

Workshop Carolynn Rankin *Practical aspects of planning a new learning centre* 24/4 2001
Leeds Metropolitan University

Carolynn Rankin started by giving a short presentation of the history of the Leeds Metropolitan University. The university is a young organisation, it only became a university in 1994/95. A decision was made four years ago to make a learning centre on campus. The university used to have two libraries that merged into the learning centre, and it opened on September 4, 2000.

Rankin talked about the preparations and how to arrange the actual moving and planning of the centre. The management planned so that group study rooms, photo copying machines and printers are situated in one area. This means that it is almost completely quiet in the rest of the library. She told us about the importance of having a strategy and considering the influence factor; who is the decision maker, and do we have any political links?

Stock management and finding a home for everything is a major job; every shelf had to be counted to be sure that there was enough room at the new centre. The learning centre at Leeds Metropolitan University also discovered that there were too many books; weeding was necessary to be able to find room for all the material.

Cost factor is important when planning a new centre. Will IT equipment from the old libraries be good enough, do we need new bookshelves, and how much does it cost to train the staff to be prepared to work in a new environment with new equipment?

Rankin emphasised the importance of teamwork and informing all staff about what was happening during and after the centre had been finished. All staff should participate in a work group to feel that they have a part to play. The users also needed information about the changes, but although information was put out on the libraries web site, posters were put up, and post cards and bookmarks were handed out with information telling the users when the library would be shut and reopened, students were still standing outside the door of the library surprised over the fact that the library was shut.

Our impression of the workshop was that it was more of a lecture than a workshop. Rankin had planned to activate the participants, but ran out of time so there was only time for questions. There were only a few questions, mainly about the finished centre. A discussion never emerged, but the workshop was interesting and showed how meticulous you have to be when planning a new learning centre.