Everitt N, 2024, Facet, London** and can be purchased from www.facetpublishing.co.uk. The author agrees not to update the preprint or replace it with the published version of the chapter.



Chapter 2

Academic Libraries and Estates Strategy: A Library Leadership Perspective

Tim Wales

Introduction

In my 20 years' professional experience of leading five UK academic or research libraries, *the* most difficult, frustrating yet essential institutional relationship has been with the estates or facilities department. (Throughout this chapter, 'estates department' or 'estates director' refers the people and senior leader who manage, maintain and develop the physical infrastructure of a university and its associated services and utilities. The latter services can include the management of catering facilities, vending machines and student accommodation – which I define as 'facilities' even though 'estates' and 'facilities' are often used interchangeably.) The importance of the estates/library services relationship has intensified in line with the increased higher education (HE) sector focus on 'student experience' during the 2000s as evidenced in the United Kingdom's (UK) National Student Survey (NSS), a national tool for benchmarking student satisfaction, as well as with the marketisation of HE in the UK.

Unlike other HE support services which can (rightly or wrongly) be replicated in some part at department level to enable local control and oversight of specialist or niche library functions, e.g., the library systems team, the security/reception team, porters, etc., the same is not true of estates services and their unique remit to maintain and develop the institutional estate. Yes, it is true that most large libraries employ some form of facilities or environment manager post, but such a role is mainly concerned with managing relationships and service levels on behalf of the head of service with estates colleagues and their sub-contractors. Such a role is rarely involved in the nuts and bolts of planning or constructing a new building or directly responsible for maintaining an existing library estate. This fact, in my view, creates a form of perpetual insecurity and paranoia arising from the lack of control over a key part of library operations that shades the working relationship between library and estates teams, especially when the library team are fielding estates-related calls from their customers.

I have no doubt too that some library services are perceived as tricky and awkward internal customers by our estates colleagues – never happy with their lot, impatient, always complaining, not understanding the reality of balancing competing demands on a limited resource across a complex estate with many legal obligations to remember, etc. So often in my experience, though, at the heart of this mismatch is the fact that the budget and planning cycles of both sides seem to be out of sync so that the demands of one side cannot be met by the other due to the point in the financial cycle. Sometimes only an intervention by the university executive promising additional funds or a reprioritisation of the estates plan seems to be able to restore the equilibrium.

As a final introductory note, I am conscious of the fact that I have not yet seen a new library estates project through from idea to completion *in one institution*. However, on reflection, I

realise that I have participated in most of the different Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stages associated with such projects when my career is viewed in totality across multiple institutions (RIBA, 2020). This pattern does perhaps reflect the reality for most UK academic library heads who have had to change jobs and progress upwards in seniority via several institutions to reach a leadership position. In doing so, they may have missed the rare career opportunity to be involved in creating a new library building from scratch, usually inheriting an existing project part-way through.

Survey

As the above very much represents my own experience gained from working at various academic or research institutions, for the benefit of this book I decided to survey my fellow UK academic library heads in November 2023 on their experiences of working with their estates departments.

I used the private SCONUL-DIRS JISC mailing list as my sampling frame for a Qualtrics online survey, as the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) is the main UK and Ireland professional membership organisation for academic and research libraries (SCONUL, 2024). The list had 218 individual members (excluding SCONUL staff) representing 190 member institutions at the time of the survey. Fifty-four responses were received representing 28% of SCONUL member institutions. Respondents were asked to indicate which UK HE Mission Group their institution belonged to, as I believed this to be a short cut for understanding respective higher education institution (HEI) size, type (research-intensive or teaching-intensive) and mission in the context of library provision (Table 3.1). The average number of student FTEs serviced by respondents (n=51) was 20,303 from either 1 site library (31%) or 2–5 site libraries (61%), with only 8% running 6 or more site libraries.

