

Photo courtesy the University of Washington.

The William H. Gates Hall skylights allow natural light to stream into the library space below.

Moving a Law Library

Lessons Learned while Relocating the University of Washington Law Library from Condon to Gates

by Penny Hazelton and Jonathan Franklin

Some days in the middle of the University of Washington School of Law's move from Condon Hall to William H. Gates Hall, we weren't sure we could find anything positive about it. But now that we're all settled, it's hard to remember how stressful it was.

The move began more than a decade ago. Condon Hall, home of the law school since the 1970s, was a model of brutal concrete architecture. It was excellent for withstanding earthquakes, but it made upgrading the technological infrastructure difficult. The library had 22 entrances and exits and little security for its volumes. Worst of all, the law school was built off the main campus by four blocks, and the lack of integration between it and the rest of campus impeded collaboration efforts.

"[A] new building will help usher in a new era in legal education and training at the UW," said Roland Hjorth, dean of the law school. "By emphasizing advances in education technology, creating flexible work spaces adapted to hands-on training, and increasing library space, the new building will help us better educate our students and serve people in the community who depend on us."

Between the original vision and the ribbon-cutting, library staff experienced years of legislative lobbying for the state-funded portion of the budget, fundraising for the privately funded portion of the budget, architectural planning that was subsequently rejected by the university's Board of Regents, and all the complexities of putting a large public works project out to bid.

It took about two years to complete the project, from ground-breaking to ribbon-

cutting. The school had a firm requirement that classes be taught in Gates Hall in the fall of 2003. Original plans had the library moving in during the early part of the summer. As completion dates slipped, the anticipated move was pushed into July and August, with the final books reaching the shelves only a few weeks before students arrived. Luckily, the University of Washington is on the quarter system, so classes start at the end of September.

Everything is Interrelated

The move was staged to coordinate with the installation of shelving, lighting, carpeting, and various other parts of the interior decoration. Lighting may not seem relevant to moving books, but everything is interrelated. The books could not go in until the shelves were up. The shelves could not go in until the ladders were gone from the drop ceiling installation. The drop ceiling installation could not be completed until the lighting fixtures were installed. And when the lighting fixtures were delayed in early 2003, we knew the book move would be affected.

This illustrates one of the hundreds, if not thousands, of ripple effects that can take place on a project of this type. If you are embarking on a new building, a problem with a rebar delivery has a direct effect on everything that follows.

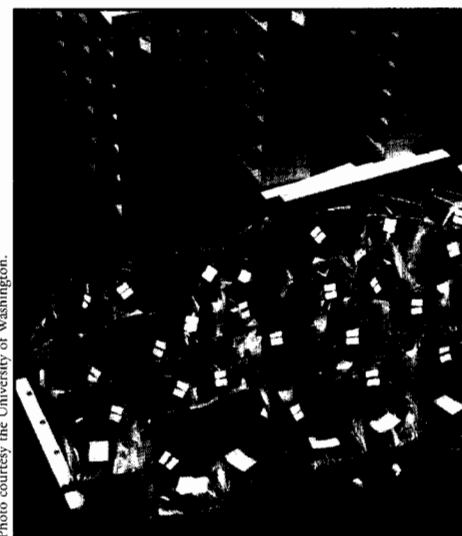


Photo courtesy the University of Washington.

Days before the building was dedicated, the library's new chairs were still plastic-wrapped and waiting to be open.

The book move was carefully coordinated with the shelving erection. We put the first books on the shelves long before the final shelves were installed. In addition, the first few floors we vacated in Condon Hall were remodeled long before the last books were

out of the building. The move of 350,000 volumes took more than six weeks.

Library staff experienced substantial challenges in removing the books from Condon Hall because the movers could not get their carts into the non-ADA-compliant 22-inch-wide aisles. This meant they had to ferry books to the range ends and, using a complex cart numbering system, get the books off the shelves, on the carts, down the elevators, onto the trucks, off the trucks, onto the Gates elevators, down to the correct level, and onto the shelf.

A Smooth Move

The library move went without a hitch (except for delays caused by installation problems with our compact moveable shelving). Nikki Pike, planner extraordinaire, got the collection organized after months of

down as quickly as they removed the books. (Why do you suppose the Geology Department wanted to keep the manual compact stacks in the basement? It gave the department somewhere to store its huge rock collection!)

During our three and a half month closure, reference and access services continued to provide services to the law school community and others through e-mail and phone reference. The library staff met the challenge of finding answers to questions when the collection was in a different place every day.

Going through the move, we knew that many things would be much better in our new home. Now that we're here and moved in, they are! Stack aisles are ADA-compliant; staff members have better working conditions; virtually our entire collection is accessible to all library users; we have much better security (one entrance and exit); library users all have generous work spaces and access to the wireless network; we have new furniture, stacks, end panels, and book trucks; and we have growth space for the collection.

Saying Good-bye

We packed our last boxes on a Friday in early August and did our brief grieving. Condon Hall was not perfect, but we knew it inside and out. We knew its wrinkles and warts (and cement). For most of us, it was the only home we knew for the Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library.

We knew where to park and what bus to take; we knew where to find the

Maine Revised Statutes Annotated and the *USCA*; we knew how long it would take to get to a classroom or the dean's office; we knew which doors to lock and the shortest way to the faculty office on the seventh floor.

Monday morning we arrived at William Gates Hall. Our computers were working on our desks, our phones were connected, and our boxes were stacked ready for unpacking. It was a remarkably smooth transition. Except ... except for a few minor annoyances. But we learned some lessons along the way:

- **Expect the unexpected.** Plan as much as you can, realize that you cannot control everything, but know that you can control how you react to the situations that arise.
- **Be flexible and adaptable.** Prepare yourself for change, but don't be surprised if it stresses you out anyway.
- **Laugh a lot,** and don't be afraid to talk about what seems to be stressing you out. Talking through the challenges you face (even if they are small) can be therapeutic.
- **Celebrate milestones** and party as much as you can. We had a goodbye-to-Condon party as well as a welcome-to-Gates party.
- **Everyone will handle a move differently.** Expect that staff will be stressed at different times throughout this process. Sometimes people will express their stress in ways that seem completely unrelated to the move, even though that is the underlying cause. Encourage casual interactions and conversations about people's concerns or worries.
- **Communicate often with the staff.** The more that staff know about the project, the more likely they are to be patient. Sharing what you know, even if it is not the answer they want, is better than keeping people in the dark.
- **Be sure all staff computers and telephones work immediately.** In many places, this is not under the library's control, but stress levels would have been over the top if we had not been able to do simple things like check e-mail or make calls.
- **The longer you work on a project, the more you are invested in its outcome.** Try to keep the big picture in mind.

The dedication of William H. Gates

Hall celebrates the life and contributions

of a giant of a lawyer in the Seattle legal

community. We are very proud to have our

beautiful new building bear his name. But

we did not feel truly at ease until Marian

Gallagher's portrait was hung outside the

main library's entrance in Gates Hall.

Then we knew we were home.

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Photo courtesy the University of Washington.

The University of Washington's new law library features many improvements, including ADA-compliant aisles, better working conditions, improved security (one entrance and exit), and growth space for collection.

decisions about where specific titles should go and hundreds of hours of marking and remarking the more than 350,000 print volumes in our collection, ably coordinated by Richard Jost and his remarkable technical services crew.

A Bekins Moving and Storage Company crew moved the collection. Bekins hired a high school track team for the summer, and they worked hard. Because Condon's aisles were so narrow and the Geology Department needed to build big laboratories for its temporary occupancy of Condon Hall, the stacks were taken