

**BELFAST CENTRAL LIBRARY**

**A REGIONAL LIBRARY**

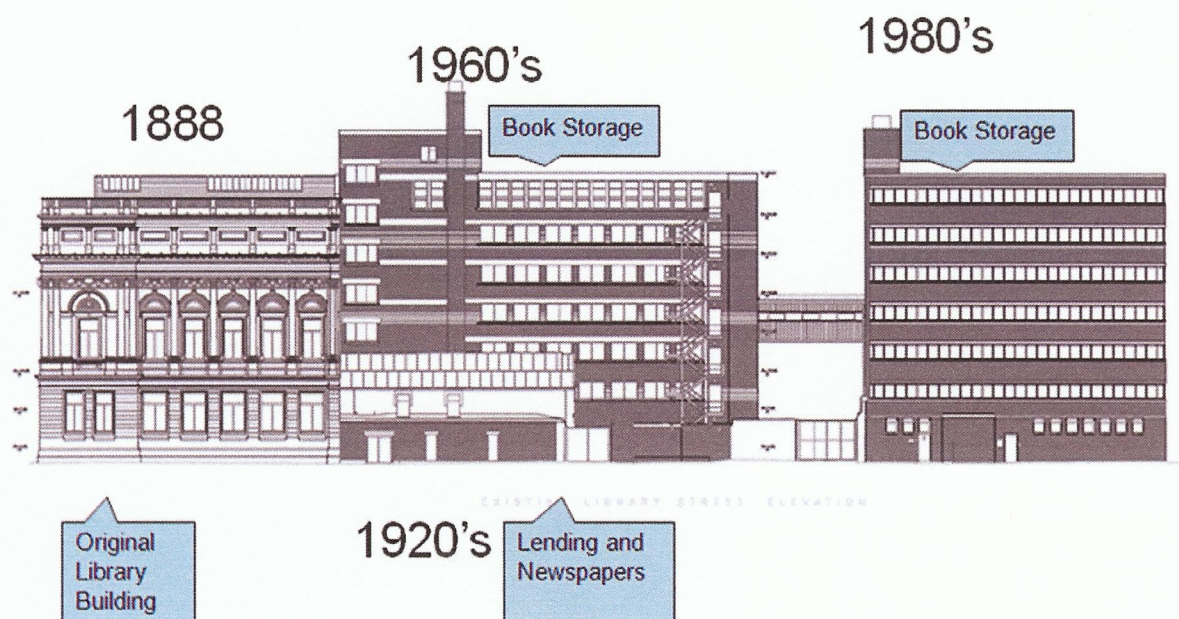
**FOR A SHARED FUTURE**



**A MODERN CITY LIBRARY, A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL AND  
ECONOMIC CHANGE SET AT THE HEART OF THE URBAN  
RENEWAL OF THE CITY OF BELFAST**

## An iconic building in the Library Quarter

Belfast Central library is one of the few remaining historical buildings in Belfast which is still used for its original purpose. The library was officially opened in October 1888 on the same day as Belfast was granted city status. It consists of a Grade B listed building - designed by W H Lynn - which houses the public access part of the service. To the rear there are two editions which were built in the 1960's and 1980's and these house, in the main, storage floors and staff facilities. The Newspaper library viewing facility which is open to the public is located in the 1980's building with access from Library Street. We are currently planning a programme of celebrations from October to commemorate our 125th year.



## The need for a regional library

The library attracts over 400,000 visits per year and serves a city population of 281,000 and a Greater Belfast urban area of 579,276. The current library floor space for public use is 1,745 Square Metres and to realise the vision of the new regional library we would require a minimum of 7,500 Square Metres.

