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Ask the expert live chat with Diane Job

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On Friday 10th May 2013, Diane Job, Director of Library Services, discussed the **University's new library (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/alumni/giving/circlesofinfluence/LibNew.aspx)** . Here is the full transcript from the event. The full storify recap can also be viewed here (**http://storify.com/birminghamalum/ask-the-expert-diane-job-director-of-library-servi (http://storify.com/birminghamalum/ask-the-expert-diane-job-director-of-library-servi)**)

Q: Why do we need a new library? And why now?

A: The way students are taught and learn has changed and we need a facility to support this now and in the future.

Q: What is the problem with the current library?

A: It is inflexible. It is created from a core and many extensions making accessibility extremely difficult and it has reached the limit of the number of electrical sockets it can host which is affecting our technological offering.

Q: Why is technology so important in a university library?

A: So many resources and library activities are now electronic, meaning libraries are now used in completely different ways.

Q: How has the student learning experience changed since the current library was built?

A: Students work so differently now - there is a lot more group study which needs flexible study space demand for our space, collections and services is higher than ever because of the increasing diversity of what we offer

Q: How can we predict the new library will meet the needs of future students?

A: We can't predict needs but we're designing a building as flexible & adaptable as possible for future changes in learning.

Q: Will the new library still have books?

A: Yes it will - there will be up to 12km of shelving for print material in the new library.

Q: What will happen to the books you are taking out?

A: They will be stored in the new Research Annexe. We currently have lots of books in stores which only library staff can access.The new annexe will make these available to our users meaning there will be more print material accessible than ever.

Q: What will happen to the smaller libraries on campus?

A: The Harding, Barber Music and Education library collections will be incorporated into the new library and Research Annexe.

Q: What are you most excited about for the new library?

A: The training rooms, which will allow students to access the best of the library & learn how to exploit the collections.

Q: What do you think will be the best feature of the new library?

A: All of it! The training rooms, Academic Skills Centre, the High Demand Collection, the Cultural Gateway to name a few.

Q: What is the Cultural Gateway?

A: A gallery space within the library which will allow us to showcase learning, teaching, research, collections & assets.

Q: What do you mean by 'flexible learning space' and a 'technologically rich environment'?

A: It means the new library will be able to adapt and change over time as technology and learning continue to develop.

Q: Will any of the current books/archives be converted into modernised versions of their former selves?

A: We already have a very large ebook collection & will be able to provide material in the formats most suitable even more.

Q: How will the new library affect the rest of campus?

A: It will become a destination for everybody. Currently few researchers visit us as the space doesn't suit their needs.

Q: What will happen to the old library?

A: It will eventually be demolished after the new library opens, opening up the green heart of campus.

Q: Why has it been decided to build a new library instead of refurbish the current one?

A: We did extensive feasibility studies looking into refurbishment & it just wouldn't be cost effective to improve the facility.

Q: Would it not be cheaper to provide additional IT resources within the current building?

A: No - we would still have to upgrade the basic infrastructure and we are at our limit of electric sockets on the circuit.

Q: Do you not think a modern building will destroy the traditional redbrick campus?

A: No - the library is not an original redbrick building like Aston Webb. The University has a tradition of building the best possible structures available at the time and we have architecture across the campus reflecting the time periods they were made, which the new library will continue to do.

Q: Could the current library not be used for something else?Does it really need to be knocked down?

A: It would still face all of the same accessibility and IT issues, whatever the function.

Q: What is the environmental impact of demolishing the current building?

A: We will stop using an energy-hungry old building the designers predict that the new library could use less than 2/3 of the energy used by the current building.

Q: When considering the new designs, who did you consult with? Were student views considered in the decision making process?

A: Student reps have been involved in the consultation of the new library for many years & we take on board NSS & survey results.

Q: What will the new library look like?

A: Very modern & interesting. It will be a living, breathing building which will be much more open than the current one.

Q: What will happen to the space where the current library is?

A: The original vision for campus will return by restoring the green heart to showcase the campus & create new space for learning.

Q: In what ways will the new university library complement Birmingham city's new library?

A: Between us, the city will have the most amazing collections more accessible to more people than ever before.

Q: Do libraries really have a future in an increasingly digital age?

A: Yes, definitely. Our services are in demand more than ever – we provide access to print & digital collections, learning & research space, help students & staff develop skills, & manage the University's own research publications archive.

Q: What do you think libraries will look like in 20 years' time?

A: Remarkably fresh with fewer print resources and I would imagine more training activity and technology.

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