



Complete, inspired design solutions



CASE STUDY

Bradfield College

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Introduction

Bradfield College, a distinguished independent boarding school near Reading, set out to transform a Grade II* listed church into an innovative Study Centre. With half of the college's pupils being sixth formers, the goal was to create a space that reflected a university environment rather than a traditional school setting.

This project required a seamless blend of the church's historic charm with the practical demands of modern education. FG Library played a pivotal role in bringing this vision to life, using our expertise to deliver bespoke solutions for shelving, storage and furniture that aligned perfectly with the College's ethos of combining tradition with modernity.



The Design

The project underscored Bradfield College's commitment to providing a forward-thinking educational experience. The Study Centre was designed as a bridge between school and university, supporting both independent and collaborative learning. The College aimed to preserve the church's architectural integrity while introducing contemporary design elements.

Achieving a balance between historical preservation and modern functionality was therefore key. FG Library was tasked with achieving a design that respected the building's historic character while ensuring it met the needs of a modern educational facility.



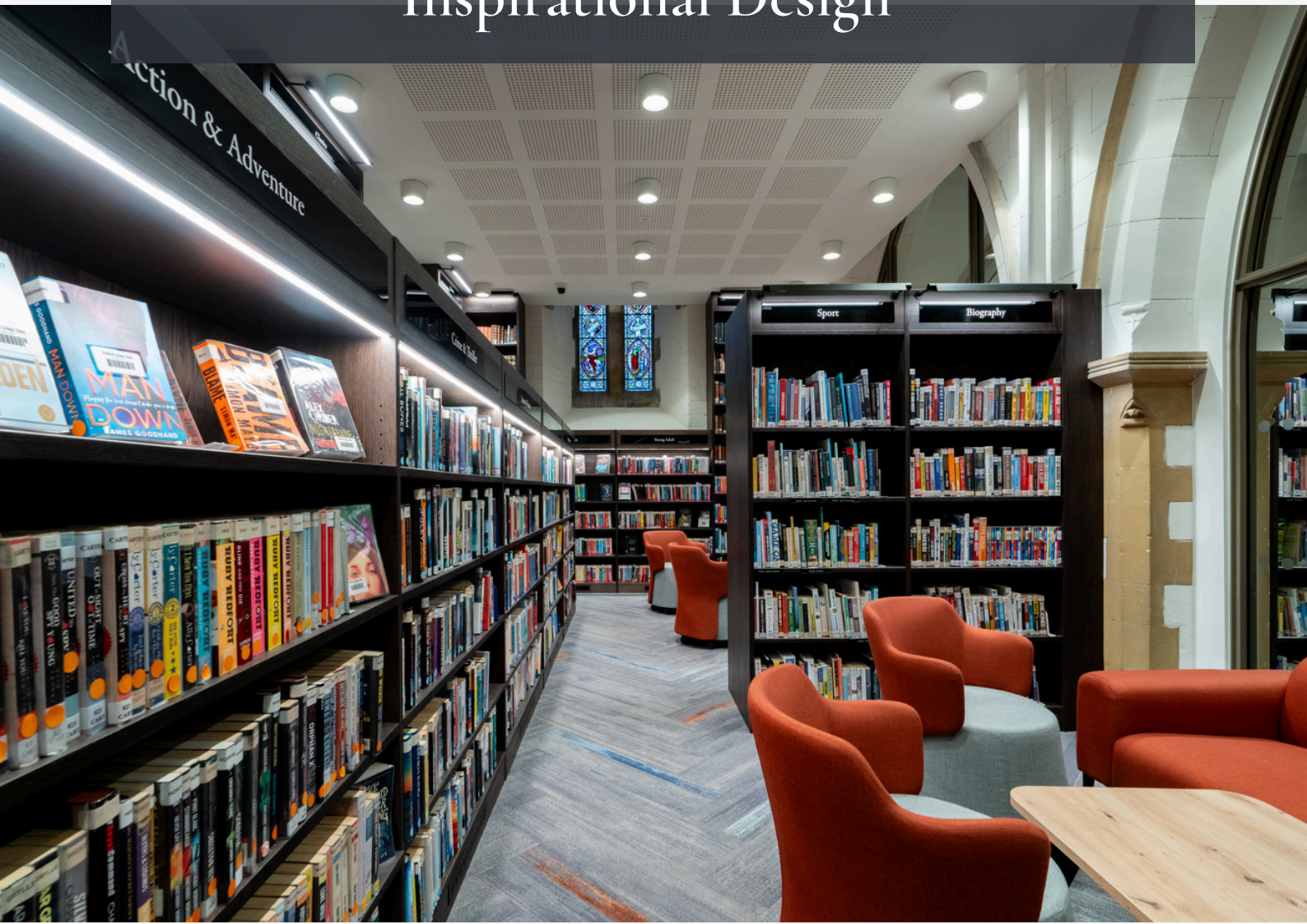
Where old meets new...



Sympathetic Design



Inspirational Design



Preserving Historical Features

FG Library ensured the design celebrated the church's historical elements, such as the original Font, famously the site of Kate Middleton's christening. The Font, positioned on a stepped pedestal, and the well-preserved pews were central features that had to be preserved.

FG Library's craftsmanship played a leading role in integrating new additions, like bespoke shelving. The team worked closely with architects and adhered to strict conservation guidelines to ensure that functional elements didn't compromise the building's unique character.



