

# Saving Space

*The O'Melveny & Myers LLP Library makes the most of a new, smaller space*

By Holly M. Riccio



O'Melveny and Myers' sixth floor library features ample storage space for back issues of newspapers and library supplies.

In 1988, when the San Francisco office of O'Melveny & Myers LLP opened its doors, six attorneys were working in a temporary space while offices in a new building were being designed, built, and staffed. After moving in the summer of 1989, about a dozen lawyers occupied more than two floors totaling approximately 30,000 square feet. Over the next 20 years, the firm grew to include more than 100 attorneys with offices spanning five and a half floors, and a library of more than 2,300 linear feet.

At the time of the decision to move to a new building, space was at a premium and the library was cut to 1,700 linear feet in order to create more offices for attorneys. Many items once considered essential for a law firm library, such as the *Federal Reporter* series, were cancelled and weeded down to make room for a core collection of

primary and secondary legal materials. Even then, the remaining library space was far from comfortable: once half was converted into attorneys' offices, there was no longer room for a work table or places to sit—instead, there were pull-out shelves and kick stools.

It wasn't the ideal situation, but the attorneys and staff in the office understood why it was necessary. "Managing competing interests—need for more office space and a desire for space to sit in the library—is challenging," says Tina Shinnick, office administrator for northern California. "Open communication and dialogue between the office administrator, managing partner, and library manager are key to ensuring buy-in and cooperation at all levels." When the firm decided to move to a new office, the attorneys and staff eagerly anticipated a future space that would allow for books, tables, chairs, and much more.

The office move process began back in December 2006, when library staff formed the "New Digs Committee" and met regularly to discuss plans for the new space. In July 2007, each department also spoke with architects from Gensler about their workflow, processes, needs, and "wish list." Shortly thereafter, the architects presented their initial plans, and the library's future started to take shape. The new space would consist of a main library space as well as hallway shelving on other floors, just as the existing space did. While the linear footage would be close to that of the existing space, staff members knew that once they reviewed the collection and weeded items that were no longer necessary, the new space would accommodate the library quite comfortably, with ample room for future growth.

One of the biggest changes from the existing space to the new space

involved areas for the library staff. The San Francisco office consists of two professional librarians as well as an outside filing service. Over the past year, the San Francisco staff transitioned almost all of their library check-in functions to our Los Angeles office, allowing more time to focus on research projects and requests. As a result, they did not plan for as large a workroom area as was in their existing space. Instead, they planned for two offices, both right next to the main library, and a workstation for the filer. Losing the workroom area, however, meant finding other storage areas for items such as MCLE collections. Luckily, they were able to use filing cabinets in common areas to organize and store these materials.

With the move to the new space quickly approaching, Library and Calendar Manager Holly Riccio sat down with her office administrator to discuss current plans for the library. The original plan included a large round

table (similar to the one the library had and then lost in the original space) and chairs, with the addition of a pop-up box in the middle of the table for plugging in laptops for power and Internet access. In addition, the entire library space would have wireless access throughout. After some discussion about the space, a

three-high bank of shelving for reference materials, which would also serve as a physical divider between the work table and the stacks, was also added. Staff members also decided to add two soft seating chairs and a small table between the three-high and the stacks, thereby adding a casual seating area, in addition to the more formal work table.

The only surprise arose when the shelving company started working with the architect. While the original plans called for the library stacks to be seven shelves high, the height of the ceilings on this floor would only allow the stacks to be six shelves high. Collections with shorter books, such as the *Code of*

*Federal Regulations* and the *United States Code Annotated*, could still be stacked in seven shelves, but the rest of the collection could not. Luckily, since staff members were just starting the process of shelf reading and weeding when this discovery was made, they simply had to weed a bit more judiciously than initially planned. They were also able to cancel print versions of treatises and resources that were not as heavily used and rely instead on electronic versions. In addition, other last minute changes, such as storing newspaper back issues inside built-in cabinets in the new library, freed up additional banks of shelving.



before



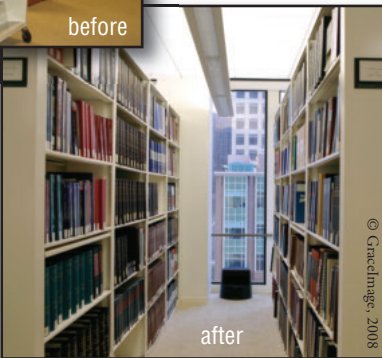
after

Soft seating is now available in all satellite library locations as well as in the main library, which also includes a large work table.

The new library stacks are illuminated with both overhead and natural light, and provide ample room to work and use materials in the aisles.



before



after

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## Going Green

Another large component of the new space was an effort to “go green.” The new San Francisco office includes building design elements that reduce environmental impact, promote water and energy efficiency, increase the overall indoor environmental quality, and use sustainable materials, furniture, and building techniques. In fact, the renovated space is expected to achieve silver certification under the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. During the construction phase, close to 80 percent of the construction waste was diverted from landfills. Some of the green features in the library include carpeting made from low-emitting materials to increase indoor air quality, low-emission paints and sealants, and glass walls that allow more light to penetrate to the core of the building. In addition, staff members continue their commitment to transition from electronic to print resources, meaning they purchase and use less paper in the form of books, supplements, pocket parts, and loose leaf updates.

## Brilliant Results

The result of many months of planning and preparation is a very functional and organized library collection. The main library stacks are very light, both from

the daylight coming in and the overhead lighting in the aisles. There are pull-out shelves in almost every aisle that can be pulled out and in use while still allowing enough space for others to move around comfortably. There is ample space to work and use the print collection at either the round work table or the three-high shelving area. On the floors with satellite libraries, there are large multi-

purpose areas for attorneys to gather, use library materials, and work. “The goal of both the main library space and the satellite library locations was to create a collaborative space where attorneys and staff can work, conduct research, and share ideas with each other,” said C. Brophy Christensen, a partner and the chair of the New Digs Committee. “Our library has traditionally served as a place where people come together and interact in a comfortable, casual setting, and our new space allows us to achieve this and more. It takes the concept of community space to a whole new level.”

Although the physical library presence as measured in linear feet is actually less than it used to be, the library’s presence in our new space is one that reflects the changes and innovation made possible by the technological advances of recent years. “This move and new library build-out provided a great opportunity to continue our transition from print sources to electronic resources, and allowed us to realize the best and most efficient use of the library’s physical footprint in the office,” said Cheryl Smith, firm-wide director of information services. As library staff members move forward in their new space, the library will continue to communicate a strong, positive presence that extends far beyond the library walls. ■

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