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Building Management Responsibilities for Access Services

Katherine Furlong
Bucknell University, kaf035@bucknell.edu

David McCaslin
Whittier College, dmccasli@whittier.edu

David W. Bottorff
University of Chicago, dbottorff@uchicago.edu

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David W. Bottorff, Katherine Furlong, and David McCaslin

ACCESS SERVICES staff, especially those in circulation, often act as the conduit for space management and library building maintenance. Overseeing the evolving physical aspects of a library can encompass a variety of challenges. The access services department possesses a unique perspective from its frontline service point and can oversee certain facility-related issues within a library operation.

The following chapter provides a brief overview of many of those issues, from managing the use of study rooms to planning a new library facility. As will become clear, the range of these issues is far-reaching and, regardless of where direct responsibility for them may fall within a given library, access services staff will often find themselves involved, formally or informally, in many if not most of the areas discussed in the following pages. Successful access services librarians will find that knowing at least

a little about each of these areas will serve them well. Flexibility and an openness to change are key elements of navigating building management issues.

GROUP STUDY ROOMS

Study spaces on campuses are not easy to come by, and group study rooms have become a haven where students can collaborate on class projects, practice presentations, or study quietly in an enclosed space.[1] Libraries are increasingly asked to build and manage rooms for groups of students to work. Scheduling and technology are two major factors with library group study rooms.

Group study rooms can vary in size, but each room should be able to accommodate small groups of students. Actual room occupancy will, of course, be determined by fire and building codes as well as any other local factors. Libraries should have clear policies in place regarding the number of students permitted to reserve a room.[2] For example, a student reserving a group study room for individual use could be considered to be wasting available space for others, especially during a high-volume time like finals or midterms. Libraries should also restrict the monopolizing of study rooms through consecutive reservations by the same group of students. Scheduling software can provide libraries with a system to accept study room reservations, provide a framework for policies to be enforced, and keep statistics on use of the rooms, thus lessening the staff time devoted to scheduling issues.[3]

When creating group study rooms, strong consideration should be given to technology for the space. To provide spaces for students to practice presentations or collaborate on projects, libraries should offer large screens with laptop/network connectivity for easier viewing, whiteboards or smartboards, and multiple docking stations to connect several laptops. If groups of students interested in collaboration are steered into group study rooms, quiet study spaces in other parts of the libraries could

become available for individual students. Flexible furnishings, adequate lighting, power, and network access (through wireless or wired connectivity) are essential aspects for successful group study spaces.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has changed the use and nature of group study rooms, often turning them into seemingly "safe" spaces for solitary student work. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for reservations and time limits on these increasingly popular rooms (as well as other library spaces), which require frequent cleaning and attention to ensure safety. Demand for and use of these spaces are likely to persist into the future. Occupancy limits for group study rooms may be fluid and change from time to time based on campus, local, or even state guidelines.

LIBRARY CLASSROOMS

Like group study rooms, library classrooms can be in high demand for students or groups because of the space and technology they can provide.[4] These spaces present the library with opportunities to become active partners in the learning or teaching process. Instructors can offer the classroom as a way to introduce the library and its resources to students. Librarians can give instructional presentations on library resources or research methods. Library staff can use the space for training purposes. Groups can offer speakers to give presentations around related topics to their groups.

To offer a palatable learning environment, a library classroom will require adequate space for a standard number of students, presentation space for an instructor, and technology support, which could include individual workstations or projection capabilities. Whether planning a classroom for a new library or retrofitting classroom space into an existing library, library planners should ensure that the classroom be adaptable so that users can move around and work collaboratively, as well as being flexible enough so the space can accommodate new technology

when it becomes available. Aspects of adaptability can include moveable furnishings, laptops for instruction, wireless and wired network access, and variable lighting controls. Planning for updating technology and refreshing furnishings should be part of the library's capital budgeting process to ensure that spaces are kept up-to-date.

Scheduling a library classroom could be similar to scheduling group study rooms, with some form of appointment software providing support for booking the classroom. In addition, to ensure the classroom is booked for its intended purpose, staff could require the use planned be disclosed upon scheduling. Training should also be provided so instructors understand how to use the provided technology. Libraries may want to think about what purposes are appropriate for library classrooms (e.g., library instruction sessions, faculty-led courses that rely on library resources) and what purposes might be less appropriate. In a landscape in which teaching spaces are at a premium, libraries may find themselves struggling to retain control over classroom spaces rather than cede ownership of the spaces to the course registrar or the university as a whole. Library classrooms provide opportunities to collaborate with campus partners and highlight the vital work conducted in these spaces.

