

Librarian's Note on the current proposal to partition Rooms E, F and G in the Library

The proposal in the Sub-Treasurer's July report has changed considerably from the partitioning proposal put forward and considered by the Library Committee in March. At that time what was contemplated was occasional evening and weekend use of certain Library rooms by E&T. Now the proposal is for regular use throughout the year for 'a range of educational facilities', all the Inn's Committee meetings and external meetings. (31 Committee meetings and 150 E&T events/activities are mentioned.) This means that Rooms E, F and G would be unavailable to Library users in the evenings throughout the year. Barristers wishing to work in those rooms after court or students after lectures would be unable to do so.

Access to Collections

The Commonwealth collections are housed in Rooms E and F and Scottish law is housed in Room G. It is likely that the collections housed in those rooms would be unavailable after 5pm if the rooms were being used for other activities. The Sub-Treasurer's report mentions establishing rules for access to material but E&T is asking for 'use of the rooms without interruption' for their events. It also seems unlikely that Committee meetings could be disturbed to retrieve books.

The Sub-Treasurer's report mentions that Room E contains a major part of our Commonwealth collection and that it could if necessary be moved elsewhere and replaced with a less-used collection. In fact the Commonwealth collection is in Rooms E **and** F and takes up both rooms. It is well-used, as recent surveys show. If it were to be unavailable in the evenings, as it is jointly funded, we would need to ask the other Inns for their views on this, especially as a considerable proportion of the material is not available in other libraries or online. Additionally I am not sure how Library staff are meant to deal with barristers who come to the Library to read or copy a Commonwealth case which might be needed for court the following day and who find that they are denied access to this material. The Sub-Treasurer's report mentions moving the collection to another part of the Library – but all the main collections are well-used and there is no space to switch this whole collection or large parts of it elsewhere.

The ceiling of Room E is at Gallery level. If doors are also installed at this level and meetings are taking place in the room below then parts of other collections (old editions, Hansard, Parliamentary Papers) may also be unavailable. On the other hand, if doors are not installed, this area will not be soundproof, noise will travel and disturb Library users in other rooms and discussions at meetings will not be confidential.

Access to Wi-Fi

Our Wi-Fi access has required careful planning and has been set up in Rooms E, F and G using the best cable routes and the best locations for wireless access points available to us. Implementation of the proposal would mean that Wi-Fi would not be available in these rooms in the evening, which would inconvenience both barristers and students who are accustomed to using this facility and who favour working here. The four wireless PCs in these rooms would also be unavailable.

In the evenings Library users would be left with the option of working in Rooms C, D and J (where there is only a single table). There is currently no access to Wi-Fi in these rooms. The other rooms (E, F and G) are popular not only because of Wi-Fi but because they are side rooms where users can confer more easily. Room D has always been for barrister only use and the last time this was raised at a Library Committee meeting it was felt that it should remain so. However, if this project went ahead that might have to change. Some users have asked us not to turn the Library into an internet café, which is why we have kept Room D reasonably computer free. We had public access PCs sited there but removed them to Rooms C and E when users complained about noisy keyboards. Also there are no power sockets for laptops under the central tables in Room D or the table in Room J and the installation of power cables here would be difficult. *(For more details on how wireless and Wi-Fi would be affected see Appendix 1.)*

Practical Difficulties

The Sub-Treasurer's report says that 'disturbance for Library users is a key factor in determining whether or not this project should proceed' but little thought appears to have been given to the practical implications of these changes for Library users or staff. These include the following.

- If rooms had to be set up for a 5pm meeting or event then preparation would begin long before 5 and we could in theory be asking users to move any time after 4pm if the Inn's lifting and shifting team had work to do elsewhere. Furniture would then be rearranged.
- If refreshments are to be available (which is not stated, but is likely), apart from the question of having food and drink in the Library, catering trolleys would be brought up in the Benchers' lift and have to be taken through Rooms H and D to get to Rooms E, F and G (thus disturbing users working in Room D.)
- Those attending any of the events/meetings (unless they were Benchers) would come to the main Library entrance and have to walk through the Library (past seated users in Rooms C and D) to get to the end rooms.
- Lavatories are on the first and ground floor so anyone needing these would have to walk back through the Library to get to them.
- If the lifting and shifting team had other early morning duties to perform the furniture in Rooms E, F and G might not be rearranged by the time the Library opens at 9am.

