

## Physical Access to Special Collections

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015

1. Special Collections used to be in Main Library with collections adjacent to the reading room. Moved out to Library Annexe in 2010/11 to allow upgrade of Main Library. The reading room was a portacabin accommodating six readers. It was stuffy and either cold or too hot but was at least close to the collections – apart from what is in deep storage.
2. December 2013 we opened a reading room in the converted Martyrs Church building. This is a much more pleasant environment for the readers – certainly the best of the three reading rooms I have worked in. There is a problem with the climate control – there is none and at time the room is much too warm and too dry for the collection items, especially vellum.
3. This room can accommodate 14 readers with generous working space. Sockets are in the floor to allow the tables to be re-configured for talks or other uses outside core hours. The staff area is separated by a two metre partition. All windows in the reading room have blinds to exclude natural light for print viewing but there is the large window in the staff area which we cannot shield.
4. However, this reading room is at a considerable distance from the Annexe where our collections are still housed and my team is split between the locations. This causes a few operational difficulties with the need for real-time transfer of information. To control the order and production processes for the reading room, we rely on several different systems.
5. We use Outlook calendar to control the bookings for our reading room. Readers have to request their material before 3pm on the working day prior to their visit. They can email, book online through our website, telephone or

ask in person at our reception desk. We encourage the first two of these methods. This is a screenshot from Monday when we had seven readers booked in, one of whom cancelled, the yellow column. We also have a seminar room within Martyrs which is used for meetings and teaching. It was not in use on Monday. I also have my own calendar and the general departmental one which shows holidays and other commitments.

6. The appointment is put into the diary. Sometimes this is straight-forward, sometimes this involves a dialogue with the reader to ascertain exactly what is required. The requested items are listed and their locations within the store, or stores are added. More about that later. Once we close the appointment it should be visible to the reading room staff working at the Annexe.
7. Some days are not as straightforward as last Monday. This is the diary for a day last November when we have five readers booked in, one of whom cancelled and we had a class being taught in the seminar room for which original materials had been requested. We also had a schools mini conference in Lower College Hall in the morning, the launch of the Mediaeval St Andrews App in the afternoon and then a book launch in the King James Library in the evening. Each of these events had its own requirements for supporting items
8. Location Guides. I mentioned that we put the location into the diary for every item requested, where we can locate it. This is a section of our Rare books location guide. Our guides are spreadsheets because we originally tried to use an Access database but if two people had it open and one made a change, the database corrupted. Excell spreadsheets are more robust. I would draw your attention to the bottom of the screen and the number of pages on this guide. There are 27 tabs visible in this s-w section
9. This is the equivalent manuscript location guide

10. At the annexe a slip has to be written for each item to be fetched, giving description, classmark or reference, location and name of the requester. The slips are self duplication and the yellow part is always left on the shelf where the item has been removed and the blue or white part accompanies the item while it is out of place. The books and manuscripts are fetched, wrapped in acid-free tissue and packed into Really Useful boxes for their journey.
11. We use a task management software package (Clovis II) to manage the consignments and produce a consignment note that accompanies the boxes. This forms a checklist when the boxes reach Martyrs, are repacked for the return journey and when they are unpacked on their return to the Annexe.
12. In Martyrs new readers register using the white form and the blue form is their reader card which they are asked to produce before entering the reading room. There is a beige form made out for each reader visit. It gives information of the reader's name and number, when they arrived and left and where they sat. The reverse is where we list each item they see. All this information is captured in our Access Reader database. This is done by the person sitting at reception who also cancels off the consultation slips after the items have been returned to the shelves. So we have now input this information into the calendar, onto consultation slips, into Clovis, onto the beige card and into the reader database.
13. We approached the Lean team to help us look at our processes with the intention of building a business case for obtaining a data management system to streamline our processes, specifically a product called Aeon which is the only bespoke system designed for Special Collections departments. Fin and Simone came and timed our processes and this is the chart produced. It is very bright and busy and quite fun looking. The blue columns are the transport to and from Martyrs so little can be done about those. Looking more closely at the first task

14. This is the breakdown of the booking process and you will see that emailing the reader is the most time consuming part of the process. This is because we often have to negotiate timings of visits and amounts of material that can be produced.
15. We then had a Rapid improvement event which, unusually was not held in Lean Central but at the Annexe and Martyrs over two days so that the whole process could be observed. This is the action list produced. Some were easy to implement, one was outside scope, some were cancelled as there were good reasons for not changing the process and the others are being attended to at the moment.