24/7 (OR 24/5 OR 24/6) OPERATIONS

Just as a library's electronic resources are available 24 hours a day, the demand for access to a library's physical confines has resulted in many libraries remaining open for twenty-four hours for five to seven days a week. Though use between midnight and 6:00 a.m. may not be as high as other times of the day, the accessibility can provide users with a safe and quiet alternative that may be unavailable to them elsewhere. This is an equity issue for some students and can be an important part of providing services to our entire campus community.[5] Providing 24-hour access to a library is a large undertaking, and several things must be considered before leaving the doors open. Physical access to the library, staffing,

and security must be addressed. When planning these spaces, work with your student health and campus safety offices to anticipate questions on student sleep deprivation, safety, and work-life balance. By collaborating with campus partners, learning more about the science of sleep, and the importance of setting boundaries, libraries may wish to reassess the message sent by offering space and support for round-the-clock study.

Several libraries offer 24-hour access, but to only a part of the library.[6] A university library can be a large building and providing staff and security for the whole facility may not be feasible or cost-effective. Given that use during the late hours will likely be lower, providing a smaller space within the library may be acceptable. Ideally, the space should have its own entrance, and any internal doors that lead to the rest of the library should be lockable. Closing procedures for most of the library should include filtering students toward the 24-hour or extended hours area. Once the 24-hour area is secure, the area should have only one or two entry points. Access to the areas of the library open during the overnight hours could be limited through use of identification (ID) cards. This could involve either key card technology, such as Radio Frequency ID (RFID) that unlocks a door, or a security checkpoint where identification is presented to a security guard or staff member for entry. If using key cards, library staff should work with student life or public safety personnel to ensure that part-time and off-campus students have access to the building.

Staffing a library space for 24 hours can be difficult. The level of staffing might be dictated by what services will be offered in the space. For instance, can patrons check out or return materials? Some libraries rely heavily on student staff. For the overnight hours, student staff may be an option if students need the work to earn their living expenses and can keep odd hours. However, relying on students to staff this area may not be the best option given that students' lives can often be dictated by their academic responsibilities. Employing full-time staff for a 24-hour space might be ideal but hiring and keeping staff for these nontraditional hours could be an ongoing problem. This is particularly true if the library does

not have overnight operations for some periods during the year, such as during the Summer, and the overnight staff will not be employed during that time. If the 24-hour space provided by the library is a purely study space with no circulation services available, staffing the area with a security guard could be adequate.

Whether security is the primary source of staffing or the library relies on student or library staff for the after-midnight hours, the presence of a uniformed security guard in the space during the overnight hours can provide a sense of safety for the patrons. If an academic library is unable to provide a security guard within the 24-hour space, the library should consult with on-campus security to ensure staff receive the proper training and support in case a security situation arises.

Assessing and collecting data on the use of 24-hour spaces can be an invaluable decision-making tool in determining what hours and services are needed. Support of these spaces can have budget implications for libraries so data assessment on usage is useful in determining future directions. Conducting surveys, focus groups and consulting with advisory groups or student government can all provide useful information. Aspects of data-informed decision making are discussed in Chapter 10.

INCLUSIVITY CONSIDERATIONS

Libraries have the responsibility of being welcoming, inclusive spaces for their entire communities. Patrons should feel visible, and the needs of every user should be accommodated. Though the subject of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in libraries is much broader than can be addressed here, there are some key questions to keep in mind as an access services professional.

Is your library inclusive? Is it physically accessible? Can patrons alter their names and pronouns in your LMS? Do you provide baby changing stations for parents? Legislation in some jurisdictions require access to all gender restrooms. The conversion of restrooms can be a facility-related

project, but the communication and overview will fall upon library personnel. Are you providing adequate training for your frontline staff? Training on DEI for library staff should extend beyond interpersonal interactions but to spaces and how libraries can create spaces for *all* of their community. As a starting point, access services staff should review policies, procedures, and practices with the goal of identifying inconsistencies with stated DEI policies or goals. For example, you may be able to reevaluate charging late and other fines. There could be opportunities for making your language and pronoun usage more gender inclusive. There are many unwritten but generally agreed-upon ways that work gets done in a library, and these should be reviewed with a critical lens. Consider ways to allow all staff to contribute to this process in an equitable manner. It is important to consider policies and practices through a DE&I lens not only in terms of their impact on patrons but also on the library staff. The American Library Association's Office of Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services is an excellent place to find additional ideas and resources.

