





pompey chimes

We never thought we'd see the day when we'd start using phrases such as 'It wasn't like that in our day'. But that day has definitely and shockingly arrived. We've come to look at the recent project undertaken at the University Library, Portsmouth, and this is not how we remember things (and some of us are only in our 30s!).

For a start, those three-month long (a bit of journalistic license there) Christmas breaks are no longer part of the curriculum, while the austere, nervy atmosphere of the hallowed library has been replaced by, well, an exciting, contemporary and inviting space. In our day three stone tomes were dragged to ancient wooden seats while an equally ancient dragon 'shhhhd' at your groaning muscles. That certainly isn't the case at this forward-thinking seat of learning. In fact, the entire nature of the library – from the once simple act of furniture provision through to technology enhancements and ways of working – has >>>>>>>



time following best practice in energy efficiency. We also wanted a new toilet block and a number of smaller rooms for private meetings and intensive working.'

The 3,600 sq m extension to the existing university library establishes a clear and

attractive entrance plaza and gateway to the park. The extension provides a new triple height entrance, an IT facility, a café and a series of seminar rooms around a planted courtyard. The two new upper floors contain the library stack areas and reading

carrels overlooking the park and also connecting back to the existing building.

With such a large number of students and facilities to be catered for in the extended library, purchasing and furniture provision became a major issue for Ian and the team. A decision was made to veer away from the traditional – very much in keeping with the project as a whole – and look to something new.

With a great deal of previous experience of educational facilities, the university chose Tangent for its furniture needs. A&D Manager Paul Carroll tells us about the traditional route to market when it comes to such institutions. 'What we have found is that some purchasing departments have 20-year established relationships with furniture manufacturers, and it becomes near impossible to break that. It is now more about talking to the end user – the person actually in charge of the facility – and saying 'You might not actually be getting the best deal here by simply relying on your purchasing department or by relying on your purchasing consortiums'. Most of the time heads of departments really don't want to be that heavily involved in purchasing >>>>>





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'It was through Southampton University that we were contacted by Portsmouth – and we have since been contacted by other universities who went to the opening at Portsmouth. The architects for the project were Penoyre & Prasad – and I have to say they were excellent. We enjoyed a really good working relationship. It was nice to be able to work with them.

'We were given a brief to provide something extremely flexible – something that could be moved around easily. They wanted something that would work equally well as a reading or studying position or had the capability for data and power management for computers. This was one of the largest computer rooms I have ever worked on, with nearly 200 computers (there are in fact over 300 computers across the library in total) in the one room, so

there was the need for heavy duty power and data. We supplied them with our Svelte system, which has vertical and horizontal cable management.

'Also, the system is height adjustable through the legs, which fits in with the DDA compliances – which are extremely important when it comes to universities. In total we supplied 850 desks, of which approximately half are computer based.'

Ian made the final decision when it came to the finishes used here at the library – with, we are told, just a little coaxing from the architect!

A striking, contemporary blue finish was chosen for the furniture, which works quite brilliantly with the clean finishes used throughout the structure itself.

The new extension has dramatically improved the experience of arrival and circulation of the library. It is approached from the Library Plaza, a new public space created on the axis of Cambridge Road and Burnaby Road. Welcoming students into the library is a triple height, light-filled hall, orienting them in a dynamic space

interconnecting with the existing and new parts of the library. The flexible building now allows for variable equally flexible working patterns, including 24 hour access to IT areas.

24 hour access? It just goes to show how far the modern library does differ from its hallowed ancestors. Back in our day nothing was 24 hour – including the length of the days. We think ●

essential ingredients

Client:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portsmouth University – The University Library
Architect:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Penoyre & Prasad 020 7250 3477
Systems Furniture:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tangent 0870 990 4150
Staff Furniture & Storage:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tangent 0870 990 4150