

Commission: Design and production of bespoke reader tables
Client: Leicester University
Business Unit: The David Wilson Library

At the heart of Leicester University's £300m development plan is their new Library. Its completion this year was the fulfilment of a 40-year ambition, which has culminated in a state of the art facility designed to meet the Building Research Establishment Energy Assessment Method (BREEAM) "Excellent" rating; a standard that few even attempt to attain.

A major requirement for a project of this size is the furniture, and the University set out early in the process to find products that would compliment the building and maintain the standard of design.

N.E.J. Stevenson entered the process after the University had undertaken some initial design work and had some prototypes made when we were asked to review the design and improve its aesthetic quality, its functionality and its longevity in the face of student usage.

Our Head of Design, David Drew proposed a range of improvements and also consulted with the client on the spatial layout and service provision.

Of particular concern to our designers was the initial specification for a wooden work surface and given this would require veneering, we felt that it wouldn't take long at all for the desks to become damaged and therefore quickly detract from the high quality environment the university was creating for its students. Our proposal was instead to use a desktop marmoleum but with a solid timber edge. This would provide a surface that is resistant to damage and easily refreshed as well as opening up the opportunity to add colour thus meeting the clients long term needs of quality and durability.

It was also necessary to have power points to most tables and initially these had been proposed as sitting in wells with removable lids. Practically we felt that the lids would be lost if loose or broken if hinged with the wells being filled with litter, so the solution was to combine the sockets with the central dividers and make a feature of the whole structure.

Whilst the size of the project at over £300K is not unusual the requirement to manufacture so many identical pieces provided an interesting test of our craftsmen's ability to adapt to mass production techniques whilst maintaining the standards for which we are renowned.

Consequently, we've been asked to help with the design of further furniture for the library by providing more specialised items on a smaller scale and have subsequently been commissioned to design and make new furniture to enhance their formal degree ceremonies.

Our unique position as a design house with an in-house production capability allows us to offer a turn-key solution for organisations that want a bespoke solution without having to manage a diverse range of specialist suppliers.

The installation of the furniture was managed on a floor by floor basis with all items being delivered on time, to the quality specified and at the agreed budget.

Specification

Brushed stainless steel legs and underframe
American Cherry framed marmoleum tops
Opti-white glass dividers
American Cherry and stainless steel centre console

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| 45no | 6 seater table |
| 107no | 4 seater tables |
| 19no | 2 seater tables |
| 4no | Round tables |
| 3no | Point of sale tables |
| 9no | Computer stations |

Contact information

If you feel we could help you with the design and production of your bespoke furniture requirements please contact me, Neil Stevenson, Managing Director, NEJ Stevenson on 02476 544662 or email me at neil@nejstevenson.co.uk