

Our Experience

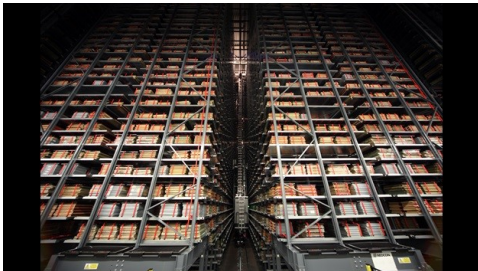
The British Library has a strong track record of delivering high value, innovative storage construction programmes, of the type envisioned by this proposal, on time and to budget. The Library’s site at Boston Spa is home to two unique storage buildings that, as well as conforming to PD5454 (guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials), also maintain a low-oxygen environment to prevent fire. The storage facilities are known as the Additional Storage Building (ASB) and the National Newspaper Building (NNB). Both buildings provide highly automated storage solutions, in which collection items are held in ideal environmental conditions, incorporating controlled levels of oxygen, humidity and temperature, in order to ensure the long term preservation of the printed materials.

The Additional Storage Building opened in 2009, with the equivalent of 262 linear kilometres of shelf space, holding over 144,000 bar-coded containers capable of storing up to seven million items which are stored vertically in the containers. The ASB was the first construction of its kind in the world to incorporate within a single building automated storage and retrieval systems, optimum environmental conditions, and low-oxygen fire prevention.



Following the success of the ASB, the Library was awarded in 2009 funding of for a to move the UK’s national newspaper collection from the Library’s facility at Colindale, and into a purpose built storage facility at Boston Spa. Unlike the storage solution for the ASB, Newspaper Collection items are stored horizontally on trays. The Newspaper Strategy Programme delivered a range of benefits including ensuring that the collection is preserved, guaranteeing use for both current and future generations; and improving collection management, reducing costs and delivering improved value for money.

Across both the ASB and NNB programmes transitional planning, including training of new staff, and in depth testing of the new retrieval systems within the BL ensured a seamless customer service experience, allowing for the same 48 hour delivery service from the ASB and NNB to users of the Library’s London reading rooms. The success of these two programmes provides significant assurance that the Library has the capability to deliver the storage facilities within this proposal on time and to budget.



Financial Implications


The basis on which the British Library charges for services to other public sector bodies is cost recovery. The annual operating cost per metre reduces as the level of content held within the facility increases.

The total storage space in the UK Printed Collections Management Hub would be 250km. Of this, the British Library would wish to utilise 35km, on the same commercial basis as other users of the facility, allowing the vacation of two storage buildings at Boston Spa that are more than thirty years past their life expectancy. This means that the available space for long-term shared storage in the new building would be 215km.

Commercial Alternatives

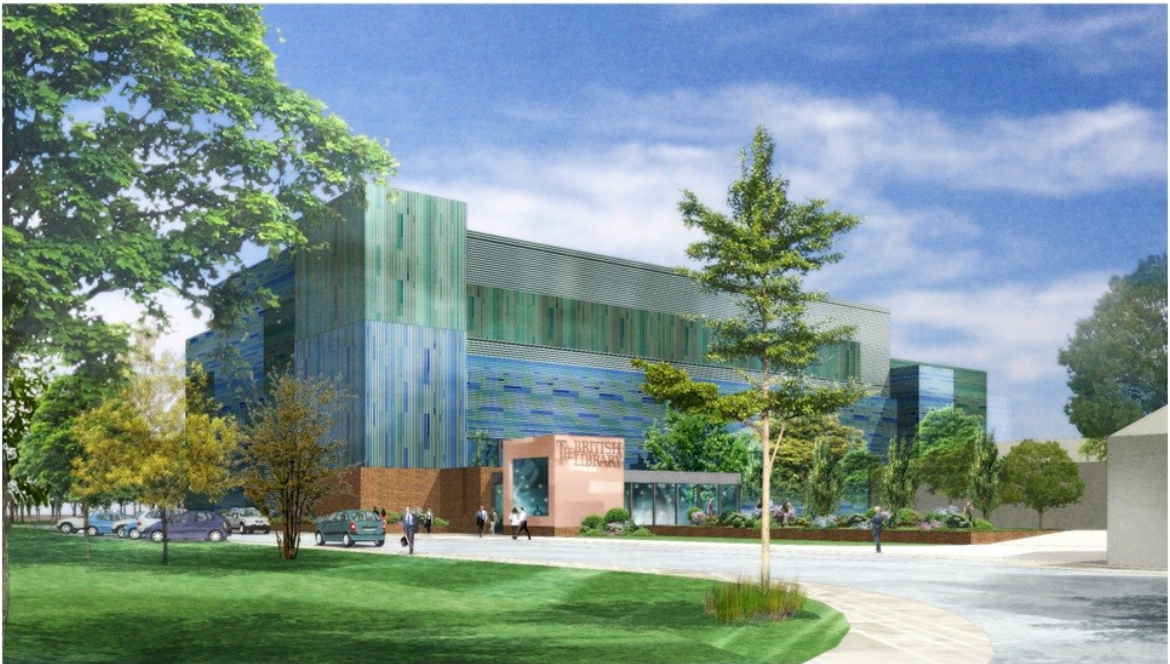
An analysis of the proposed service against available commercial offerings, including price benchmarking where such information is publicly available, has been undertaken.

