

Making Space:

Designing Custom Storage for the Newberry Library



- 1.5 million books.
- 5 million manuscript pages.
- 500,000 historic maps.
- One major storage issue.

For the prestigious Newberry Library, an independent research library located in the heart of downtown Chicago, maintaining and growing their world renowned collections is critical to sustaining the high level of service that their readers have come to expect. Therefore, the storage and accessibility of these growing collections is a top priority. So when their 10-floor storage facility was reaching capacity, they had a situation—they needed to create more storage space without building a new facility.

Hjordis Halvorson, Newberry’s Vice President for Library Services, knew the best way to maximize their existing space would be to convert their stationary shelving to high-density mobile shelving. Her challenge was that while many providers were able to sell them storage equipment, they lacked a plan to manage the implementation process. So Halvorson called the experts at TAB, having been referred by highly respected peers—The Art Institute and University of Chicago (Regenstein Library)—who had already completed large mobile projects.

1.0 Laying the Groundwork

Donna Frakes and Tom Wulf from TAB sat down with Halvorson and her team to identify all the specifics of their storage requirements and the different options available to maximize the existing capacity cost effectively. Her team’s experience and feedback was invaluable in creating the right solution.

“I was very impressed with the engineering of the carriages and the many configurations of the shelves. The whole system is customized so that every inch of space is utilized.”

- Michael Mitchell
Facilities Manager & Chief Security Officer

1.1 A Custom Design

David and his team quickly came up with a new, custom storage and labeling solution that would meet all the project requirements and still allow the large documents to be kept in a rolled format. They managed to deliver revised proposals only two weeks after the discovery of the Mylar issue.

“We are all amazed by the pace of work, but also the care being taken to best protect the collections during the project.”

- John Brady
Director of Reader Services
Bibliographer of Americana

1.2 Truly Turn-key

The TAB Professional Services Team would not only manufacture and project manage the installation of the high-density mobile systems, they were also fully responsible for ensuring accessibility, integrity and security of all the reference materials during the project.

This included:

- Offloading and reloading of all materials and collections
- Maintaining the precise order of the collections
- Moving collections to a new location or consolidating them as needed

The Newberry required that most of the collection materials needed to remain on site. Given that space for the project was very limited, the staging of the materials during the transition would need to be managed very carefully. This process needed to be co-ordinated very

closely with the installation of the shelving systems so that the Newberry Library and its readers didn't miss a beat. To help make the process more efficient, additional staging areas were created by moving less critical collections and duplicate materials temporarily to TAB's secure off-site storage facility nearby.



Before



After

2.0 Delivering Results—30% More Capacity

Newberry's existing storage capacity for the area in question was about 675,000 linear filing inches. The custom designed solution TAB delivered was about 880,000 linear filing inches—increasing their total capacity by about 30%! The project gave the library a stunning 13.75 miles of new shelving and the equivalent of a full floor of additional storage.

“The project was completed on time; and, most important, the impact on our readers and their research was kept to a minimum. We're very pleased with the entire team at TAB, which did excellent work and was a great partner.”

- Hjordis Halvorson
Vice President for Library Services

2.1 Anatomy of a Successful Partnership

The Newberry Library team chose to partner with TAB because they were confident that TAB could handle all aspects of designing and implementing the custom solution they were looking for. At the beginning of the project, TAB prepared a comprehensive plan which illustrated in detail how this project would be completed. This plan demonstrated to Newberry that TAB would be able to complete this project efficiently and with minimal disruption to the library's collection and readers. Because of the thorough planning and close coordination of the construction team and project managers, these goals were accomplished in all respects.

If you'd like to learn more about how TAB can design a custom storage solution that will work for your space, contact us.

Contact one of our representatives today.

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