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Woods Bagot Re-Design University of Sussex Library for the New 'Flexible Learning Student'

World leading education and community facilities designer Woods Bagot will add the University of Sussex's Library interior revitalisation to its expanding portfolio of new age designs for the 'flexible learning student', supporting progressive pedagogy, due to be completed in Spring 2011.



Caption: University of Sussex Library, United Kingdom. (Credit: Woods Bagot)

Woods Bagot's interior re-design of the University of Sussex Library, in direct response to the changing needs of university students, incorporates flexible, light filled collaborative spaces that will accommodate the new generation of mobile multi-taskers engaging in lone study, team discussions, social interaction, remote desktop research, exchanging information through WiFi/Bluetooth devices or simply relaxing.

"Woods Bagot has designed the latest generation of collaborative education spaces across Australia, Europe, Asia, North America and the Middle East. The library in particular has to re-invent itself as IT infrastructure has evolved and these spaces are now about interactive virtual working rather than the traditional delivery of books," said Woods Bagot Melbourne's Education and Science Director, Mark Kelly.

Designed to meet the new demands of the flexible student, the open floorplan design features 'technology zones' where study is supported by wireless hubs and seamlessly integrated with a spacious courtyard café permeated by natural sunlight through an expansive glass roof. The building will also house a career information centre, seminar and flexible interactive learning rooms and dedicated postgraduate study areas.

Moreover, the Library's increased spatial capabilities can largely be attributed to the introduction of RFID technology, ebooks and compact mobile shelving.

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“The modern library is an environment founded on knowledge discovery and is far removed from the historic concept of the hushed, rigorously sectioned spaces. Students who frequent the library will enjoy a vibrant, modern library, where ideas, debate and discussion flourish, and no one is requested to ‘shhh’,” stated Woods Bagot London’s Project Manager, Mint Orr.

Woods Bagot understands that, like many international higher education facilities, the University of Sussex requires intelligent investment in the design and construction of its physical infrastructure if it is to remain competitive. The creation of a flexible, accessible, technology-rich study environment that offers state-of-the-art facilities in support of innovative research and inspirational teaching and learning will undoubtedly provide an enhanced student experience at the University of Sussex.

The Library was originally designed by Sir Basil Spence in the 1960s. Woods Bagot have worked in consultation with English Heritage, the custodian of the nation’s historic environment, to ensure that fabric of the Grade II* Heritage Listed building will remain intact as the Library interior continues to undergo its revitalisation.

“Working with Woods Bagot on developing the brief for the refurbishment of the University of Sussex Library has been a hugely rewarding experience. Their track record in designing contemporary learning spaces has resulted in the creation of an innovative and attractive environment that not only makes the best use of Sir Basil Spence’s original building and furniture but will also deliver the flexible study facilities to support the diverse requirements of the current generation of students and researchers,” said University of Sussex Librarian, Kitty Inglis.

“Educational facilities are about sharing a vision for the future. These projects are not amortised over fifteen or twenty years. They are built for organisations which will still exist one hundred years from now. They involve intellectual pursuit, quality of life and an ongoing belief in our society,” Kelly said.

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ABOUT WOODS BAGOT

Woods Bagot’s commitment to global excellence has resulted in a workforce of 500 staff based in five regions, in cities such as Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Sydney, Beijing, Hong Kong, London and most recently San Francisco, New York and Shanghai. Woods Bagot has also announced planning permission for what will be one of the world’s most luxurious hotels at 10 Trinity Square, London and unveiled plans for the Middle East’s tallest tower – at more than 1km high – in Dubai.

Woods Bagot’s Australian studios have recently completed several award-winning flagship projects, including ivy, Sydney (with collaborative partners HP&G and Merivale), Qantas International First Lounges (with collaborative partners Marc Newson and Sebastien Segers) and the University of Western Australia Business School, Perth. Recently unveiled by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Premier Mike Rann, Woods Bagot Adelaide has also designed the new \$200 million South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).

PROJECT SUMMARY: University of Sussex Library

Construction Start: December 2009

Construction Completion: Estimated Spring 2011

Area: 13,000 m²/ 140,000 sq ft

Heritage Listing: Grade II*

Client: University of Sussex, United Kingdom

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