Comparatively, the use of a commercial provider does not offer the most cost effective storage solution, and restricts access to the content, typically offering purely dark storage solutions.



UK Printed Collections Management Hub

A storage, preservation and access solution for UK Museums and Galleries



Background

Storage provision is becoming increasingly difficult for Museums, Galleries and Libraries, and there is a pressing need to investigate alternative storage and distribution services that could replace existing facilities. In response, as part of a range of solutions, the British Library has put forward the option of using its Boston Spa, West Yorkshire site as an extended, shared storage facility for institutions within the DCMS family - and potentially other Government departments as well.

The current proposal is for the construction of a 250km (215km shared storage) high density, automated storage facility in order to deliver a significant increase in the capability of the British Library to provide print collection management, and collaborative shared services for print collections, across the public sector.

The construction of the facility would drive efficiencies, reduce operating costs, and replace end-of-life storage facilities with modern, high-density storage buildings, providing an appropriate twenty-first century infrastructure that strengthens a major UK institution, for the benefit of a wide range of public sector users. The space freed up by relocating print collections to an off-site facility would allow that space to be re-purposed for galleries, staff, or potentially to be sold.

This proposal also presents a unique opportunity to create an innovative cultural research experience outside of London - the combined nature of the unique collections (comprising books, journals, archives and other printed material sources), held in an accessible and central UK location, would enable readers to access and study, in a single place, an unparalleled range and depth of content from a diverse range of institutions.

The British Library has already delivered two high density, automated stores at its Boston Spa site, both of which were developed as the result of multi-million pound capital projects. As a result, the Library has developed unique expertise in constructing and operating the type of facility envisaged by this proposal.

The Strategic Outline Case for the “UK Printed Materials Collections Management Hub” was approved by DCMS in April 2015. The Library is currently working on developing an Outline Business Case for the proposal, and as part of that process is working with stakeholders to understand the scale of the need for off-site print collection storage.

British Library Overview

The British Library is a major research library; at the end of 2013/14, the collections held over 110 million items from many countries, in many languages and in many formats, both print and digital.



As a legal deposit library, a copy of every UK print publication must be given by its publishers to the British Library. The legal deposit system has been part of English law since 1662. From 6 April 2013, legal deposit also covers material published digitally and online.

The Library’s iconic building at St Pancras was built to bring together on-site reference collections providing access for readers, researchers, and learners, and was the largest public building constructed in the UK during the twentieth century.

The Boston Spa site, perhaps less-well known, in the centre of the UK, was selected in the pre-digital age to provide convenient remote access to print collections via document supply services. The 43 acre site at Boston Spa, for which the British Library owns the freehold, was originally an ordnance factory. Today, the Boston Spa site houses over 70% of the British Library's collections, as well as c600 of the Library’s staff.



