

Session 2, Wednesday

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Is it possible to change a Sixties' library in a library for the XXIème century?

Abstract

The refurbishment of the Grenoble law and humanities library had a long gestation period between 1994 and 2002, during which funding was gradually secured, the schedule established, the architect chosen. The project symbolically called "Doc2000" was to meet safety standards and to turn the 1960s library into a documentary resource for the 21st century, making it the lynchpin of the SICD library network and providing suitable premises. The steering committee decided to conduct the works in two phases. The first one, split into four successive or parallel stages, would concern the east wing and the central section, the second would rehabilitate the west wing. In February 2002, the project entered its execution phase. The end of the first complete phase is previewed for May 2004. The second phase is not yet planned.

The basic economics of the project combined an obsolete building with thoughts on the necessary evolution of its services. The renovation had to resolve the problem of a saturated building which was impeding the development of staff practices and user services.

In 2000, the architect, P. Du Besset, redefined the principles of the restructuring and wrote: "The objectives of the restructuring must be the same as for a new building". The prime contractor's objective, besides the safety upgrade, was better user traffic flows, transparency, and spatial redevelopment. In fact, the prime contractor would keep the building shell and profoundly reshape the interior. He created a 500-square-metre store-room and a specific administration part.

New SCID management took over in 2001-01, and decided that a new utilisation of space and the overhaul of the library's internal organisation – to strengthen the documentation network – inevitably went hand in hand. This process generated requests for design changes.

For everyone – library staff, users, university authorities, contractors – the works phase was like sailing down a long, tempestuous river because the works were realized in an occupied site with continuing library public service. At the same time, an onerous and unavoidable librarianship task prior to re-opening the renovated library in autumn 2004 had to be carried out. As the works advanced, the library limits changed. At times, the library was in the middle of the works; at other times, the works were in the middle of the library – both situations were uncomfortable! With each step, fallback strategies had to be devised and adapted to the available space. It brought about big transfers (26 linear kilometres of collections and shelving), adaptation of the public service conditions, a lot of risks for the staff and students, the collections and the building. Twenty-six accidents were recorded.

The documentation resource has been partly adapted to all types of reader. The reading rooms have had a full safety upgrade, and are spacious, rational and quiet. The working spaces let readers use laptop computers. Document searches will be easier, traffic in the building should be simplified. The rehabilitation has also strengthened links within the SICD network, between the university library and the research-unit libraries. But, phase two of the works must be executed to complete our ambitious project and obtain authorisation to open safety services after the west-wing renovation. Phase two will also be important in the continued adaptation of the building

CV

In 1993 I was the chief of the scientific part of the Chambéry University Library (Savoie).

I was responsible for the building and the opening of the new library (2500 m²) on the campus of Le Bourget du Lac.

In 1999 I went to Grenoble to develop the information system of the SICD2. In 2000 I became the chief of the project for the refurbishing of the human, social and law sciences

library. In 2002 this responsibility made me the assistant director of the SICD2.