I believe this to be the first survey on this library topic attempted and codified in the UK in the last 20 years, and so there was no previous questionnaire to draw from in the literature. This means that some of the survey questions did have a detectable bias which at least one respondent picked up on in their free text comments. Nevertheless, I will try to weave in the findings from the rich survey results as appropriate as the chapter unfolds.

Whose space is it anyway and what are the drivers for decisions on spaces?

To what extent are library heads the masters of their own (physical) universe? Are they able to make the ultimate decisions on new library spaces or major refurbishments, when all is said and done? In my experience this depends on the institutional culture, the power dynamics at play within it and the various drivers prevalent in the period in question, as the following case studies from personal experience will illustrate.

Case study 1: The Paul Hamlyn Library at the University of West London (UWL)

This is an excellent example of an integrated estates redevelopment and master plan with a new library literally at its heart. The library adjoins an atrium called 'The Heartspace', which was created by demolishing old teaching blocks at the centre of the main campus. The vice chancellor was the driving force behind most major UWL change projects and Library

Services was helped by the fact that he was generally pro libraries and had preconceptions of what an ideal library should be (including the optimum size of a printed book collection for academic credibility).

Investment in a new library was also one of many firm commitments the vice chancellor made to address legacy poor NSS satisfaction scores, alongside the creation of a new Student Experience portfolio for an incoming pro-vice chancellor who would be able to bring much-needed co-ordination to student experience services and projects, something that had become intrinsically bound up with the ongoing major estates renovation project (for example, should there be a shared reception and office area for Student Services staff as a prominent focal point for students, while optimising space use).

From an incoming head of library point of view, I was expected to lead the completion of the development of the new library with the director of estates. We had to make the most of the empty box, which was already under construction before I joined UWL, that was to become the new library, deciding how best to use the space for collections and services and accompanying designs.

Although part of the University's senior management team, I was probably third or fourth in the institutional 'pecking order' for library estates decisions, but we were all working to the same goal within a relatively short time frame (12–18 months), which was to relocate the main library back to the campus from a temporary location in an office block one mile away and offer students a modern library building suitable for different study styles and collections. After an uncertain start working with the architect's original floor layouts, a very productive working relationship developed once I had persuaded the director of estates to employ a specialist library design consultancy alongside the architects. The consultancy was able to bring a new injection of ideas and enthusiasm into our design thinking, underpinned with excellent attention to detail (especially when determining the optimum balance of collections versus study spaces, considering floor-loading factors, etc.). They were able to offer visualisations based on their experiences of the HE sector and working within a limited budget and, crucially from my perspective, were able to resource a much-needed (and rapid) in-person student consultation survey before the summer vacation to provide an extra sanity check on some of our fit-out ideas. The report on the survey's key findings, as it was student focused and presented directly to the project board by the consultants, enabled me to rise up that pecking order, and on the back of it I was able to successfully make the case for some additional investment in radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, new book stock and various design changes before it was too late.

The new library building opened in summer 2015 and was very well received by the student body, to the point that it was instrumental in library services' NSS scores ultimately reaching 90+% in subsequent years, rising from the mid-70s a few years earlier. Not everything was rosy with the estates team, however; the director of estates ultimately expressed disappointment in how the entrance area of the new library manifested itself in the end, 'lacking a wow factor' to lure students inside.

Case study 2: The Likiermann Library in the Sammy Ofer Centre at London Business School (LBS)

This was a fascinating example of an institution taking tactical advantage of a rare opportunity to acquire the lease of a large but poorly maintained council-owned facility (the Old Marylebone Town Hall (OMTH)) to meet LBS's long-standing strategic aim of expanding its teaching footprint in a very expensive and built-up part of London. A substantial £25

million donation to LBS funded the refurbishment and remodelling of the building (LBS, 2017).