Location and Public Access

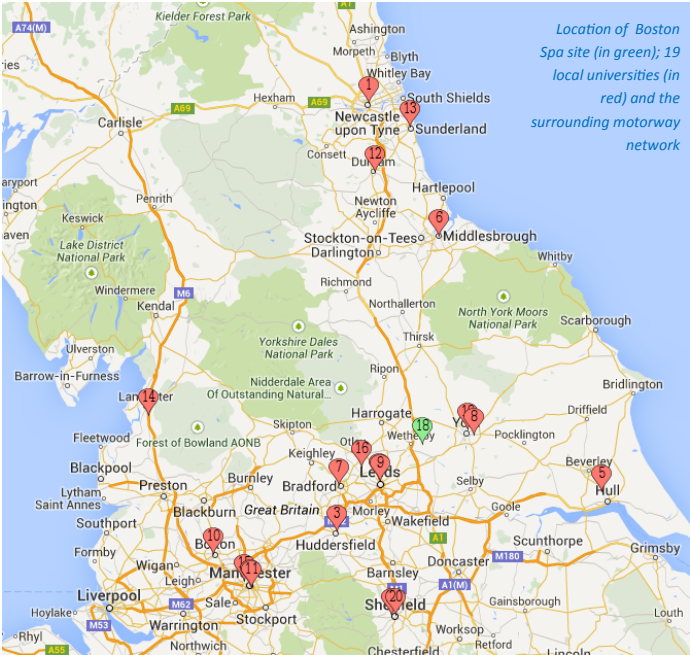
The Boston Spa site is located centrally within the United Kingdom with access to the site via the two central train stations, within the cities of Leeds and York. This is complimented by a bus service running between Leeds, Harrogate and Wetherby via the Boston Spa site, interlinking the public transport facilities. There are also excellent links to the UK’s motorway network with the A1 (M) junction in the local town of Wetherby coupling both the North-South and East-West motorway networks.

There is an increasingly large student population within the North of England, with 19 universities located locally within the North-South and East-West motorway networks. These universities provide an active research population, currently enrolling over 405,000 students who would benefit from the reduced travel times and travel costs provided by an out of London research facility.

Delivery

The Library already has in place the physical transport and logistics functions necessary to transfer content between its Boston Spa and St Pancras sites.

A regular transfer service delivers an average of 1,000 printed items every day to the Library’s London reading rooms from the storage facility at Boston Spa. This infrastructure makes content available in London within 48 hours (in most cases, within 24 hours) of a reader ordering the item online, Monday to Friday.



Storage and Preservation

Highly automated storage solutions ensure that collections are held in ideal archival storage conditions (controlled levels of oxygen to remove fire risk; humidity and temperature controls to facilitate the long-term preservation of the printed materials). Collections are held in high-density storage racks, reducing the storage footprint and reducing annual operating costs.



Upon initial receipt of any collection, an initial condition assessment takes place so that any recommended treatments required to stabilise or repair collection items are documented. In addition collections or parts of collections, being transferred between sites are assessed prior to transfer to ensure they can be safely transported.

Access, distribution, and creation of surrogates

Physical transfer from the Boston Spa site to the premises of the organisation that owns the content within 48 hours is available. (24hours also available at additional cost).



Digitisation services, enabling access via surrogate to content held in The Hub is available, including digitisation on demand of single items, scaled up to mass digitisation of entire collections. Different service levels are available depending on the required turn-around time ranging from four days to our premium 2 hour service. Creating digital surrogates for printed materials reduces the potential for damage to the original material that can be caused by handling, and improves accessibility via online access capabilities.



Visitor Facilities

Continued access to collections stored on behalf of other institutions will be provided on-site within an adjoining 500sqm purpose built Reading Room. Provided that descriptive metadata can be harvested into the British Library’s resource discovery systems, the same pre-ordering and on-site delivery service would be available to readers as for the British Library’s own collections.

This presents a unique opportunity to create an innovative cultural research experience outside of London - the combined nature of the collections, held in a highly accessible and central UK location, would enable readers to access and study, in a single place, content from a diverse range of institutions.

As well as a reading room, office space will be available for visitors from institutions whose print content is held at Boston Spa. This will allow on-site access for research, curation, or other purposes. The British Library can help plan the visit to ensure it optimises time on site – organising visitor passes, providing a “hot desk”, general on-site support during the visit and, if required, help with planning travel and accommodation.

