

*Moving to a New Ideal – A Relocation of a Performing Arts Library*

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**ABSTRACT:** This report examines the experiences of a state university branch library relocation across campus to a new facility still under construction. The branch library possessed varying formats including books, scores, recordings, special collections, instruments, and office equipment. Multiple dependencies – construction issues and the subsequent relocations of other campus libraries – influenced the relocation and are also discussed. Recommendations are offered for working with professional movers, composing a request for proposal from contractors, and negotiating a bureaucratic procurement process. Furthermore, the report provides a model for how to plan and execute such a relocation, while analyzing situations to avoid.

## **Introduction**

In late September 2001, a gala celebration was held for the naming of the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library at the University of Maryland. This gala featured the opening of a gallery exhibition, *Building for You*, highlighting the new technology and service configurations of the one-year old facility. Located in the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the Michelle Smith Library was the product of over ten years of designing and planning. The resultant cross-campus relocation in August 2000 was a relatively complex endeavor requiring coordination and contributions from all levels of staff, reallocation and careful tracking of resources, and a relentless commitment to all phases of project completion.

This report examines the experiences leading up to the relocation and its aftermath.<sup>1</sup> From a perspective of over ten years, there are still lessons to learn. It is the hope of the author to provide a model for how to plan and execute such a relocation, while analyzing situations to avoid.<sup>2</sup>

## **Institutional and Situational Context**

At the University of Maryland, the predecessor to a performing arts library was the Music Library. Established in the Hornbake Library building in 1983, the Music Library was the product of a merger of three distinct units including a general circulating and reference music collection extracted from the former Fine Arts Library, an archival unit called Special Collections in Music, and the International Piano Archives at Maryland. During the following seventeen years, each unit of the Music Library expanded dramatically resulting in the entire holdings more than doubling in size. Indeed, by August 2000, the Special Collections unit – originally one collection storage room and one small processing area – spanned four large storage rooms (average size: 1,200 square feet), three smaller storage rooms (average size: 180 square feet), and two processing areas.<sup>3</sup> The new Library in the Clarice Smith Center accommodated for that growth, but with limited space for expansion of special or circulating collections.

The new library space offered several positive changes, including state-of-the-art technology and architectural design, improved proximity to the main patron communities in the performing arts academic units, and an influx of new users brought on by the undergraduate dormitories neighboring the Clarice Smith Center. Another significant change was leaving the third floor of what was then an undergraduate library (Hornbake) and moving into a two-floor facility devoted to just the Library.

In August 2000, construction was nearly complete for the Clarice Smith Center, the new home to the School of Music, the Department of Theatre, the Department of Dance, the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library, and five performance spaces. The School of Music and the Department of Theatre were in the process of occupying their new facilities (the Department of Dance would relocate six months later); the Clarice Smith Center management was split between temporary offices in a plant sciences building and their future permanent home; and the 23,000 square foot, cathedral-shaped structure to house the Library was finally accessible after months of construction-related delays.

The cross-campus relocation of the Michelle Smith Library from Hornbake Library to the Clarice Smith Center was the first of four interrelated library relocations relying on precise timing with little room for delay. The second was also a cross-campus relocation; this time for two large archival departments,<sup>4</sup> each leaving the main library on campus (Theodore McKeldin) for two floors of renovated space in Hornbake. The two other relocations consisted of the National Public Broadcasting Archives moving in 2002 from the ground floor of Hornbake to the third floor space the Michelle Smith Library was vacating, followed by Nonprint Media Services Library moving from the fourth floor of Hornbake to the newly vacated ground floor in 2005.<sup>5</sup> This sequence of relocations created numerous dependencies: completing the construction of one facility, the substantial renovation of another in multiple phases, moving the Michelle Smith Library out of what was to be the new home for another department, and all libraries striving to open for the semester in September 2001. To cut cost, alleviate the procurement process, and concentrate the use of UMD Library System resources, the two cross-campus relocations were procured under the same contract.