As a head of library reporting to the director of IT, who reported to the chief operating officer (COO), I was not privy to many of the senior machinations behind the project, unlike at UWL in the previous case study. This comparative lack of seniority was the outcome of a major restructuring exercise to reduce support staff costs after a downturn in the executive MBA market during the 2010 recession. The director of information services role was deleted, and the library team was halved in size and moved into IT services. This was quite a change in status, as compared to the 1970s when the LBS librarian was a board member. Unlike UWL, the driving force in delivering the project was not the dean but the University secretary (rather than the COO or estates department), as they were already involved in the complex legal and planning negotiations and truly represented both the spirit of the School and the School's best interests.

As the project planning progressed, it became apparent that there were discussions as to whether the LBS library should be relocated into OMTH from its existing location opposite the main campus building. From a head of library perspective, this presented a once-in-a-decade opportunity to gain some rare capital investment in library space and facilities as part of a flagship building project. However, it also presented a potential risk in terms of declining student footfall, as OMTH was further away from the main campus.

From an estates team point of view, moving the library would release additional space at its existing location for a much-requested gym extension and additional executive development teaching space without having to construct additional buildings. Even more importantly, it transpired that the local planning department would look favourably upon any redevelopment plans that preserved the original layouts and library use of the OMTH Annex (Grade II listed) with its rotunda reading room, original book lift and other wooden fittings. It was this planning permission incentive that finally made the argument for the LBS library to relocate, despite the operational challenges that this would ultimately create.

I did not stay long enough at LBS to see the project through to completion, so it is for my successors to judge whether or not the move was a success for the service in terms of, e.g., institutional visibility and student footfall. As with the earlier UWL case study, I am aware that the LBS library was able to successfully use the move to upgrade its self-check and security hardware to use RFID technology. And the restored rotunda reading room is a lovely space. However, the extent to which the head of library could have insisted on any other option for the library is very unclear, given their position and status in the organisational structure as described earlier.

Case study 3: Rothamsted Research Library

Rothamsted Research (RRes) is an independent UK agricultural research institution with a long, complex and illustrious history (Rothamsted Research, 2024). In the mid-2010s, the actual power to get things done there estates-wise lay with both the 'Station Engineer' (as the director of estates was then known) and the chief financial officer (CFO), even though the head of library and information services reported directly to the chief executive officer (CEO).

The CEO was keen on the idea of reconfiguring the existing relatively small but underused RRes library space to create more internal meeting rooms that would be free for institutional use (whereas use of rooms in the adjoining conference centre had to be paid for via internal budgets as part of a new funding deal put in place with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Lawes Agricultural Trust and Rothamsted Enterprises Ltd). Inevitably, RRes staff went to great lengths to avoid using the paid-for spaces, which put a premium on the few remaining spaces dotted around the campus, many of which were poorly fitted out for teleconferencing.

In two minds about the plan, as I knew it would increase footfall while potentially creating some conflicting space use, I drew up some sample layouts with the Station Engineer, who was fatalistic about the probability of anything actually happening as a result. Sure enough the then CFO was able to block any such library space works on priority and cost grounds, despite the initial enthusiasm of the CEO. The library therefore remained as is, and will do so until the space it currently occupies can be converted into commercial laboratory space to be let out by Rothamsted Enterprises Ltd. The moral of this case study is that sometimes even having the support of the CEO or vice chancellor is not enough for heads of libraries to force through library space projects with the estates department, due to the power dynamics (or financial realities) at play in institutions.

Survey analysis

Findings from my survey for this chapter are perhaps even more illuminating when considered alongside the case studies above. Table 3.2 shows the responses to the question which aimed to identify which senior officer really did have the final say (according to the respondents, at least) over library building and spaces at the respondents' institutions. The phrasing of the question perhaps indicated that I was not expecting the answer to be the head of library service – and the results showed that this was indeed the case!

That role ended up being third most-cited from the list of choices presented (17% of responses) with first and second in importance being the COO (29%) and vice chancellor (25%), respectively. Of course, institutional governance structures and hierarchies vary, but nevertheless it is salutary to note that effectively 83% of respondents indicated that the head of library services was not ultimately responsible for their own library building(s)! It was ever thus – prestigious libraries such as the Bodleian at Oxford were conceived and shaped by wealthy and ambitious alumni such as Thomas Bodley, rather than by the scholar librarians who ran them (Pettegree and der Weduwen, 2022).

