

Harwell Case Study: Library move, Queen's College, University of Oxford.

The skills of Harwell's teams of technicians and support staff in handling and moving collections after incidents of fire and flood damage can also be transferred to library and archive moves. Sensitive and careful handling of antiquarian collections is at the core of Harwell's service and was part of our successful appointment to move library and archival collections at Queen's College, Oxford into a new, state-of-the-art facility.

This library move had been planned over two years in advance, with Harwell being selected as the move contractor before the construction project had even begun. The move was complex; it was to be completed in three phases over vacation periods, to allow refurbishment of existing library spaces whilst minimising disruption to students, particularly those preparing for their final exams. Harwell could provide a scalable and flexible solution to this requirement, accommodating slippage in the construction project and some changes to access to the library which disrupted the intended work flow.

Aside from the timescale challenges, the original storage locations in the library were extremely constrained, mostly in the case of special collections. These were to be moved from a series of tunnels with narrow and difficult access channels, multiple sets of stairs and low ceiling height.

The first move consisted of the transfer of 1,300 linear metres of collections from the original Lower Library to the New Library. There was a requirement to maintain the sequence and allow for expansion space, including the temporary decant of some items into the New Library to allow another space to be refurbished. The second move consisted of transferring that collection back into the newly refurbished library and the permanent move of the Library's reserve collection into roller racking in the New Library, comprising 1350 linear metres. The final phase was the move of XX linear metres of special collections and archives from eight spaces within the college.

Thanks to the hard work of Harwell's team, all three moves were completed successfully and within the time allocated.



The move was successfully completed to the delight of the College Librarian Amanda Saville:

“Stuart and the team left yesterday and I just wanted to write to you to say what a fantastic job they all did, due in no small way to Stuart’s brilliant leadership and the great rapport between him and Keith, who was also fantastic. The lads were all excellent and the teamwork and good humour they showed in really difficult physical circumstances is testament to Stuart’s excellent people management skills and his ability to motivate his workers.

I cannot thank you enough for providing such excellent service to Queen’s. We could not have asked for better people to work with or a more efficient project. Please pass on my thanks and congratulations to everyone in the team.”