### **The Procurement Process as Opportunity**

The similar requirements and tight proximity for relocating the Michelle Smith Library and the two archival departments' suggested from the outset a shared effort to contract a mover. The mover needed to have extensive library-moving experience and also prove proficiency in relocating offices, rare and fragile items, computers, audio equipment, and sound recording collections. Creating highly technical specifications for relocating multiple complex libraries ensured that less qualified movers would not win the contract based solely on a low bid.

Institutional and state procedures required the UMD Libraries submit a request for proposal (RFP) as a first step. The university's Procurement Office was highly cooperative and appreciated that representatives from the Libraries had done their homework before initiating the process. This included having all specifications and requirements for the relocations defined and written in the appropriate procurement language ahead of time.<sup>6</sup> The procurement officer assigned to contracting moving placed considerable value on such preparation.

Interested movers were welcomed to attend a pre-bid conference, which attracted five companies from around the country. The RFP's specifications were reviewed in great detail and amendments were composed based on their questions. As a group, the movers were given tours of all of the facilities, during which it was revealed how the successful bidder intended to execute the relocation. (These interactions informed later planning). Ultimately, only two movers bid, with the other three citing various reasons for disinterest (i.e. out of scope, or already committed at that time).

The final step in the procurement process involved ranking the bids. A grading system was devised awarding a certain percentage of points for the ability to meet each requirement and specification in the RFP. After concluding if the movers were so qualified, versatile methodology and equipment resources were given the highest points. The successful bidder, Hallett Movers from Chicago, won the contract primarily on their experience moving multiple music and fine arts libraries, despite their slightly higher bid. (The other mover had not relocated any music or fine arts libraries). By devoting the time to creating highly technical specifications, we were able to narrow the field quickly to the two most likely candidates

nationwide. The result was finding the right mover for the projects, while having the authority to award the contract to a mover that provided the higher bid, all within institutional and state procedural guidelines.

### **Cost Measured Against Staff Involvement**

Compared to the myriad of projects involved in the construction of the Clarice Smith Center, the cost for moving the Michelle Smith Library was relatively modest at \$54,000. For the flagship campus of a state university system, \$54,000 is not a staggering amount of funds to devote to safely and accurately moving a library with rare and unique collections. However, Hallett Movers' proposal indicated significant efforts on the part of library staff, combined with professional movers.

The Library had assigned a staff member as the Project Manager for Procurement and Transition.<sup>7</sup> This role, though it goes by different titles, is highly recommended in the current literature on moving libraries or archives, and proved essential for the Library's relocation.<sup>8</sup> During the transition, the project manager coordinated the Library staff's efforts, while striving to maintain productivity for direct reports with minimal disruption to public services. The project manager was also responsible for initiating all RFP processes for equipment and services, and managing an outfit budget of \$3 million to procure eighty-five computers (for offices and public workstations), furniture for twenty-four rooms, multi-media exhibition equipment, office machines and audio-visual equipment.

Despite the assortment of responsibilities delegated to the project manager, the level of effort required of the Library staff was not welcomed unanimously.<sup>9</sup> The relocation was impossible for the staff to attempt alone, as the UMD Library System lacks the equipment and expertise for such a considerable undertaking. Furthermore, the Library's staff was, for the most part, inexperienced in moving libraries. However, relying entirely on Hallett Movers would have produced a considerably higher final invoice, especially as there were physically demanding tasks the staff simply wished to defer to the movers. In the end, staff had to balance the tedious tasks they were formally assigned with those they felt personally responsible for due to the attention required of certain materials. Thus, the extent of staff participation was more than an economic decision; it was also a realistic one based on stewardship of collections.

### **Attention to Varied Formats and Different Needs**

Moving the Michelle Smith Library was, in many respects, akin to moving an archive or a museum due to the requirements of the music collections, as well as the Library's considerable special collections. The relocated materials included:

- 300,000 circulating books and scores
- One hundred fifty linear feet in periodicals
- More than a mile of archival collections
- At least thirty cabinets worth of vertical files
- Four map cases
- Two hundred rare books
- 3,000 linear feet in various sound recordings formats
- Over twenty pieces of framed art and sculpture

- Two pianos equipped with piano roll mechanisms
- Nearly four hundred linear feet in piano rolls
- Four crated historic instruments
- Office machines and files packed by the respective staff member

Each of these formats necessitated individual consideration for packing and transporting. Specific librarians, curators, and technical staff advised Hallett Movers for each instance.