Not all libraries have the ability to offer dedicated personnel to offer services to those with disabilities. Access services staff are often, and should be, trained to assist patrons with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) legally obligates libraries to provide public accommodations to those who need assistance. Examples of assistance might include ensuring appropriate physical access to the library building, retrieving items for users with physical or mobility disabilities, or providing assistive technologies, such as screen-reading equipment for users with visual disabilities or assistive listening devices for users with hearing disabilities. The American Libraries Association (ALA) provides a framework of guidelines for libraries to follow to be in compliance with the ADA.[7]

In a college or university environment, users may need official documentation of a disability to qualify for some accommodations, and this may often be coordinated through a campus office for disability services or office of student life. Policies and interpretations of ADA and related matters are always changing, so liaise with your appropriate campus office

to ensure seamless service and advocate for universal design principles in any library renovation.

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

The area of signage and visual communication for wayfinding, perhaps one of the more neglected aspects of library buildings, often falls into the realm of access services. A coherent wayfinding scheme, combined with well-placed and clearly worded signs, can reduce the number of directional questions received at service points and serve to communicate a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.

Wayfinding is an umbrella term used for indicators (light, color, design elements) that guide patrons to a destination. Signs, directories, and digital displays are some of the tools in a wayfinding scheme. For large and complicated library buildings, consider the use of a design consultant. Performing a wayfinding study of one's users may identify failure points in one's current signage system.[8]

Above all else, a wayfinding system should be as simple and intuitive as possible, and librarians should restrain the impulse to label everything. Too many signs create information overload and can cause users to ignore potentially helpful signs. There may always be a need for temporary signs but the use of them should be limited. Well-designed and simple signs can be created using office productivity software, but a template should be used to maintain some uniformity. Signs will need to comply with all state and local building codes, and permanent signage must meet ADA requirements for braille and tactile graphics.

A recent trend in libraries is to integrate physical signage and virtual wayfinding tools more directly. Particularly in large buildings, some libraries have leveraged technology to provide interactive maps that link from the library catalog and show users the precise location of a book on an online map.[9] Given the ongoing investment in keeping systems like these accurate and up-to-date, libraries should consider how many users

will take advantage of these systems before implementing or updating them.

JANITORIAL, PEST MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE ISSUES

Access services personnel are often the first to notice and respond to custodial and climate/HVAC issues within buildings, which can range from simple cleanliness issues to conditions that lead to threats to collections, patrons, and staff due to pests, mold, or other contagions. At a minimum, access services staff should have clearly defined protocols for addressing and, more importantly, reporting these issues.

Your institution may have a contract with a pest management service, or it may need to coordinate services with custodial and plant operations. Though common pests (mice and roaches, for example) may be covered by standard pest management, more exotic library menaces, such as silverfish, firebrats, bedbugs, and cigarette beetles may need special consideration. Working with your plant operations personnel and developing an integrated pest management (IPM) solution to prevent and control infestations are key to success. Regular communications and building walkthroughs can catch potential problems before they worsen. Any change in food policies or the introduction of a library cafe will merit a review of pest management and custodial procedures. Your IPM program should not be limited to public areas of the building; ensure all staff lounges and office areas are covered.

Controlling climate and climate fluctuations in a library building is also vitally important to preserving collections. Mold outbreaks can happen with little notice following a seemingly innocuous event that alters the environment in your library building. Even the most modern HVAC systems can create microclimates, or pockets of humid air, that allow molds to flourish. High relative humidity encourages mold growth and insect activity. Extremely low relative humidity brings its own risks

of desiccation for materials. Installing and maintaining a climate control system providing a stable environment with a temperature no higher than 70°F/21°C and a stable relative humidity between a minimum of 30 percent and a maximum of 50 percent is a common standard for preserving collections and maintaining a healthy building for patrons and staff.[10] Due to the potential health hazards in any large mold outbreak, professional advice and mold remediation are recommended. Take protective measures, such as using respirators, gloves, and protective eyewear when handling moldy materials. In general library collections, the cost of cleaning materials might outweigh the value of the volumes; evaluate collections before proceeding.

DISASTER PLANNING

Preparing for a disaster can be a daunting task because it requires foresight to imagine what damaging event might occur and what effect it might have on the library. Access services, especially circulation, is often involved in this type of planning given that it has a public location within a library building and access services staff are generally available whenever the library building is open. Though entire books are written about library disaster planning and all aspects of the topic cannot be covered here, access services personnel are key players in any disaster response team.[11]

Disasters can come in many forms. Earthquakes and weather-related events can cause flooding, power outages, structural problems, and fires, threatening collections and patrons. Civil emergencies, law enforcement actions, and public health crises may pose more immediate dangers to patrons than collections. Regardless of the circumstances, the focus during and immediately after should be on safety.[12]. The safety of personnel and patrons is the key driver of any disaster response. Above all, stay safe, and keep people in your department safe.

