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## Condon to Gates: Some Lessons

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I told our editor that I could not possibly write this short piece until after we had moved and been in our new digs for a couple of months. It wasn't just because I could not find the time, but because, some days, when I was in the middle of it, I was not sure I could write anything positive about our move from Condon Hall to William H. Gates Hall.

So, now I have perspective. It's hard to remember how stressful it really was. A good thing, I think!

The library move went without a hitch (except for delays caused by installation problems with our compact moveable shelving). Nikki Pike, planner extraordinaire, got the collection organized after months of decisions about where specific titles should go and hundreds of hours of marking and remarking the over 400,000 print volumes in our collection, ably coordinated by Richard Jost and his remarkable tech services crew.

A Bekins crew moved the collection. Bekins hired a high school track team for the summer, and they worked hard. Because Condon's aisles were so narrow and the Geology Department needed to build big laboratories for their temporary (2-3 year) occupancy of Condon Hall, the stacks were taken down as quickly as they removed the books.

During our 3 1/2 month closure, reference and access services continued to provide services to the law school community and others through email and phone reference. They met the challenge head on of finding answers to questions when the collection was in a different place every day.

Our mantra for months was: "Everything will be different. That's okay. Different is not bad, just different. We can cope. We are flexible. We really WANT to be in our new place." We knew that many things would be much better -- and, now that we're here and moved in, they are! Stack aisles are ADA compliant; lots of staff have better working conditions; almost our entire collection is completely accessible to all library users; we have much better security (one entrance and exit!); library users all have access to generous work spaces and to the wireless network; we have new furniture, stacks, end panels, and book trucks; we have real growth space for the collection.

Some of us looked forward to the opportunity to clean up files, sort through papers, and get better organized. Some of us had trouble imagining what it would be like to move. Finally, the law school move coordinator decided it was time for the library staff to move to Gates in early August.

We packed our last boxes on a Friday and did our grieving. Oh, yes. Condon Hall was not perfect, but we knew it inside and out. We knew its wrinkles and warts (and cement). For most of us, it was the only home we knew for the Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library. Condon Hall is where I studied in 1975-76, learning about my profession from Mrs. Gallagher. We knew where to park or what bus to take; we knew where to find the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated and the USCA; we knew how long it would take to get to a classroom or the Dean's office; we knew which doors to lock and the shortest way to the faculty office on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor.

Monday morning we arrived at William Gates Hall. Our computers were working on our desks, our phones were connected, and our boxes were stacked ready for unpacking. It was a remarkably smooth transition. Except

Our first few weeks in Gates did still present many challenges. Our office furniture was not completely installed; we couldn't easily reach the operable windows we had worked so hard to have; the staff bathrooms were like an echo chamber; no one could really unpack because our bookcases, filing cabinets, and desk

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hutches had not been installed; vendors did not like the fact that we did not have a street address any more and insisted that we give them one; staff had to learn what bus to take and where to park; we had to provide services to the law school community while they were still in Condon Hall; we had to remember our Husky cards since we could not get into the closed library without it; library tables and carrels were still being installed; the water dispenser in our gorgeous new refrigerator was not hooked up; there were no instructions for operation of the new dishwasher in the staff lounge; we had old and new furniture while we awaited delivery of many items. . .

As I look back at this list of challenges, it seems rather ridiculous. Such minor problems, really. But I must say, on some days, they took on an aspect of tall rugged peaks. All of us took so much ownership in our new space that the idea that some things were not as they were supposed to be was, well, hard to take. Thank goodness for Jonathan Franklin who kept a cheerful, positive attitude through this whole time. What is not right can be fixed, he would say over and over and over again - maybe not tomorrow or the next day, but eventually. In fact, all the staff helped keep us patient; when one person was heading over the edge, someone else would help pull him or her back to safety.

Now, mind you, I am not just whining for the sake of whining, or remembering all this to bring back nightmares. But I learned some lessons I thought I would share.

- Expect the unexpected. Plan as much as you can, but realize that you cannot control everything! Someone once told me that with moving/building projects, there is much you cannot control, but you can control how you react to the situations that arise.
- Be flexible and adaptable. But no amount of saying it will make it so. Prepare yourself for change but don't be surprised if it stresses you out anyway. This surprised me the most.
- Laugh a lot and don't be afraid to talk about what seems to be stressing you out. Others probably feel the same way. Talking through the challenges (even if they are small) can be therapeutic.
- Celebrate milestones and party as much as you can. We had a goodbye to Condon party as well as a welcome to Gates party. The first day we were in Gates we had pizza, and as I looked around the room of shell-shocked staff I knew we would make it. But there was great comfort in food and some discussion about the many things that were not quite ready yet.
- Everyone will handle a move in different ways. Expect that staff will be stressed at different times throughout this process. Have snacks and food available. Encourage casual interactions and conversations about people's concerns or worries.
- Communicate with all staff often. There are so many details it is hard to do this, but the more staff know about when something might be fixed or what some of the reported problems are, the more likely they are to be patient. Sharing what you do know, even if it is not the answer you want, is better than being in the dark.
- Be sure all staff computers work immediately. In many places, this is not under the library's control, but stress levels would have been over the top if we had not been able to do simple things like checking email from the first moment.
- The longer you work on a project, the more you are invested in its outcome. Try to keep the big picture in mind!

We did many things right in planning the new library space. It has character and yet it is functional. It is a space we can truly claim is the intellectual commons of the Law School. The dedication of William H. Gates Hall celebrates the life and contributions of a giant of a lawyer in the Seattle legal community. We are very proud to have our beautiful new building bear his name. But I must say that I did not feel truly at ease until Marian Gallagher's portrait was hung outside the main library entrance in Gates Hall. Then I knew we were home.

\*Thanks to the entire Gallagher Law Library staff who gave me a chance to get a perspective of this process and who made it all work! This move was a TEAM effort. Thanks also to Mary Whisner, whose feedback and editing made this a more polished effort. Hyperbole and mistakes are mine alone.