

A New Chapter In Bodleian Library History



Oxford's world-famous Bodleian Library has enlisted independent consultants Total Logistics to provide a solution to a unique challenge: where to house over eight million of Oxford University's library books. Total Logistics worked closely with the university's teams to develop and define a book storage facility solution to be based in Swindon. The site's groundbreaking ceremony, marking the commencement of construction, took place on 17 September.

As one of six legal deposit libraries in the country – meaning it is entitled to receive a copy of every book published in the UK - the Bodleian Library's stock is growing at a rate of around 170,000 volumes, or five kilometres of shelf space, per year. The new facility will be used to store books that are in low demand and support growth of the collection for the next twenty years. Of the eight million books to be housed, it is expected that just 200,000 books per year will be requested by readers.

In addition to the long term storage solution, the book storage facility also has to facilitate a shorter term challenge: accommodation of most of the New Bodleian stack contents. The New Bodleian Library - built in the 1930s and part of the Bodleian Library - is to have a major refurbishment to meet modern standards as part of Oxford University Library Services' (OULS) development strategy. Once complete, the New Bodleian Library will be renamed the Weston Library and will be repopulated with a selection of material back from the book storage facility.

Total Logistics' solution for the new 300,000 square foot facility needed to be perfectly in line with the National Archive Standards, which state specific guidelines on how books and manuscripts are stored. For instance, volumes will be stored in specially designed storage trays or boxes that are of conservation

alkaline standard. Also, an 11 metre tall narrow-aisled solid shelf racking system will be installed to provide rapid access to the books. In total, the facility will have over 250,000 metres of shelf storage space. Other requirements that had to be considered were temperature and humidity, lighting, air conditioning and filtering, and fire regulations – all of which had to be taken into account in the storage solution design.

Dr Sarah Thomas, Bodley's Librarian and Director of Oxford University Library Services, said: "With a modern storage facility for its extensive collections under construction, the Bodleian is now entering an exciting phase of development of services. The book storage facility will be the catalyst for improved management of its collections and the transformation of the New Bodleian into a special collections library and public galleries.

"Total Logistics is making a substantial contribution to the success of this huge undertaking. Their understanding of the complex nature of this unique storage facility and their attention to detail is impressive and will have a positive impact on library services for years to come."

Martin Brickell of Total Logistics, commented: "This has been a very complex project, requiring a clean and stable preservation environment for the library's books. The facility's climate and environment will be fully controlled and the books will be stored to allow easy retrieval when necessary. At the library's current growth rate, the storage facility will provide capacity for another 20 years."

Readers will be able to request books from the new facility online. Located 28 miles from Oxford, the site in South Marston, Swindon, is on a direct route to the Bodleian Library, allowing for a reliable book-delivery service to the central Oxford reading rooms.