Modern Functionality

The Study Centre had to cater to the needs of a contemporary academic environment. FG Library addressed several key requirements:

- **BYOD (Bring Your Own Device):** The design seamlessly incorporated power sockets and connectivity throughout the space to support modern technology.
- **Shelving for Bookstock:** FG Library devised a solution to house approximately 15,000 volumes, balancing storage capacity with accessibility and aesthetics.
- **Flexible and Ergonomic Structures:** Fixed storage and shelving were crafted to enhance functionality. A bespoke reception desk was also designed to integrate into a historic alcove, blending modern utility with timeless charm.
- **Creating a University-Inspired Environment:** The design catered to the diverse needs of sixth-formers preparing for university, encouraging both academic and social engagement.



Balancing Budget and Aesthetics

FG Library ensured that high-quality materials and finishes were selected, delivering exceptional value without unnecessary expenditure. The team balanced budget constraints with the desire for a sophisticated and enduring design solution.



Material and Finish Considerations

The shelving was crafted from veneered wood, stained in dark oak, and made from moisture-resistant plywood with a 10% PU sheen. This material choice was essential to prevent moisture build-up from the building's stonework, ensuring long-term durability. The shelves were fitted to wall battens for ventilation, safeguarding against moisture.

The shelving was optimised at 1200mm under windows and 2100mm along the walls, offering ample storage without overwhelming the space. The shelves were adjustable to adapt to future needs and were meticulously scribed to fit around intricate cornices and stonework.

The lighting design was integrated into the overall architecture, with canopy headers providing accessible cable management, ensuring future maintenance would be simple.



Technology Meets Tradition

Incorporating modern technology was essential. The design included laptop charging bays and pigeonhole shelves in the café area, offering students convenient access to power. These modern features were seamlessly integrated into the space, preserving the building's historic charm while meeting the needs of contemporary users.

Periodical Display & Storage

FG Library created display and storage shelving to accommodate periodicals like journals and magazines. Behind flap-opening shelves, students could store back copies, keeping the space organised and accessible while maintaining its elegant design flow.



High-Level of Skill and Craftsmanship

This project required an exceptional level of craftsmanship, as every shelving unit was designed to fit the intricate spaces and contours of the historic building. Our skilled craftsmen meticulously created each piece, ensuring seamless integration with the architectural details while meeting the exacting project requirements. Working in unison, our dedicated installation team collaborated closely with our craftsmen to bring the designs to life, ensuring precision at every stage. This synergy of expertise and teamwork delivered a flawless outcome, perfectly blending functionality with the building's timeless charm.

The project was conducted on a live construction site, requiring seamless collaboration with various teams, including architects (Squires and Brown), site electricians, plumbers, and site management personnel.

Given its complexity, continuous communication between on-site and office-based teams was essential, demanding agility and flexibility from the FG team. With a shared commitment to project success, meticulous assembly and precise modifications were necessary due to the building's historic nature. Certain furniture elements were crafted on-site to ensure the highest level of accuracy and alignment with the project's requirements.

Reception Counter

FG Library designed a high-spec reception desk that harmonised with the historic building. The desk, crafted from crown-cut American White Oak with a lacquer finish, complemented the newly installed battening. It featured a felt backing to enhance acoustics and a carefully crafted work surface made from moisture-resistant plywood.

The desk featured innovative heating integration, with the plinths housing the room heating services and pipework running through a service channel for easy maintenance access.

The lift-up hatch ensured full accessibility for wheelchair users and flexible access for all, flawlessly integrating with the building's battening to conceal essential services and preserve the historic integrity, all while accommodating modern functional needs.



Staff Workroom

FG Library designed bespoke storage solutions for the staff workroom, ensuring functionality while respecting the room's unique character. The pitched roof and exposed beams were integrated into the design.

The office was nestled within the roof space, with cupboards that accommodate exposed beams and pitched walls. The design needed to preserve the architectural reliefs behind the storage. It was also important to create a functional and spacious feeling, which was a challenge as it was a tight space, but we ensured every inch of space was used efficiently.

Manifold Cupboard

The manifold cupboard was one of the most challenging elements of the build. It was designed to fit into a confined space while ensuring full access to the Font and the electrical services boards. FG Library crafted an innovative door system that allowed the entire front panel to be removed for unobstructed maintenance access.

The cupboard was scribed to fit around the building's intricate stonework and cornicing, blending seamlessly with the room's aesthetic. Discreet ventilation was also incorporated to prevent heat build-up and ensure the cupboard functioned efficiently.



Conclusion

Josh Hughes, Commercial Director, states, “Our ability as a multi-faceted manufacturing organisation, combined with over 20 years of library design experience, played a key role in supporting Bradfield College’s transformation of the Grade II listed church into a modern Study Centre that honours both history and innovation.*

The space now stands as a benchmark for the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings in education, demonstrating how tradition and modernity can coexist. Our team's meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail ensured the project met the needs of the College’s sixth formers for years to come, offering a university-inspired environment within a historic context.

This project is a true showcase of our capabilities, underscoring our expertise in managing complex projects that demand precision and skill from concept to completion.”



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01604 755954
enquiries@fglibrary.co.uk
www.fglibrary.co.uk