'Bargaining chips' for library–estates negotiations

It is very rare, in my experience, for library heads to be permanent members of estates strategy committees in UK universities. The estates director is usually the more senior of the two positions in terms of responsibility, budget and position in corporate governance (e.g., reporting directly to the vice chancellor or COO) and so the library head inevitably becomes a supplicant as my earlier case studies showed.

So what other leverage does the library head have over the estates department in negotiations to get library needs prioritised? These are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this book, but, in my experience, examples can include the following.

- **Student experience:** For students, the site library is usually the main third space (i.e., that used most after home and work/education spaces) on campus. It is usually the space open for the longest and so it gets the most throughput and student attention. If a UK academic library service's NSS score is particularly low as compared to the sector average – and the free text comments indicate that this is mainly due to the state of the physical environment – then the senior executive team usually notices and puts pressure on the head of estates.
- **Prestige or reputational factors:** An unsightly physical library environment can get attention when it is noticed at institutional open days, public events or student union activity. Sometimes bringing attention to this situation during a formal committee with the vice chancellor present can provoke a response.
- **Planning related:** Examples include listed building status or planning gain from resurrecting library activity (see Case study 2).
- **Space savings:** Examples include co-location of services or compression of space to achieve better space use efficiencies so as to save money elsewhere on campus (but once released, unlikely to be regained). This is often wrapped up in bigger conversations around site sales or campus consolidation efforts.
- **Environmental costs:** If the building is too costly to heat or maintain, then this should force the estates team's hand – depending on how bad are the conditions of other buildings!
- **Compliance or standards requirements:** For example, the need to meet the Society of Legal Scholars' requirements for law collections as part of a bid for accreditation (Society of Legal Scholars, 2009).
- **Cost savings:** These could come from reductions in leasing spaces from third parties, or from a more energy-efficient space, or from using a space-accounting method based on equivalent commercial rent charge per square metre.
- **External stakeholder factors:** These can include benefactors, council member interest, funding grants, and so on.
- **Competition and prestige factors:** These are typically applicable to regional or historic rivalries between research-intensive institutions such as Cambridge, Oxford and University College London.

Of course, any combination of the above can apply, but often the same combination becomes less effective over time as each party understands more about how the other tends to operate and they learn to work together. Ultimately, the library service is not purely looking to negotiate, to fight for or to protect its own position, but to produce the best outcome for the institution, which can only be done by negotiating with other stakeholders.

Survey findings

I wanted to test my list of 'bargaining chips' against the experience of my peers in the academic library sector, so I asked my survey respondents to rank a list of negotiating tactics or arguments used with estates departments to 'get things' done in order of effectiveness. The results are shown here in rank order (1 = highest voted, $n = 48$):

- 1 development of good personal relationships in advance
- 2 student experience
- 3 compliance with regulations, professional standards, health and safety, etc.
- 4 green or environmental considerations
- 5 cost savings
- 6 space savings
- 7 reduction in complaints
- 8 prestige or reputational factors for the institution

- 9 use of senior management views to exert pressure
- 10 benchmarking/peer-group comparisons
- 11 library or archival collection concerns.

The top three are broadly in line with my personal experience and it is tempting to cluster items 4–6 together under an overall efficiency banner, with one eye on the current economic climate in the UK, which is still recovering, in gross domestic product terms, from the COVID-19 pandemic. But perhaps the most striking conclusion from these results, especially to our illustrious librarian forebears, is of how little importance the core aspects of librarianship relating to collection management and stewardship are in this list. Is this because the post-World War 2 expansion in UK university library buildings solved those space constraints long ago? Or is it because of the focus over the past two decades on study and learning spaces – rather than space for collections – to meet the rapid rise in undergraduate numbers across the UK HE sector after various government reforms? Further research is needed.