Once patron and staff safety is assured, a disaster plan must involve the cleanup and preservation of potentially damaged materials and continuity of services. Libraries that have preservation experts should include them in the planning as their insight will be helpful in creating preventive measures and documenting post-disaster protocols. Just as the immediate response to a disaster is likely to involve security and emergency personnel from the campus or community, the overall disaster plan should integrate and liaise with safety personnel on the campus (for an academic library) or in the community (for a public library) to ensure the library's disaster planning corresponds with the campus or community disaster plan.

ACTIVE SHOOTER PLANNING

It is a sad truth that, at least in the United States, active shooter planning/violent intruder planning and staff training have become a grim and necessary part of library access services. Partnering with your campus public safety and/or police department is essential in coordinating training and communicating best practices. Even though the plan for your library will depend entirely upon the specifics of your building situation, the basics of Run.Hide.Fight® are a constant. An annual table-top exercise involving all levels of staff is a great way to review the plan and prepare. Ensure that part time, casual and student staff are aware of procedures and protocols. And know that dealing with the aftermath of a mass shooting can be as devastating as any other part of the process.[13]

PLANNING FOR A NEW LIBRARY OR RENOVATING AN EXISTING LIBRARY

Planning for a new library or renovation of existing library space can be an exciting and challenging endeavor. Access services librarians and

staff must advocate for a seat at the table early in the process to ensure our ideas and concerns are incorporated into any final design. Access services staff are often best situated to keep two factors in the forefront of planning discussions: the pragmatics of workflows and staff processes and, more importantly, the user experience.

On a practical level, access services staff are well positioned to address questions of how proposed building plans would impact daily workflows and staff processes. Where are books returned? Is it close to where they are processed and shelved? Do pathways allow book carts and other equipment to be moved where needed efficiently and with minimal disruption to users? Are staff workstations designed in ways that encourage interaction with users? In other words, designers of these spaces should engage staff on the daily tasks of staff and practices of library patrons. Access services librarians should prepare themselves for these planning meetings by meeting with staff and students to understand different points of view on what is desired in a library.

More important than staff processes, however, is the user experience. What is the first impression the building will make on users? How easy is it for users to find someone to help them? How do the library's physical spaces create expectations for behavior, whether of quiet studiousness or active group inquiry? What paths will users take through the building in a given visit? In short, how can users' needs and desires be anticipated by the building itself, and how can universal design principles be incorporated to ensure access for all? What is the story of the space? Providing a narrative of observations and data will bring advocacy to the decision makers on behalf of the users. This should include consideration on issues involving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Access services staff should be willing and able to engage in discussion with other public services staff, with outside architects and consultants and, most importantly, with the users to understand their needs and to translate those into a compelling vision for new or renovated library spaces.

The user experience (UX) and workability for staff are two important issues, but a few other preliminary actions should take place. Communication is important during a construction project. Updates should be shared early and often with staff and patrons. Disruptions will likely occur with renovations or through moving collections to a new library, and announcing these disruptions early and often will avoid patrons and staff being caught by surprise. As a major public service point, access services staff should have a communication plan in place to answer questions from patrons on the construction project. Staff should be prepared to manage service interruptions or to provide additional services to minimize patron inconvenience.

Along with communication, protection of collections should be a focal point during the construction project. Collections may not move during a renovation project. In these cases, preservation should be a paramount concern due to the risks, such as dust or sprinkler leaks. If collections need to be moved to a new library, careful planning must be done to ensure the materials are moved in a safe manner and are shelved in the proper order.[14]

CONCLUSION

As this chapter outlines, access services may take many and varied roles in building management. From mediating group study spaces to battling mice to planning major renovations, anything and everything may fall under the access services umbrella. It's what makes working in access services so interesting and, at times, exhausting. Participating in a new library space planning process or creating and managing collaborative spaces like group study rooms can be intellectually stimulating, even though the largely hidden work of planning for an impending disaster or dealing with pest issues will not make the front page of a library newsletter. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that access services needs to be flexible and develop contingency plans to address fluid and rapidly

changing work environments. Building management for access services staff can span the spectrum from exciting to monotonous, but all are vital services that take organization, foresight, and commitment.