Based on sub-units within the Library, the corresponding staff tagged collection materials to indicate the future room and shelf locations. The process also involved the mover tagging shelves in both locations according to a predetermined configuration. This collection tagging was then double-checked for accuracy by the appropriate staff member. We hoped that having this degree of hands-on staff involvement ensured the desired shelving scheme. This was mostly a success.

In addition to the special consideration the materials required, the greatest priority was having the circulating collections unloaded, shelf-read, and accessible for public use by the start of a fall semester just fourteen days after the relocation began. Effective planning by the Library staff enabled the relocation of both the circulating and reference materials with time to spare. Unfortunately, shelf reading revealed that the mover erroneously mixed two separate collections of LP recordings. While this was impossible to remedy by the start of the semester, the error only proved a minor nuisance, and the Library opened as scheduled.

### **Mapping a New Ideal**

For months prior to the relocation, staff worked with floor plans, shelving diagrams, and measurements for the new facility creating an ideal arrangement for collections and services from the thinnest score to the largest equipment. Opportunities to consolidate service points were contemplated and deliberated. Before the mover was actually hired, a functional map of all future locations for collections, equipment resources, and staff was in hand. No one else could create this new ideal arrangement for the Michelle Smith Library – this was staff expertise at work.

Previously, music and dance materials made up the bulk of the Library's circulating collections, with all music materials – regardless of folio status – shelved together. In the year prior to relocating, staff began integrating theatre materials from other campus libraries into the holdings as the Library fully embraced the scope of the performing arts. The former library space in Hornbake did not offer adequate shelving for arranging the materials sequentially by Library of Congress classification, and the newly arriving theatre monographs were isolated from the rest of the circulating collection. Thus, the relocation allowed staff to logically reorganize the shelving layout for the circulating materials with the dance, music, and theatre monographs and scores divided only by non-folio, folio, and oversize status. The results greatly benefitted the Library's users, and the shelving scheme still applies ten years later.

This relocation also enabled the Library's archives staff to logically arrange and store special collection materials previously located in eight rooms on two floors of Hornbake into the specified closed collection rooms for either the International Piano Archives at Maryland or Special Collections in Performing Arts (SCPA).<sup>10</sup> What was spread amongst the eight rooms in

Hornbake was reduced to just three rooms: two for papers collections, and one shared room for archival non-print media materials and circulating sound recordings. Therefore, establishing in advance the proposed location index<sup>11</sup> for archival collections was crucial. Fortunately, the staff was ready to communicate to Hallett Movers the expected configuration. Conversely, having this preparation complete made it easier for staff to incorporate the system used by the mover.

For over ten years prior to this planning phase, SCPA had been using a “box inventory” database (location index) recording the location for each archival container in the collections. Part of the preparation involved inserting an additional field to each database entry to record the container’s future location. This also meant physically tagging each container using a location code created by SCPA (one that did not attract the eye of the mover and confuse them) before using the mover’s tags for their system. While this represents a duplication of effort, it provided an additional layer of control over the collection materials and made it easier for staff to communicate to the mover the exact location for each item. Moreover, after the mover had departed, the SCPA coding system was still in use and remains central to the location index protocol.

There were some unique items the Library staff felt they must pack. It would have been irresponsible, and unfair to Hallett Movers, to allow someone other than a staff member to pack items such as rare books, cumbersome ephemera, and fragile artwork. Librarians even transported select rare books across campus in their own cars. These decisions were made on a case-by-case basis.

The future configuration of the staff also required significant consideration. In Hornbake, the majority of the staff worked in close proximity to each other, including the Head of the Library. In the new facility, the Reference and Circulation units and Special Collections in Performing Arts are located on opposite sides of the first floor. On the second floor, the Library’s administration is housed in one suite and International Piano Archives is located in a separate suite of rooms. While this meant little to Hallett Movers, this did necessitate planning regarding shared office equipment, access to supplies, and maintaining a sense of staff cooperation for eradicating post-relocation issues.