Finally, not a ‘bargaining chip’ per se, but a definite means of facilitating the library–estates relationship is the employment of a dedicated or semi-dedicated estates liaison post in the library management team. It is most often deployed on a fixed-term basis during major library estates projects, whether new-builds, extensions or refurbishments, but some larger library services (in terms of either physical estate or student numbers) deploy a facilities manager role all year round. The role is attractive from a head of library perspective, as recruitment is usually not dependent on library qualifications (or, indeed, facilities management qualifications). It is also an attractive secondment or redeployment opportunity for existing staff. It enables the burden of day-to-day estates communications and troubleshooting to be shared, and ensures that there is some dedicated staff resource available to be spent on project planning, supplier liaison, external scanning, etc. From an estates department point of view, it reduces the complexity of business, partnering with one dedicated point of contact, and enables them to habituate or train the post holder in their preferred way of working and culture before translating that back to the library stakeholder groups.

Library, IT and estates relationships

One aspect that I was not able to cover in the survey was the extent to which IT considerations also influence thinking around estates and library projects nowadays. Developments in, and student expectations around, universal Wi-Fi access and device portability are obviating the need to provide traditional IT teaching labs laid out in linear rows, or hundreds of fixed personal computers in new-builds. Virtual server hosting (whether on a local campus cloud or in a private cloud) is reducing the number of server rooms needed to support connectivity in campus spaces. As students can now roam and gather flexibly to study as they like without being tethered to physical devices (with the possible exception of power sockets until wireless charging becomes prevalent), so flexibility in space and infrastructure design is needed to attract them to study on campus. Otherwise, they will vote with their feet and base themselves on the nearest coffee chain’s sofas.

The fast pace of technological change means that the types of physical IT hardware and infrastructure needing to be considered by library leaders when thinking about new or refurbished library estates in 2024 include the following.

- **Library RFID technology:** This includes self-service kiosks, reservation/laptop lockers, sensor alarms and sorting systems (for medium- to large-circulation libraries). Kiosks may disappear during the next decade, once self-checkout and return via mobile becomes prevalent or libraries truly become e-only, but considerations of the library 'security perimeter' can still dominate estates thinking, such as at UWL (see Wales, 2017).
- **Audio-visual (AV) display technologies:** Whether in classrooms, study pods or circulation areas (digital signage), with wireless connectivity these have become less bulky, although they do require more associated furniture for facilitating hybrid meetings. Virtual reality headsets and 3D immersive spaces are also starting to appear.
- **Personal computing hardware:** Increasingly, dual monitors with docking stations for laptops are provided. Some library software still requires desktop architecture, so a 100% move to tablet devices is not expected until the 2030s.
- **Swipe-control access systems:** These allow flexible provisioning of different areas according to user types (although it is still amazing how widespread physical locks and keys remain across UK library estates).
- **Scanning and printing multifunctional devices (MFDs):** These take up less space than pure photocopiers in the past (including paper storage space). Some libraries have gone down the maker-space route as well, of course, with provision of 3D printer spaces, but no UK academic libraries to date have gone down the 'print on demand' equipment and supply route typified by the now defunct Espresso Book Machine.
- **Security surveillance systems:** These comprise remote-controlled cameras in key hotspots linked to intelligent surveillance systems across the wider university estate, with people-tracking abilities.

The extent to which the institutional IT strategy shapes or is shaped by the above is a question worthy of discussion elsewhere.

Future trends in academic library builds from a leadership perspective

Other than changes in materials, emphasis and interior design trends, it is hard to identify any major new trends in UK academic library design in this century. The oft-discussed possibility of moving to a true e-only library from a collections point of view has yet to materialise, not least due to the current controversy and uncertainty around e-book pricing models (Anderson, 2023). The cost to an average-sized UK HE institution of replacing a standard library's print textbook teaching collection with equivalent e-textbook accesses for the required number of students would run into the high tens of millions of pounds alone, by my estimates, before even considering the additional costs of moving to e-monographs (presuming that they would all be available in online form across the disciplines needed). Even when digitising archive or special collections, the primary source materials and artefacts usually need to be retained somewhere. Print collections are therefore here to stay and must be factored into library estates planning even if they are reduced in size and relocated to less-prime real estate either on or off campus.