The two main Library rooms in which readers would have to work would risk becoming a thoroughfare and one of the things that Library users value (as shown in all the surveys), an atmosphere which is quiet and conducive to research, would not exist in the evenings. The new training facilities in Middle Temple Library are quite different as they are on a separate floor and Library users are not disturbed when rooms on the third floor are in use.

Furniture

Rooms E, F and G are designed and set out for Library use with tables, lights and floor sockets arranged as required. E&T events and Committee meetings would require furniture to be rearranged. Difficulties associated with this are noted by the Director of Estates in his paper. Tables not required for events/meetings would have to be left within the rooms since it would not be possible physically to remove them and all the furniture would have to be put back in place by the time the Library opens at 9am. I can foresee problems with this because of the workload of the lifting and shifting team. The Sub-Treasurer's report suggests that 'furniture in Room E would need to be reconfigured' to meet E & T's needs. If this happened it would obviously affect daytime use of the room by Library users. I am not sure that the dual purpose use suggested in these proposals will work. We could run the risk of downgrading Library facilities and driving users away without providing E&T with the kind of space and facilities they really want, all of which have been incorporated into one of the other new building projects at present under discussion.

Working Environment

Readers particularly value the space and general working environment offered by the Library, as some of the comments made by members and tenants in our recent surveys and in the 2009 feasibility study survey show. (*Some of the comments are attached in Appendix 2.*)

Security

For events involving non-members, security would be an issue. It is not stated who would be responsible for receiving visitors or where this would be done or who would make sure they were off the premises, but this should not be a role for Library staff. How closing of the Library would be done and who would do it if events for members or non-members went on after 8pm (or 7pm on Friday) would also need to be addressed. At present this is done by the member of Library staff on evening duty. The one porter on duty is usually fully occupied elsewhere. If the main Library door on the second floor could not be locked at closing time because it is the main fire exit route then some thought would need to be given to the security of the Library's collections and IT equipment, especially now that it is so easy for anyone to get access to the building via the Pegasus bar.

Fire Safety

The doors within the Library have been adjusted to ensure that they comply with current fire safety regulations. Enquiries would have to be made about fire safety requirements in relation to this proposal, for example the effect of the additional retractable doors creating rooms within rooms, where people might be trapped in case of fire, and the use of the Library for non-Library purposes. These matters would need to be investigated further with the Inn's fire safety consultant.

Usage Figures

The monthly headcount figures circulated with the Sub-Treasurer's report have been averaged out from the Library's daily headcount figures, which are snapshot figures taken at certain times during the day. The total number of people who visit the Library on a daily basis between 5-8pm is higher than the figures mentioned in the report. We have recently installed a people counter in Room A to measure footfall in the Library. In the short time since the people counter was fitted, subtracting the figure taken at 5pm from the 8pm figure indicates that the numbers visiting the Library during those hours range from 35 to 71, with the average being between 40 and 50.

On a recent late evening duty I noted that users were working in Rooms C, D, E, F, G, and J. Series in specific rooms were being consulted, books were being moved from room to room, subscription databases were being accessed and the Wi-Fi facility was being used. The freedom users currently have to carry out research in the way that they choose in the Library would be curtailed in the evenings if this proposal went ahead.

Weekends

On use at weekends, the fact that we are open one weekend in four during legal terms as part of an established rota agreed with the other Inns is not mentioned in the reports. The order of Saturday opening follows an agreed pattern and is planned a year ahead. This agreement with the other Inns, which has been in place since 2005 when Saturday opening first started, would need to be accommodated. We also have to allow for other maintenance work to be completed at the weekend because it cannot be carried out during the week (e.g. maintenance of comfort cooling). Use for some of the E&T events listed indicated that theatre style seating was needed. I am not sure how our rooms could accommodate this. If the rooms were being set up during opening hours with chairs being brought in then it would be extremely disruptive for users. A few of the E&T events listed would take place throughout the day e.g. Schools days and Education days. It would be disruptive and unfair on Library users to expect them to give up these rooms for the whole of a working day.

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Notes on the Library Partitioning Proposal and its effect on IT provision

There is a difference between “Wi-Fi” and “wireless”. The former refers to freely-available internet access for anyone with any device within range. The latter refers to access to the Inn’s data network (online catalogues and subscription databases) being provided to Library PCs wirelessly.

Wireless and Wi-Fi are provided by two access points in the Library, one at the far end of Room E and one in the Gallery above Room A. The Wi-Fi server is in the Server room in the Gallery.