For all relocations, it merits mentioning that the greatest preparation does not rule out the need for spontaneity. After months of planning and assigning locations for every item using a very detailed system, the Library staff was surprised during a pre-move inspection of the new facility to learn that in a special collections storage room sections of shelving were not installed as projected on blueprints. Support columns populated the space for three sections of shelving units (a loss of twenty-four linear feet per section). This transposed large portions of the new location index causing staff to scramble right up to the day of the relocation to compensate for lost space and determine new shelving schemes.

Furthermore, in the final days leading up to the relocation, the fire safety inspector pronounced that the fire suppression sprinklers required replacement as they were installed too close to the tops of shelving units in each of the collections rooms. This was an unanticipated delay of a few days, which in turn delayed the painters (one of the final phases in the construction project). As the painters were not able to complete their work in the rooms where

sprinklers were being replaced, they had to continue painting through the relocation. The movers had to re-route some intended paths and reschedule certain phases of the relocation to accommodate the work of the painters. Once the relocation was underway, few obstacles slowed the movers down.

### **Moving Day and Beyond**

Planning meetings with Jack Hallett, president of Hallett Movers, occurred in the weeks before the relocation. Hallett explained his methodology, supplied moving cartons and destination labels for use with archival containers, and explained his partnering with the local company Office Movers for sub-contracting temporary workers. At these meetings, the Michelle Smith Library staff learned Hallett's system for labeling shelves on both ends of the move for the cataloged books and recordings that the movers would pack, unload, and re-shelve.

During the relocation, each day started at 7:00 am with briefings between the Library's project manager and Hallett and his managerial team. Day one of the relocation began with Office Movers constructing temporary loading bridges to accommodate the limited space for a large truck to access Hornbake's loading dock, and also at the Michelle Smith Library's new front door (due to the lack of proximity to the Clarice Smith Center's loading dock). They also laid down boards on the carpet for the paths they tread, applied protective sheets and blankets to cover any permanent fixtures along the moving route, and unloaded all of their special book trucks and cardboard moving cartons on wheels (called missiles).

The movers' staffing configuration was complex and included hierarchical layers from what appeared to be temporary workers to established managers. The on-site staff consisted of:

- Packing and unpacking teams
- Missile and book truck carriers from collections to elevator
- Missile and book truck carriers from elevator to truck
- Truck loading and unloading teams
- Two trucks running at all times with one driver each
- Floating management staff to supervise and inspect work and assist when progress was lagging
- A daily presence of upper-management from Office Movers to guarantee that the clients were satisfied
- Jack Hallett running from site to site ensuring efficiency

The Michelle Smith Library staffing model was much simpler and consisted of:

- All permanent employees completing assorted tasks at both locations
- Student workers assisting as directed and providing some security
- The Library's project manager trouble-shooting issues for the relocation, construction, and equipment installation
- The Head of the Library receiving progress briefings whenever possible

The movers' staff and the Library's worked together effectively in response to the challenges that arose throughout the relocation, and also regarding the obligations of library service that was happening concurrently elsewhere in Hornbake.

Public services dictated the route for the movers. With summer session classes still active, very specific moving routes were designated to prevent disrupting the patrons still using the rest of Hornbake. Hallett Movers also reserved the loading dock for the building (and postponed routine deliveries), commandeered a staff elevator located out of public view, and, on occasion, used the public elevator. Additionally, the movers began their workday ninety minutes before Hornbake opened for service, which also diminished inconveniences for patrons. In the end, the movers created minimal, if any, disruption and there were no complaints from the other library units in the building.

