

# LIBRARY BUILDINGS

## Consulting, cajoling, and communicating

In November 2007, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry moved from its historic location in the Barton Parliamentary Triangle precinct of Canberra, to the city centre. The new building meets the latest Australian government standards and incorporates a number of environmental initiatives with air conditioning design, recycled water, use of natural light etc. With over 2 000 people to accommodate, this was a substantial and complex undertaking and took two years to accomplish.



*A very functional and attractive fit-out*

two sets of fire stairs, on both sides of a glassed corridor running from the building foyer to the back door.

Library staff consulted, cajoled, and communicated our needs to the Accommodation planning team, architects and various consultants from day one. This was a happy partnership on the whole, though challenging at times.

They say 'the devil is in the detail' and it is certainly true. No matter how meticulous the planning, how good communications, a few things will not work quite as expected. The Library entry doors open automatically but very slowly and are triggered if someone stands close to the PAC locations; light switches on the door jamb are regularly switched off by patrons, thinking (despite labels) that they open the doors; internal door handles confuse. Insufficient power and data points were initially supplied despite our specs. However, these are small prices to pay for what has proven to be a very functional and attractive fit-out.

Location, location, location..... our major success—the ground floor. The glass allows us to see from the staff/display/patron reading area on one side into the stacks on the other side which serendipitously, are at an angle that lets us see if a patron looks lost. Display shelves on stack ends have been surprisingly successful—books placed there are almost guaranteed to go out on loan. All shelving, trolleys etc are new and a compactus accommodates lesser used material and serves as the staff storeroom.

The staff area of the library was our other big win. Originally we were destined to have the usual 4-person 'pod' beloved by today's office designers. This would have positioned two of the four staff members with their backs to patrons. Instead, we have a curved, custom-built desk with 2x2 individually adjustable desks behind a counter-top—tidy and handy for patrons to lean on, place books on etc. We don't have a separate 'tech services' workspace as there simply wasn't room for separate areas.

With a small staff, it is not unusual for some of us to be absent and the open plan lets staff see and be seen.

Equipment such as multi-function copiers, fax, printers etc are in side areas and patrons access them easily on both sides of the library. Patrons can self-checkout from terminals next to the entry doors and there are sufficient seating areas for quiet work and casual reading. All in all, we are thrilled with our new location and our patrons' support!

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## Relocation! relocation! relocation!

In an age of explosion in the growth of online resources and virtual libraries, Defence Science and Technology (DSTO) Research Library is still providing attractive physical spaces for their clients in which to work, collaborate, or take a break.

The DSTO Research Library is a multi-site library with locations in Edinburgh (SA), Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, and HMAS Stirling (WA). Each of the site libraries has a specialised print collection as well as an extensive electronic collection available via the DSTO Intranet. Each library provides lending and reference services as well as a client reading area where clients can browse the new books and journals or read the local newspapers while enjoying a cappuccino—Melbourne and Edinburgh sites both have a coffee machine in this area.

Since 2001, all five libraries have moved into new purpose built premises.

In 2001, the Edinburgh Site Library moved into the first floor of the new HQ Building. This is the largest of the five libraries, providing a library service to 1500 employees on the site as well as a library service to all Defence personnel in SA.



**Canberra**

Also in 2001, libraries were established at Fern Hill Park (ACT) and HMAS Stirling (WA). The library in Fern Hill was initially set up to be a totally electronic library with one librarian working out of a small office with a computer and a bookshelf. This library did not remain a 'paperless' library and soon moved to a bigger area. A purpose built library was part of the relocation of DSTO Canberra to new premises at Fairbairn Business Park in 2007. This library is double in size, with more shelving for books, a reading area with computer access, photocopying facilities, and display areas.

A new purpose built library was included in the Melbourne site redevelopment at Fishermans Bend. The new staff resource centre including the library, auditorium and refurbished canteen is centrally placed within the Melbourne site. This library has an attractive reading area, desks with computer access points, a coffee machine, and two plasma screens which are used to promote both library and site based functions and Powerpoint demonstrations.



DSTO Sydney moved to its new headquarters at the Australian Technology Park at Eveleigh in 2008 and, as part of this whole of site relocation, the library moved to its new purpose built space at the hub of the new site. It has a bright reading area with walls of glass, and is adjacent to the site break-out space with kitchenette facilities.

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## Much more than a makeover

After months of planning by our amazing Teacher-Librarians Anne Flanagan and Carolyn Swalwell, the Guardian Angels' School Library (for Prep to Grade 3) was about to undergo a transformation.



*The purple compactus houses teacher resources*

This was to occur during the beginning of term one while library staff were busy with all that a new school year entails. This however was not our biggest obstacle. That was to be quality versus cost—all who have had to

work within the constraints of a limited library budget will know how difficult this can be.

And then there were the suppliers. With them came the challenges of items not delivered on time or with parts missing and even sometimes damaged. This can and does slow any project.

Yes, we had a few hiccups and I am sure our TL's most probably lost some sleep during the process.

The result, however, is a library space that now reflects the warm and welcoming attitudes of the library staff. A space that could not be accessed effectively by teaching staff—except during rostered library classes—has become a well used, busy teaching and learning environment.

With brightly painted walls (orange, yellow & purple), a large purple compactus that houses our teacher resources, bright green book boxes, new tables, chairs and bookshelves, our library has gone from dull and uninviting to a bright, open and airy space—from a caterpillar to a butterfly transformation complete!

And what do our most important clients—the students—think? If you have ever seen a child's face when they are given a present, then you will know their reaction.

But wait there is more! We are now working on the library for Grades 4 to 7. Will keep you posted.

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