The current seated IT provision on the main floor of the Library is as follows:

- Room C has five public access PCs, all of which are on the Library’s wireless network.
- Rooms E and F have in total four public access PCs.
- Rooms E, F and G are also covered by the Library’s Wi-Fi: a freely-available (password-protected) internet service for Library users.

Wi-Fi users expect to be able to plug their laptops into power sockets, rather than relying on battery-power. Floor sockets have been installed for this purpose under the central tables in Rooms E, F and G.

If the partitioning project went ahead, soundproof doors would be in place at the entrances to Rooms E, F and G. When closed in the evenings, these doors would have a very serious effect on the Wi-Fi and wireless availability in Rooms E, F and G.

If Room E was unavailable for Library use, we would lose access to three public-access database PCs and Wi-Fi. The Wi-Fi signal in Rooms F and G would also be severely reduced.

If Room F was unavailable, we would lose access to the Commonwealth PC and Wi-Fi, and the Wi-Fi signal in Room G would be severely reduced.

If Room G was unavailable we would just lose access to Wi-Fi in that room.

Simultaneous use of more than one room after 5pm would remove access to four public access database PCs, and make our current Wi-Fi provision non-existent.

If all three rooms were unavailable in the evenings Library users would have to work in Room C or D. To provide wireless and Wi-Fi access in these rooms provision of additional access points and power sockets would be needed and this would entail additional cabling and wiring work.

We need to keep the current provision of wireless and Wi-Fi for Library users during the day. Therefore we are against moving either of our existing wireless access points, as this would reduce their range in the rooms they currently cover. We are also against adapting the Gallery access point (above Room A) to provide Wi-Fi, as this would reduce its wireless capability. (It is already serving nine public access database PCs, in the Gallery and Room C).

If two new wireless access points were added at Gallery level above Room C and Room D this would mean we maintained current provision as well as ensuring provision when certain rooms were unavailable. However, in both cases this would involve extensive new cabling back to the Server Room, and the purchase of two new Access Points at £500 each. The cabling work would have to be organised by the Estates Department.

Room C has power sockets in the skirting boards next to the side tables, but public access PCs are already occupying the tables there.

The central tables in Room C have a total of 6 power sockets (connected to the table-lighting power circuit). As these are in the lighting floor boxes, they are not suitable for public use. To adapt them for public use, we would have to create desk-mounted power blocks, which would have to be sited at each end or in the middle of each table. If they were in the middle, this could involve cutting holes in the centre of each table.

Room D has power sockets in the skirting boards next to the side tables, but there are no floor-mounted power sockets under the central tables. Power from the skirting board circuit could be routed to central tables, which would again involve cutting holes in floors and possibly tables. Alternatively floor sockets, similar to the ones installed in Rooms E, F and G, could be installed but this would entail removal of floorboards to do the wiring. (In 1997, when floor sockets were installed in Rooms E, F and G, the work cost £2500). This work would also have to be organised by the Estates Department.

Comments from the 2009 Library Survey

- *The value of access to all materials in one place and in an appropriate environment is incalculable and assists the Bar in providing an excellent service.*
- *I find the layout and structure of the Inner Temple Library much more conducive to pleasant and productive research.*
- *The value of a quiet place in which all materials are accessible whether in hard copy or online must not be ignored.*
- *One of the best things about the library is the environment, which is quiet and spacious.*
- *Inner provides a quiet place with an amazing working environment. I should know I've just written a book there.*
- *The key resource the Inner Temple provides is the space, the 'real estate' if you will in which to work, together with hard copies.*
- *I have become very attached to the elegant and attractive Inner Temple Library over many years, ever since it was built, with much creative thought, after the wartime destruction of the old library.*
- *[The Library] ... offers for all practitioners a quiet place to work away from telephone and human interruptions of chambers. Also chambers are increasingly under pressure of space and resources therefore the Library is a valued and essential part of Bar life.*
- *Photocopying a few pages and reading them elsewhere doesn't serve my purpose, whereas the ability to settle down, read in peace and cross-refer to other works, allows me to use my time to best effect. This requires there to be no obvious pressure on space in the library.*
- *...It is the place to which I retreat when I need to be able to work without interruption.*
- *The space available in the Library (and particularly the relatively low 'packing density' of people in there, providing an environment most conducive to research), together with the hard copies are two of its most significant resources.*
- *Inner Temple's [Library] has an environment which is more conducive to research and work than any other of the Inns' libraries. Having that environment in which to work has been key to my being able to successfully revise at post and undergraduate level.*
- *The layout, atmosphere and light make Inner Temple the most conducive library to work in.*