

Update on plans for new research and reading room, Sammy Ofer Wing, National Maritime Museum

Building work and plans for the new research and reading room

As you may have seen from the construction site webcam on the NMM website <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/about/sammy-ofer-wing/>, the hole for the Sammy Ofer Wing has now been dug and the walls are being erected. Concrete has been poured into the ground floor of the south west wing, one floor below what will become the new reading room, and the three floors will soon be inserted for the reading room and two floors of archive stores above.

The layout of the new research and reading room is almost complete. The layout assists public access to the resources, and emphasises the symmetrical lines of the architecture. Key reference works, hand-lists and access to online catalogues line the walls of the reading room, and there will be 46 spacious desks for users in the middle of the room. There are two separate study areas: a group research area for users working in small groups, and a quiet study area for readers working alone. There is also an open reprographics area with a self-service scanner, microfilm reader scanners, and camera stands.

Preparation work towards the new service

You may have noticed coloured strips of paper sticking out of many of the books in the Caird Library – this is part of a project to select modern books and journals for the new reading room and archive stores (we are updating catalogue records at the same time). We are now almost a third complete. We are continuing to catalogue and enhance the documentation of the Airy Collection and other rare books, which are all coming into the new stores. We are continuing with the location records and unit of production project, which involves recording the exact shelf location of each manuscript and confirming its unit of production, so users will have no confusion what it is that they have requested to see. This also involves noting any anomalies for Phase 2 of the project (re-cataloguing, linking or merging records in the cataloguing database, and re-housing). We have recruited eight work placement interns to help us with Phase 2, to help edit catalogue records by linking or merging records: these are mostly people looking to gain experience of cataloguing work, who wish to make a career in archives.

Our volunteers are doing sterling work improving the long-term care and preservation of collections which will move into the new archive stores. Since September 2009, four NADFAS volunteers have re-housed over 3,000 letters in the Croker and Noel manuscript collections; two others have re-boxed 600 boxes of crew lists (out of a total number of 6,000), concentrating on boxes which are in particularly poor condition. Approximately a quarter of the uncatalogued pamphlets have now been listed by another group of volunteers, who started in January 2010. The sea charts project, involving the transcription of 8,000 card catalogues onto an electronic database to improve access to the pre-1900 sea charts collection, is also progressing well with the help of volunteers.

The racking plans are almost completed: the location of the roller racking bases have been confirmed, which allows the tracks to be laid in May. We are now preparing for an exact mapping exercise, in order to plan the precise location of each book, journal, chart, print and archive box in the new store.

Next steps

The plans for the move of the collections into the new wing continue. We plan to keep the level of service within the existing Caird Library running as long as possible, but there will inevitably be some disruption in 2011. It now looks likely that the collections will be moved into the new stores during the period from mid-April to June 2011; we will endeavour to keep the disruption to a minimum, and hope that with enough notice, researchers will be able to schedule their work around these dates, when access to collections will be restricted. We ask you to bear with us during this period of transition.

For further information about the plans for the new reading room and library provision, including what it will be like and how many books will be available on open access, see Sammy Ofer Wing Library FAQs <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/researchers/library/sammy-ofer-wing-library-faqs>.

For general information about the new wing, including photos of the construction site, see the Sammy Ofer Wing pages <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/about/sammy-ofer-wing/>.

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