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**Redevolping the world's largest social science library for the 21. century**

## Abstract

It was a complicated process between the feasibility study in 1994 and the completion in 2001 of the redevelopment of the Library at LSE. But good planning, design, fund-raising, and communication with academics and students combined to make the project a success. Project management was carried out to well-defined terms of reference and a steering group met monthly to oversee progress and finances. There were actually two projects: the redevelopment, and the move to temporary premises to allow the reconstruction to take place.

A single large building close to the campus could not be found so the collections were split between one building within seven minutes' walk and a remote store for 30% of the less heavily used books. The move, of four million printed items, took fourteen weeks working at twice the normal speed between June and September 1999, during which time a full library service was maintained. A number of keys led to the success of the temporary move, including careful detailed planning, the involvement of many library staff in planning and supervising the move, and an excellent communications strategy which ensured that academic staff, students, and external users were prepared for the move.

The redevelopment was aimed to ensure that the outstanding collections could at last be housed in a building worthy of them and that the environment for users was suitable for the reputation of the School itself. In short, the library was to be made fit for the 21$^{st}$ century. The new design offers a modern research and learning environment, simpler circulation round the building and easier access to the books, expansion space for the growing print collections, improved storage and environmental conditions for the collections, and space for a larger number of computers.

The library covers five floors and 15,000 square metres. Features include a central atrium with spiral stepped ramp and two glass lifts, a glass north-facing dome at the top, a double-height lower ground floor, computer-controlled natural ventilation, presence-detection lighting, and staff offices arranged in a vertical stack with goods lift and delivery bay.

Reconstruction began in September 1999 and the move back took place from March to May 2001, just before exams and therefore at a critical time for the students. Once again, the full library service was maintained throughout, and there was a major publicity campaign to ensure that users knew which books were moving each day.

The redesign is a great success and use doubled in the first year, making LSE one of the busiest university libraries in the UK for the size of its student population. It won an architectural prize from the Borough of Westminster and is one of the most photographed buildings in London. A quotation from a user sums it up: *'It not only looks terrific but it is also very well organised and user friendly!'*

## CV

Jean Sykes has been Librarian and Director of Information Services at the London School of Economics since January 1998.The Library is the largest social science library in the world and is well known to researches for its outstanding collections. The library building has been stunningly redeveloped recently by architects Foster and Partners and receives over 80.000 visits a year by researchers outside the LSE. Jean is director of IT Services at LSE as well as the Library.

Jean was chair of the active M25 Consortium of Higher Education Libraries (40 university libraries in the greater London area) for two years and has recently finished a two-year position of chair of the national university library directors body, SCONUL. She is an acti9ve member of JISC's Committee for Content Services which managed an increasing portfolio of

electronic datasets and services for higher and further education institutions in the UK.

She was until recently vice-chair of the Russell Group Universities IT Directors (the 19 major research universities in the UK) and sits on the Board of the London Metropolitan Netwok which brings JANET and internet access to all the universities and further education colleges in the London area.