

# How to Survive a Library Move

*Control the move instead of it controlling you*

by Jennifer S. Murray

photos by Brant Bender

*Terry Psarras, manager of litigation support and library services at Carlton Fields PA, discusses how to manage your impending library move during “Moving and Downsizing Private Law Firm Libraries: Drive the Process through Strategic Leadership.”*



There are universal truths for library moves. Every law librarian encounters similar moving issues, regardless of the type of law library in which they work. This revelation came to me while attending “Moving and Downsizing Private Law Firm Libraries: Drive the Process through Strategic Leadership” at the 2005 AALL Annual Meeting.

*Clay Pendergrast, of HOK Interiors, notes the big trend he sees in architectural design is a focus on productivity, optimization of space, and increased mobility of employees.*

Having recently transitioned from one type of law library to another, I have become attuned to the similarities and differences among various library types. Library moves wouldn't have been a similarity I expected. But, read on, and I think you'll agree.

During the program, Christine Scherzinger, director of library and research services at Duane Morris LLP in Philadelphia; Terry Psarras, manager of litigation support and library services at Carlton Fields PA in Tampa, Florida; and Clay Pendergrast, of HOK Interiors, spoke to attendees about how private law librarians can survive the moving and downsizing process.

As Pendergrast noted, we can identify certain trends in the design of most workplaces. The big trend he sees in his business of architectural design is a focus on productivity, optimization of space, and increased mobility of employees. And while the traditional view of the law firm was isolated space, paper-based, and immobile, the new view of the law firm is teamwork, technology-based, and people working from locations outside of their offices. He has also noted that square footage averages for office space are decreasing across law firms. Sounds like almost any work space these days and not just the law firm libraries, doesn't it?

How do these trends affect library moves? The answer is that a library move typically is accompanied by the decrease in office space, or downsizing. But do not fear if a move is in your future. Psarras and Scherzinger put together a program to tell you exactly how to manage your impending library move. While the program was not organized in this manner, the information it provided can most easily be organized into three categories: before the move, during the move, and after the move.

### Before the Move

First, it is critical to know what you do and why. As Scherzinger states, information gathering is essential. While you may know what you do, how would you document this to a stakeholder at your workplace? One way to document what you do is metrics reports, such as statistics. User surveys are another way to gather information. Best practices guides are also helpful. You can also make note of the latest innovations and what your competition is doing. However you go about your information gathering, just be prepared to use it for documentation purposes. This will help you communicate and achieve buy-in with the stakeholders in your organization.

It is also important to know your space. You need to know not only what space your

library currently has, but also how your space could be improved to suit your future needs. For example, do you need scanners or other technology? And, of course, no library move can be discussed unless you know your linear footage. Also, do not just think about the book space. Keep in mind the workrooms, back office space, and staff space you need.

Psarras stressed that long-term planning is critical and does not just involve planning for the move of the books. You must plan for the move of staff and their reactions. Think of the physical layout for the staff. For example, what is the distance from the break room? Will they lose windows? Listen to them as well. Understand that emotional responses might not be based in reason. Such communication will go a long way toward maintaining morale. It also helps to find ways to invest staff in the moving process.

### During the Move

Perhaps the biggest advantage during a move is knowing your organization. Scherzinger advises to keep in touch with other departments that are moving, such as records or accounting. They can help you. For example, Scherzinger found out that she only had a small amount of time to order the furniture for her library. In talking with a colleague in another department about her predicament, she was put in contact with the firm's furniture vendor. She was then able to have the vendor come in and assist her with identifying what furniture she needed and placing the order.

Psarras also recommends interacting with the movers of your library. Meet with them before the move. Keep them happy to get your books put in the right place. Sweet talk them.

If something doesn't go your way, look for a way to make it an opportunity. Engage in negotiation, problem solving, and creative thinking. If your library space is reduced, will this be your chance to finally get rid of that set you've been asking about for years? If you have to get rid of books, can they be donated and provide good PR for the firm? In other words, take the lemons and make lemonade.

You will also need to make decisions about providing service while moving. Will you give some employees electronic access at either the new or old location to continue offering service? If so, think through what they will need, e.g., an Internet connection and access to passwords. This will require coordination with the IT department to troubleshoot issues such as ensuring network connectivity.

Most importantly, you must be flexible and adapt to the stress. Remain calm and be

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### Before the Move

1. **Know what you do and why.** Document this to a stakeholder at your workplace with metrics reports, user surveys, and/or best practices guides.
2. **Know your space.** Know what your library currently has, but also how your space could be improved. Do you need scanners or other technology? Keep in mind workrooms, back office space, and staff space you'll need.
3. **Know your staff and their reactions.** Think of the physical layout for the staff. Listen to them and understand that emotional responses might not be based in reason. Such communication will go a long way toward maintaining morale.

### During the Move

4. **Know your organization.** Keep in touch with other departments that are moving, such as records or accounting. They can help you.
5. **Interact with the movers.** Meet with them before the move. Keep them happy to get your books put in the right place.
6. **Look for ways to turn problems into opportunities.** Engage in negotiation, problem solving, and creative thinking. If you have to get rid of books, can they be donated and provide good PR for the firm?
7. **Decide if and how you will provide service during the move.** Think through what staff will need, e.g., an Internet connection and access to passwords. Coordinate with the IT department to troubleshoot.
8. **Be flexible and adapt to the stress!** Remain calm and be a leader.

### After the Move

9. **The move isn't over until you are satisfied.** Prioritize what additional work you will need to do and when you want to do it.
10. **Promote and market the library.** Prepare to counteract the perception that a loss of space equals loss of power. And don't forget to promote the new location.

a leader. Not to stress you out or anything, but everyone around you will be looking to you for your guidance and leadership.

### After the Move

Don't think that your move will be over as soon as you get into the new space and unpack. Psarras reminds us that the move isn't over until you are satisfied. And you probably won't be satisfied for a while. So after the move, you will need to prioritize what additional work you will need to do and when you want to do it.

Your library move will also provide you with a great opportunity to promote and market the library. But you should prepare to counteract the perception that a loss of space equals a loss of power. And don't forget to promote the new location.

I found this program to be fascinating and most informative. I would have liked to learn more about the subject, but no bibliography was provided. However, leaving a program wanting more cannot be considered a bad thing. It was almost enough to make me want to try my hand at moving a library. Almost. ■

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