

50 YEARS AT WHITEKNIGHTS



UNIVERSITY OF READING LIBRARY 1964–2014

A NEW LIBRARY

The history of the University of Reading's Library stretches back well over 100 years, beginning with a few books on a single bookcase.

At the London Road campus it occupied first a room in The Acacias, then from the 1920s to 1963 the purpose-built, imposing but impractical Old Library Building.

By 1946, the University had acquired Whiteknights Park enabling significant expansion. The new library was the third academic building planned there (after the boiler-house, Faculty of Letters and Physics buildings).¹

¹ Holt, J.C. *The University of Reading: the first fifty years*. Reading U. P., 1977. 378.4229-HOL

CHANGING SPACES FOR CHANGING TIMES

• 1969



Although the new Library was intended for a student population of 3,000, already there was talk of an extension to the east. Whilst in 1963 Reading only had 1,537 students, it aimed for 3,700 by 1967-68. In fact there were nearly 5,000 by 1969 and University numbers – and aspirations for expansion – kept rising.

• 1960

Initial designs date from 1958. Construction began in 1960 and was completed in late 1963, having been delayed by a serious roof fire and ferocious January storms. Library stock arrived in the December vacation.



• 1964

The official opening ceremony took place on 15 May 1964 when the Chancellor, Lord Bridges cut a ceremonial ribbon beside the Library's architect, Frederick Preston. It was followed by a special degree congregation in the 2nd Floor Reading Room, bestowing honorary degrees on Preston, publishers, librarians and authors including W.H.Auden.



2000

In January 2000, 'S@il', the largest PC lab on campus came into the Library. Computers were now essential for writing, communicating and research since the 1990s rise of the internet, but students still wanted to be in the Library.



2007



In 2007, £1 million of Ground Floor refurbishment created new areas for student group work—an increasingly important aspect of study—a new Course Collection for in-demand course texts, and a café.

1985

The Library extension was agreed in 1981 and opened in 1985. It reconfigured the north side, adding stack space on three subject floors, a 1st Floor current periodicals area (now S@iL) and Ground Floor administrative space. A new entrance was let into the west side, replacing a north entrance (which was enclosed to become the Short-Loan Collection) and a south entrance (now the CaféLibro window beyond the self-service machines).



2006

In 2006, University archives and special collections relocated to a new state-of-the-art store and reading room service at Redlands Road, alongside the Museum of English Rural Life, releasing 1st and 5th Floor space at Whiteknights for student study space.

2014

By 2009 contemporary students needed the Library to provide power at each desk for laptops and mobile devices, and more group study areas. Achieving this across the four upper floors by 2014 took a major rewiring project, our Collections Project reviewing all 1.2 million-plus items, acquiring an Off-site Store for lesser-used research material, and a fantastic £4.4 million refurbishment.



LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Times have changed since 1964 when students were largely full-time and locally resident and the new Library opened only term-time weekdays until 9.45pm. From 2014 the University also


committed to permanently funding 24-hour Library opening for students who now include part-timers and those with jobs who need, or prefer, to study early or late.

Never more popular, the Library remains at the heart of the student experience so the University continues to invest. Future developments will refurbish the first and ground floors, and exterior.



B11835 1014

50 YEARS AT WHITEKNIGHTS

 For more information,
please contact:

library@reading.ac.uk
Tel (0118) 378 8770

www.reading.ac.uk/library



2011