Unfortunately, the collaborative collection storage schemes (whether regional or national) needed to release the space to achieve this aim have yet to appear in the UK. This is

despite the relative success of the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) scheme for journals in the 2010s (see Stubbs and Banks, 2020) and is perhaps attributable to the slow progress on the UK National Monograph Strategy project (Showers, 2014). Nevertheless, I outline below two potential future avenues of exploration which I believe library leaders can own, rather than wait for other ideas to come to fruition or be imposed on them by directors of estates.

The warehouse model

In theory

An Amazon, Ocado or British Library automated warehouse model combined with a post-COVID-19 'click and collect' service delivery ethos offers a different library design option for UK universities in areas such as London where estates are already crammed with buildings and land value is high. I had active discussions around this concept with the executive director of estates at Brunel University London, for example, in 2021, when we were considering how best to relaunch a less ambitious version of a c. £100 million campus redevelopment project that had been postponed after the site-clearance stage due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theory was sound: build a comparatively low-cost, high-density storage unit on the edge of campus for a reduced-size library 'reserve' collection, with a smaller open-access teaching or textbook collection retained in the main student-facing building, releasing more floor space for it to be a multipurpose teaching and study environment with a market-place of student services on the ground floor, including a library collection point for hourly book deliveries from the store. The store didn't have to have automated book-handling conveyor systems like the British Library, but could adopt radical 'chaotic' book storage principles (i.e., that do not rely on shelving items in traditional library class-mark order) and intelligent pick software to reduce the pick-and-return delays created by having to retain shelving classification sequences in the store (see, e.g., Lyngsoe Systems, 2024). Optionally, the store could have a climate-controlled and fire-resistant facility for records and archives, which would be cheaper to create from scratch than trying to insert it retrospectively into a 1970s shell. Although, in theory, this storage model could be outsourced to a commercial off-site storage provider specialising in documents, in practice it was felt that being able to offer a possible 'within the hour' fetch system on-site was highly desirable. In addition, effectively moving library storage costs from a capital to an operational budget at a time of reducing student numbers was not desirable or feasible.

In practice

The actual delivery of fetched items to the customer would be at a small collection point in the atrium area of the refurbished building which could be used flexibly with other professional service functions, removing the need for library-specific areas with library-specific equipment such as self-checkout and return kiosks. Indeed, the current trend for self-service reserved-item collection lockers is a natural fit with the collection-point principle and removes the need for a permanent staff presence.

On closer examination, however, this 'warehouse model' is the old-fashioned closed-access library model or reference library model still found in national libraries today. The question for library and estates teams is whether the potential economies of scale from space maximisation, etc. outweigh the intangible pedagogical benefits for students of being able to browse and scan books on shelves themselves, organised by traditional classification

schemes in discipline clusters. Perhaps the need for that is less now that students can browse and skim e-book versions online, especially in STEM subjects; it is predominantly for arts and humanities subjects that the traditional arrangement still has benefits. Or maybe the warehouse model is best applied retrospectively in urban campuses where space is at a premium, whereas a new-build project can still benefit from the best of both worlds.

Artificial intelligence (AI)/robotics applications

At a networking lunch with my colleague who heads up Cranfield University's facilities department (which manages most 'front of house' estates services such as catering, hotel, security, mail and residential services), he mentioned that he was genuinely interested in the potential of robotics to reduce his staffing costs, having attended a conference with presentations from Japan, where, of course, robotic receptionists have been commonplace for some years. He revealed that he was also thinking seriously about how robots could reduce cleaning and room-servicing costs in the on-site conference hotel in future. This conversation got me thinking about the equivalent use cases in the academic library sector and their feasibility and desirability.