## Current Services

### Ground floor:

- ◇ An adult lending library with a range of novels, popular information books, audiobooks, DVDS and large print titles.
- ◇ A children's library where your child can develop a love of reading with a wide range of picture books, story books and information books and enjoy activities such as rhythm

- ◇ A comfortable browsing area
- ◇ A computer suite which offers free internet use to all library members and internet taster sessions for beginners, as well as workshops in shopping online and digital photography.
- ◇ A small coffee shop
- ◇ Exhibition space with regular displays celebrating our shared cultural heritage
- ◇ NI Film Archive

### **Ground Floor - Library Street Entrance:**

- ◇ Newspaper library - a comprehensive collection of provincial, Belfast and Irish newspapers on microfilm and bound newspapers.

### **First Floor:**

- ◇ Information library - adult information books, reference and e information resources, including encyclopaedias, local and national newspapers online.
- ◇ Business library - a source of business information in Northern Ireland, with specialist staff on hand to help with business start-up advice and access to on-line Business resources.
- ◇ Community Meeting space: a small meeting room available to local community and voluntary groups.

### **Second Floor:**

- ◇ A Heritage Library - books, journals, newspapers, reference resources which reflect the history of Belfast and Northern Ireland.
- ◇ A Music Library—a specialist collection of CDs, records, scores, books and reference titles.
- ◇ Northern Ireland Music Archive

## **The library holds a wealth of unique collections which are of regional significance.**

### **Some of these include:**

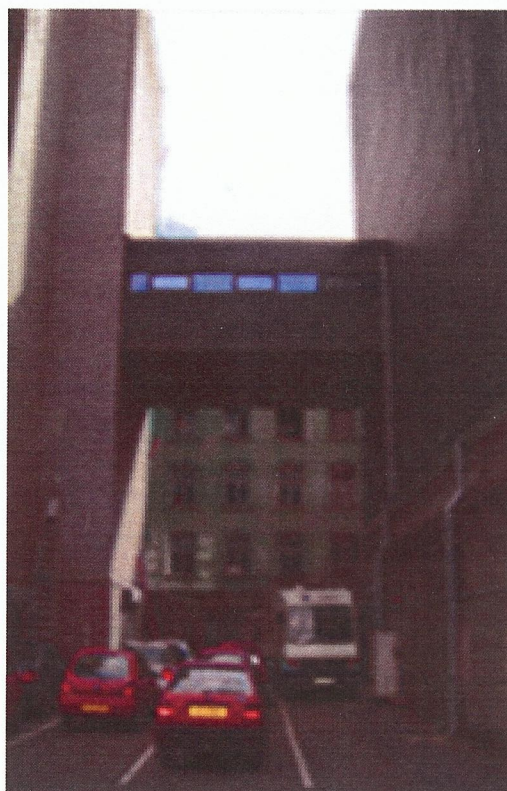
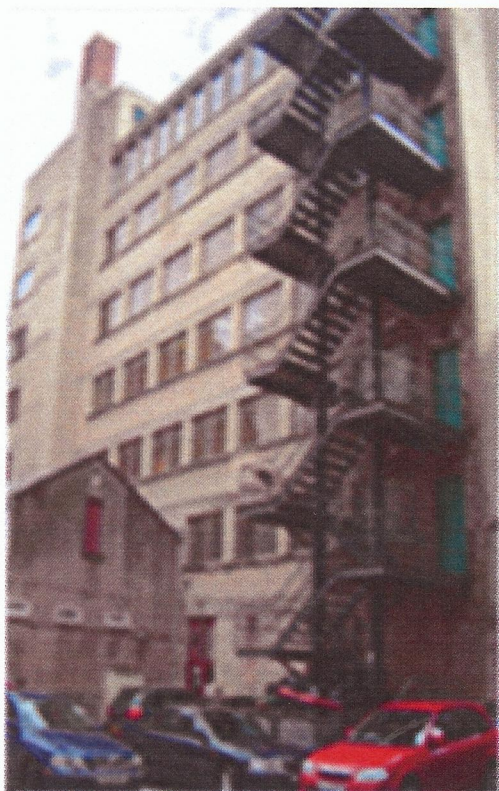
- ◇ **The F J Bigger Collection:** *books, journal, maps, music and archaeology.*
- ◇ **The Bryson and MacAdam Manuscripts** - *the most important collection of Irish language manuscripts in Northern Ireland.*
- ◇ **The Patents Collection** - *dates back to the 1640's is the only holding centre in Ireland and the library is part of the Patent Information Network.*
- ◇ **The Fine Books Collection** - *the most substantial of the Libraries NI valuable assets collections and contains a significant Botany collection, original manuscripts, first editions and maps.*
- ◇ **Newspaper Library** is unique in the scope of the material it holds relating the North.