Keeping signage current or dealing with construction dust is probably not the reason many have chosen librarianship. However, access services casts a wide net of responsibilities, and building management is included. More importantly, the space and facilities issues that the access services department manages are essential to creating and maintaining a clean, safe, and appealing library. If we think of building management in terms of serving our users, even the seemingly mundane can be imbued with significance. By focusing on our users, we are more likely to make better choices, both small and large, about the spaces we manage: choices that will have a lasting impact on how our users experience and perceive libraries. Ultimately, building management can be a rewarding and deeply satisfying task.

NOTES

1. Harold B. Shill and Shawn Tonner, "Does the Building Still Matter? Usage Patterns in New, Expanded, and Renovated Libraries, 1995–2002," *College & Research Libraries* 65, no. 2 (March 2004): 123‑150; Heather V. Cunningham and Susanne Tabur, "Learning Space Attributes: Reflections on Academic Library Design and Is Use," *Journal of Learning Spaces* 1, no. 2 (2012). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1152699.pdf.

2. "Policy on Room Use at the University of Chicago Library," University of Chicago Library, accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/about/thelibrary/policies/rooms/; "Bobst Group Study Rooms," New York University Libraries, accessed December 15, 2021, https://library.nyu.edu/spaces/bobst-group-study-rooms/.

3. Scheduling software options runs the gamut from open-sourced programs, such as PhpScheduleit and OpenRoom, to modestly priced SAS options like LibCal, to expensive, enterprise-level solutions, such as MeetingRoomManager.

4. Shill and Tonner, "Does the Building Still Matter?" and Cunningham and Tabur, "Learning Space Attributes."

5. T.E. Chrzastowski and J.E. Nutefall. (2016). "Is everything all right at NIGHT? Measuring User Response to Overnight Library Services," *Journal of Access Services*, *13*(3): 179–198. https://doi.org/10.1080/15367967.2016.1205445.

6.   "24-Hour Study Room," UC Davis University Library, accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.library.ucdavis.edu/service/24-hour-study-space/; "24/7 Study Spaces," MIT Libraries, accessed December 15, 2021, https://libraries.mit.edu/study/24x7/; and "Access Information for the Goldstein Undergraduate Study Center," University of Pennsylvania Libraries, accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.library.upenn.edu/about/access/usc. These discuss 24-hour access to library spaces.

7.   *Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy* (Chicago: American Library Association, approved January 16, 2001), accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.ala.org/asgcla/resources/libraryservices.

8.   Nancy Kress, David Larsen, Tod Olsen, and Agnes Tatarka, "Wayfinding in the Library: Usability Testing of Physical Spaces," *Proceedings of the Library Assessment Conference*: *Building Effective*, *Sustainable, Practical Assessment* (*September 25–27, 2006; Charlottesville, Virginia)*, eds. Francine DeFranco, Steve Hiller, Lisa Janicke Hinchcliffe, Kristina Justh, Martha Kyrillidou, Jim Self, and Joan Stein (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2007), 33–41, and David Larsen and Agness Tatarka, "Wayfinding Revisited: Improved Techniques for Assessing and Solving Usability Problems in Physical Spaces," *Proceedings of the 2008 Library Assessment Conference: Building Effective, Sustainable, Practical Assessment* (*August 4-7, 2008: Seattle, Washington)*, eds. Steve Hiller, Kristina Justh, Martha Kyrillidou, and Jim Self (Washington, DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2009): 65–73.

9.   StackMap, accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.stackmap.io/.

10.   National Information Standards Organization. NISO TR01-1995, Environmental Guidelines for the Storage of Paper Records. Technical Report. https://www.niso.org/publications/niso-tr01-1995-environmental-guidelines-storage-paper-records.

11.   Emma Dadson, *Emergency Planning and Responses for Libraries, Museums, and Archives* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2012); "Preservation: Library of Congress, accessed December 15. 2021, https://www.loc.gov/preservation/; Miriam B. Kahn, *Disaster Response and Planning for Libraries*(Chicago: American Library Association, 3rd ed., 2012).

12.   Miriam B. Kahn, *Disaster Response and Planning for Libraries* Chicago: American Library Association, 3rd ed. 2012b).

13.   A. Kautzman, "Active Shooter in the Library: How to Plan for, Prevent, and Service the Worst," *Library Leadership & Management*, 25(1): 1–9.

14.   Philip C. Leighton and David C. Weber, *Planning Academic and Research Libraries* (Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1999); Jeannette

Woodward, *Creating the Customer-Driven Academic Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2009). The second entry addresses the challenges and issues around a new library or renovated facility.

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