One immediate application would be the use of autonomous delivery vehicles for transporting books between site libraries and/or mail rooms. The Cranfield University campus is highly suited for testing this, due to its existing grid layout and self-contained nature away from busy urban areas, and, indeed, has been involved in autonomous vehicle research for some time already, especially for urban transit systems. Library and facilities staff already move books with reservations between our main Kings Norton library and our School of Management library about 400 m away. So, it was with that in mind that I volunteered our services to participate in a future Cranfield project in 2024 with robot manufacturer Peyk (Cranfield University, 2024a and 2024b). The ability to transport books autonomously (whether by drone or by vehicle) the 68 miles between Cranfield, Bedfordshire and our site library on the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom's campus at Shrivenham would be even more useful, but serious security concerns would need to be addressed first from a Ministry of Defence perspective. Both sites do have the advantages of having helipads or airfields, however.

Libraries are no stranger to automation, of course, and were in the vanguard of early computerisation in the service sector from the 1970s, continuing through to electromagnetic or RFID tag-based self-service and sorting technologies in the late 1990s and early 2000s, not to mention the large-scale automated handling facilities installed in the British Library for efficient mass book storage and retrieval. It is not, therefore, too much of a leap of faith to conceive of a library 'robot receptionist' using current library chat and FAQ (frequently asked questions) software as a knowledge base alongside an Alexa-like voice interface for end-user interaction.

Indeed, I had personally conceived of and prototyped a similar concept (called HOLLI for HOLographic LIbrarian) for out-of-hours library enquiries with a third-party digital signage company while at LBS Library in 2013. This used the same projection technology as was then deployed at UK airports' security control to encourage passengers to put their liquids and gels in small plastic bags, combined with a touchscreen and presence sensor. The technology proved slightly too clunky and annoying to be of practical use in the long term, but I am sure that a decade hence that may no longer be the case.

The future implications of such an idea for library and estate strategies would be to have a unified reception system across campus, with no need for a manned presence and no need to allocate space for reception desks and waiting areas. Visitors could be guided to where they needed to go with a slightly more sophisticated version of current campus or library apps with 3D 'Google-like' maps for specific directions inside buildings. Other potential deployment of robots by estates departments could follow, e.g., 24/7 internal and external cleaning devices or security K9 robot 'dogs'.

Conclusion

The future looks bright and interesting for universities when considering the examples in the previous section and the scope for collaboration and partnership that they offer to library and estate heads; a partnership already built on strong foundations, according to my survey's question on the quality of library respondents' relationships with their estates department: 73% ($n = 38$) considered it to be good or excellent with only 10% ($n = 5$) rating it as poor.

However, there is one finding from the survey that is worth retaining, as it epitomises the ongoing frustrations for library heads. Respondents ($n = 48$) were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements:

- 1 The University's Estates Strategy/Masterplan recognises the importance of library space to the institution.
- 2 I felt that I was able to contribute adequately to the development or updating of the University's Estates Strategy/Masterplan from a library perspective.
- 3 The University's executive team understands the future space needs and characteristics of the library service.
- 4 The University's estates team understands the future space needs and characteristics of the library service.

Although 66% either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with statement 1 and 58% with statements 3 and 4, statement 2 scored only 39%, which means that we have a significant amount of lobbying to do as a profession to ensure that we secure the investment needed to maintain our library estate and that we are 'in the room' where such decisions are made. These two free-text survey comments perhaps best sum up the challenge and identify developing good working relationships as part of the solution.

Being heard as an expert in library spaces is particularly difficult. I feel like everyone (senior members of staff and estates team) have a view about what the library space is for and how it should change, because it is the one part of the service they can see and physically interact with. This view is often louder than ours. We have to work really hard on relationships because of this and still find ourselves in frustrating arguments sometimes. We don't experience the same challenge when it comes to other parts of our service (e.g., customer service, learning and teaching support, research services) where we are mostly recognised as collaborative professional experts.