The relocation did not last long enough to become a wearisome presence for library users. In consultation with staff members of other libraries at UMD with collection relocation experience, it was estimated that the relocation would take fifteen working days. Jack Hallett and his colleagues at Office Movers estimated that it would take nine days. The entire relocation took six.<sup>12</sup>

After the relocation, and after Jack Hallett was on to his next project, staff came upon problems while shelf reading books, scores, and sound recordings, and as special collections were inspected. Most of these problems were small and easily remedied, although, a few were quite large and took several hours to correct. The problem described earlier involving recordings took days to fix. Many of the shelving problems would have been prevented had the missiles been inspected by staff during packing (the point where collections were mixed); this, however, would have also slowed progress considerably, and likely too much for Hallett's preference for a relentless pace. Fortunately, only once did the Library staff find a damaged item: an oversize archival item relocated unsecured inside a map case drawer. This was both the fault of the mover, whose spontaneous moving technique of turning the map case on its side resulted in damaging the item, and the fault of the Library staff member who overlooked the special packing consideration that this item actually needed.

A small amount of materials were overlooked during the planning, tagging, or moving phase and thereby left behind. Some of these items were tagged to move but were in dark corners of deep industrial shelving, or in cracks between the older wooden shelving units (several LPs were found there). There were also boxes of materials either unclaimed by one of the Library's sub-units or erroneously mismarked by the staff responsible for tagging a particular collection, and consequentially set aside and unintentionally abandoned. It took the following six months to find all of the overlooked materials that were scattered around Hornbake; staff also had to determine the provenance for such items. (This created some opportunities for de-accessioning out-of-scope and unwanted materials). After the materials were identified and claimed by the proper sub-unit in the Michelle Smith Library, they were packed appropriately and transported to the new location either in the project manager's personal vehicle, or as part of the daily campus mail delivery.

## **Conclusion**

The Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library's relocation was the right combination of hands-on staff participation, contracting of a quality mover, and cost-effectiveness. Of course, the staff hoped for less post-move issues and a greater degree of inspection of the missile packing would have prevented the majority of these issues. Ultimately, Hallett Movers' system

was optimal for the Library’s circumstances, and effective preparation for all involved can ensure a more successful moving experience – which is vital for any library establishing a new ideal in a new location.

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<sup>1</sup> In August 2001, the author and Bruce D. Wilson (then Head of the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library; now retired) gave a talk on this topic at the Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists as part of the session “Moving Archival and Special Collections Materials,” chaired by Jennifer L. Gunter, then of the University of Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> This paper is written in recognition of the ten-year anniversary of the naming of the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library, the daughter of Clarice and Robert Smith.

<sup>3</sup> By August 2000, Special Collections in Performing Arts’ holdings were approximately 4,600 linear feet in paper materials and recordings.

<sup>4</sup> Archives and Manuscripts, and Marylandia, Rare Books, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Library Collection.

<sup>5</sup> This project, slated to occur earlier, was delayed by budget shortfalls.

<sup>6</sup> It was especially helpful that we had determined all of the factors that the mover needed to know in order to bid accurately on the job; these factors included size of collections, material formats, special considerations, construction and renovation dependencies, and schedules.

<sup>7</sup> The author held this position from July 1999 through December 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Chamberlain Habich, *Moving Library Collections*, second edition (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2010), 98. Lisa Backman, “The Cable Center,” in *Moving Archives*, ed. John Newman and Walter Jones, 2 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002). Russell Taylor, “Brigham Young University,” in *Moving Archives*, 84. Todd Welch, “Oregon Historical Society,” in *Moving Archives*, 110. Other articles in *Moving Archives* do not explicitly recommend this position, but are written from the perspective of the person who performed such a role.

<sup>9</sup> At the time of the relocation, the Michelle Smith Library consisted of twelve staff members and over fifteen student assistants.

<sup>10</sup> Previously known as Special Collections in Music until 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Also known as “location register.” The Society of American Archivists defines this as “a finding aid used to record the place where materials are stored.” This is similar to what librarians commonly think of as a “shelf list.” Richard Pearce-Moses. “Location Register.” *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/>.

<sup>12</sup> This was fast when compared to similar relocations by other university branch libraries using professional movers: Music Brach Library of Loyola University (New Orleans) in fourteen days, Chemistry Library of Rutgers University in ten days, and Science Library of University of Florida in two weeks. Habich, 330-34.