## Limitations:

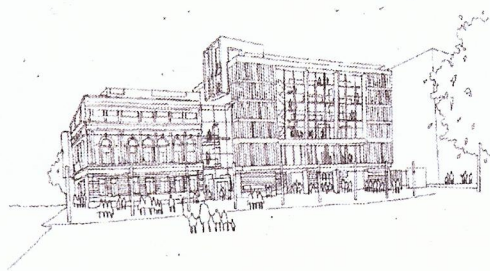
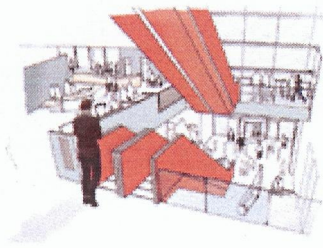
The library is in need of refurbishment and the buildings to the rear of the Lynn building have exceeded their life expectancy. All this impacts on the service which can be offered at Belfast Central and is restricting service expansion. This means we are unable to fulfil our role as a major city library.

## Some of the issues are:

- ◇ Limited access to stock and staff intensive stock retrieval system
- ◇ Uneconomical running costs due to ad hoc nature of the current buildings
- ◇ Inability to provide modern regional library services
- ◇ Limited adherence to DDA requirements and other significant legislation
- ◇ There is a high footfall (over 400,000 visits per annum) but limitations on the size of the public space impacts on library performance and participation i.e. the actual stock issued is low (about 80,000 per year)
- ◇ The public have negligible access to a fine book collection of 11,500 volumes
- ◇ Library staff are working in unsuitable conditions in the non-public areas.
- ◇ The public facilities fall well below what would be expected from a major city library.



*Behind the scenes and view from Library Square — fire escape and utilities are in poor repair. Staff have to go along the one connecting walkway on the third floor to retrieve books for readers.*



## The Future for Belfast Central Library

The library would provide a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century library facility which would properly fulfil its City and Regional role and help with the much needed regeneration of the Library Quarter.

It would provide:

- ◇ **The Intelligent merging of the old and the new** - a modern building which meets legislative and BREEAM requirements, whilst preserving the architectural integrity of the original grade B listed building
- ◇ **Welcoming, well trained library staff** - capable of responding to the changing needs of library customers and visitors
- ◇ **A connected space** - hi-tech digital solutions for the delivery of services e.g. WI-FI, RFID
- ◇ **Improved lending service** - a larger volume of open access stock for greater borrower choice and interaction
- ◇ **A dedicated children's library** - with enhanced services for children
- ◇ **An accessible leisure destination** - for both library members and visitors to the city
- ◇ **A place of renewal** - a social neutral space in the city centre which helps promote the regeneration of the wider Northside
- ◇ **Creative Lab facilities** - downloadable music and software to help users compose
- ◇ **Increased public access to Heritage and Newspaper collections**
- ◇ **Business Library** - supporting enterprise and employment in Northern Ireland
- ◇ **An Accessible facility** - for the display and enjoyment of the Fine Books Collection
- ◇ **Innovative exhibition and display space** - creative interpretations of our past and artistic and literary visions of our future
- ◇ **A Learning Centre** - a designated space where informal learning support can take place
- ◇ **Community Meeting Spaces** - Increased opportunity for partnership and community participation
- ◇ **Regional Mediatheque Centre** - access to social history films, home movies, television programmes and a local film archive collection.
- ◇ **An Inclusive centre of culture** - with programmes and projects that meet individual and community need for all ages
- ◇ **Café and small retail outlet**



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