I have found that Estates are not really the issue, it is more about getting the Library on the agenda of senior decision makers so they set priorities – Estates will then just take these forward as told to. Developing good working relations at an operational level is essential and very valuable alongside this. We are fortunate that a positive refurbishment is one that stakeholders all have an interest in maintaining, and we work from there. But it can be a challenge to keep this going when there are other, and quite often perfectly valid, Estates areas of concern across campus.

Addendum

[Table 2.1]

Table 2.1 SCONUL Directors Survey: number of responses by UK mission group

Please indicate your university's mission group	%	<i>n</i>
Non-aligned	44.44	24
Russell Group	20.4	11
GuildHE	9.25	5
MillionPlus	9.25	5
University Alliance	9.25	5
Cathedrals Group	7.41	4
TOTAL	100	54

[Table 2.2]

Table 2.2 SCONUL Directors Survey: responses to 'At the end of the day, who in reality has final say over matters relating to library building(s) and space(s) at your institution?'

At the end of the day, who in reality has final say over matters relating to library building(s) and space(s) at your institution?	%	<i>n</i>
Chief Operating Officer	29	14
Vice Chancellor	25	12
Head of Library Service	17	8
Head of Estates Department	10	5
Other	10	5
Chief Financial Officer	4	2
Other Senior Executive team member	4	2

References

- Anderson, J. (2023) Campaign to Investigate the Library Ebook Market, <https://academicebookinvestigation.org/about/>.
- Cranfield University (2024) *Autonomous Vehicles and Intelligent Mobility*, www.cranfield.ac.uk/centres/advanced-vehicle-engineering-centre/autonomous-vehicles-and-intelligent-mobility.
- Cranfield University (2024) UK first for Cranfield University and Peyk with Launch of Campus Delivery Robots, www.cranfield.ac.uk/press/news-2024/uk-first-for-cranfield-university-and-peyk-with-launch-of-campus-delivery-robots.
- LBS (2017) LBS's Sammy Ofer Centre Opens its Doors to the World, www.london.edu/news/lbss-sammy-ofer-centre-opens-its-doors-to-the-world-1322.
- Lyngsoe Systems (2024) Intelligent Material Management System™, <https://lyngsoesystems.com/library/intelligent-material-management-system>.
- Pettegree, A. and der Weduwen, A. (2022) *The Library: A Fragile History*, Profile Books.
- RIBA (2020) RIBA Plan of Work, www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/riba-plan-of-work.
- Rothamsted Research (2024) *The History of Rothamsted Research*, www.rothamsted.ac.uk/history-rothamsted-research.
- SCONUL (2024) About SCONUL, www.sconul.ac.uk/about-us/about-sconul/.
- Showers, B. (2014) *A National Monograph Strategy Roadmap*, JISC, www.jisc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/a-national-monograph-strategy-roadmap.pdf.
- Society of Legal Scholars (2009) Statement of Standards for University Library Provision, www.legalscholars.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/SLS-Library-for-a-Modern-Law-School-Statement-2009.pdf.
- Stubbs, T. and Banks, C. (2020) UKRR: A Collaborative Collection Management Success Story, *UKSG Insights*, **33** (10), 1–9, <https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.503>.
- Wales, T. (2017) Paul Hamlyn Library: An Integral Part of UWL Campus. *CILIP Update*, February, 42–3.



DSPACE

<https://dspace.org/>

Academic libraries and estates strategy: a library leadership perspective

Wales, Tim

Everitt, Regina; Everitt, Neil

2024-12-15

Facet Publishing

<https://www.facetpublishing.co.uk/page/detail/privileged-spaces/?k=9781783306466>

Wales T. (2024) Chapter 2: Academic libraries and estates strategy: a library leadership perspective. In: Privileged Spaces: Academic Libraries in University Estates Strategy, Facet Publishing, London, UK, Dec 2024