

2023

Something Old, Something New: Two Library Building Projects Converting Old Buildings into New Libraries

Allison Kavanagh

Technological University Dublin, allison.kavanagh@tudublin.ie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/bescharcart>



Part of the [Engineering Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kavanagh, Allison, "Something Old, Something New: Two Library Building Projects Converting Old Buildings into New Libraries" (2023). *Articles*. 61.

<https://arrow.tudublin.ie/bescharcart/61>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Dublin School of Architecture (Former DIT) at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License](#).

Funder: No funding was received for this work.

Fachbeitrag

Allison Kavanagh

Something Old, Something New: Two Library Building Projects Converting Old Buildings into New Libraries

Something Old, Something New: Zwei Bibliotheksbauprojekte, die alte Gebäude in neue Bibliotheken umwandeln

<https://doi.org/10.1515/abitech-2023-0020>

Abstract: This paper describes two interrelated library building projects at Technological University Dublin. The first is the ongoing construction of an Academic Hub to accommodate the library and other academic support services, incorporating a protected structure into a new building. The second is the refurbishment of part of an office block, originally built in 1970 to be a hotel, to house an interim library until completion of the Academic Hub. This project has provided valuable information for the Academic Hub project.

Keywords: library building, protected structure, renovation

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Artikel beschreibt zwei miteinander verbundene Bibliotheksbauprojekte an der Technological University Dublin. Das erste Projekt ist der laufende Bau eines Academic Hubs (Akademischen Zentrums), in dem die Bibliothek und andere akademische Unterstützungsdienste untergebracht werden sollen. Hierbei soll ein denkmalgeschütztes Bauwerk in ein neues Gebäude integriert werden. Das zweite Projekt ist die Renovierung eines Teils eines Bürogebäudes, das 1970 ursprünglich als Hotel erbaut worden war und bis zur Fertigstellung des Academic Hubs (Akademischen Zentrums) eine Interims-Bibliothek beherbergen soll. Dieses Projekt hat wertvolle Informationen für das Academic Hub-Projekt (Akademisches Zentrum-Projekt) geliefert.

Schlüsselwörter: Bibliotheksbau, denkmalgeschütztes Bauwerk, Renovierung

1 Introduction

This paper describes two interrelated library building projects at Technological University Dublin's (TU Dublin's) Grangegorman campus: the building of an Academic Hub to house that campus's library, and the refurbishment of an office building to accommodate an interim library while construction of the Academic Hub is ongoing.

TU Dublin is Ireland's first technological university. Three partner institutions, Dublin Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown and Institute of Technology, Tallaght, came together in January 2019 to form TU Dublin. TU Dublin is a large university, with over 30 000 students. As a technological university it offers programmes ranging from apprenticeship to PhD level in business, media, culinary arts, the creative and performing arts, science, technology and engineering. It is a member of the European University of Technology, offers research informed, practice-led programmes and conducts award-winning technology transfer and business incubation activities.

In the coming years, TU Dublin will have three campuses in the greater Dublin area. Currently, it has five campuses. Grangegorman, the largest campus, is located in Dublin city centre, just north of the river Liffey. The Aungier Street and Bolton Street campuses are also based in the city centre, but ultimately will migrate to Grangegorman, leaving a single city centre location. The Blanchardstown campus is located 10 km northwest of the city centre and the Tallaght campus is 13 km southwest of the city centre. Each of the five campuses has a library.



Fig. 1: TU Dublin locations (source: Google Maps, 2022)

2 History of Grangegorman Campus

The Grangegorman campus has an interesting history having been home to a workhouse, a hospital and a prison in the last 200 years.

In 1773 the Dublin House of Industry was built there to provide housing and employment to the poor.¹ Due to the lack of suitable facilities in the Houses of Industry, the Richmond Lunatic Asylum opened at Grangegorman in 1815 to provide a facility for people with mental illnesses. It was named after the Duke of Richmond, Charles Lennox, who was the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland at the time.² The building was designed by Frances Johnson, who also designed Dublin's General Post Office, and was modelled after 'Bedlam' in London.³ The hospital's name changed several times, with it finally becoming St. Brendan's Hospital in 1958.⁴ Mental health services continued to be provided in this building until its closure in 2013, at which point the small number of remaining patients transferred to the newly built Phoenix Care Centre.⁵

The Grangegorman site also included a prison. The Richmond Penitentiary was constructed in 1816 and was used as fever hospital during cholera outbreaks in the nineteenth

century. The building became a women's prison in 1836 and until the 1880s, many of its prisoners were deported to Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania. In 1897 the prison building was again used as a hospital during typhoid and beriberi outbreaks, after which it ceased use as a prison and became part of the Richmond Asylum.⁶

These and other related buildings constructed in the nineteenth century survive at the Grangegorman campus today.

3 Grangegorman Campus Today

The development of the Grangegorman campus has been in train for almost twenty years. In 2005, the Government enacted legislation to provide for the development of Grangegorman as a location for education, health and other facilities and to set up the Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA) to manage the area's development.⁷ The area is a Strategic Development Zone,⁸ which enables the accelerated delivery of new development.

The GDA's mission is "to transform Grangegorman into a vibrant community that encompasses a world class, integrated and inclusive education, health, and community campus".⁹ The intention is to open up what was previously an enclosed part of Dublin, surrounded by walls, to the rest of the city.

The Californian firm Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners and their Irish partners Duffy Mitchell O'Donoghue Architects developed a comprehensive masterplan of the Grangegorman campus in 2008 to realise the vision for Grangegorman.

The masterplan includes a consolidated campus for TU Dublin's many city centre locations in addition to health-care facilities, a primary school, and new arts, cultural, recreational and public spaces to serve the neighbouring community and city. It envisages the library as being one of the central hearts of the Grangegorman quarter, with its location creating an "intellectual hub of activity at the intersections of several primary circulation routes".¹⁰

¹ Aodhán Crealey. "Grangegorman Histories: Honouring the Past", *History Ireland* 28, no. 5 (2020): 8.

² Joseph Reynolds. *Grangegorman: Psychiatric Care in Dublin since 1815* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration in association with Eastern Health Board, 1992).

³ "A History of Grangegorman", *Technological University Dublin*, n.d. <https://www.tudublin.ie/media/website/explore/our-campuses/campus-development/grangegorman/History-of-Grangegorman.pdf> accessed October 13, 2022.

⁴ Reynolds, *Grangegorman: Psychiatric Care in Dublin since 1815*.

⁵ Crealey. "Grangegorman Histories", 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷ Government of Ireland. *Grangegorman Development Agency Act*, n.21, Dublin: Government Publications Office, 2005.

⁸ "Strategic Development Zones", Dublin City Council, n.d. <https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/planning/strategic-planning/strategic-development-zones>. Accessed October 21, 2022.

⁹ "Introduction", Grangegorman Development Agency, n.d. <https://ggda.ie/agency/introduction>. Accessed October 17, 2022.

¹⁰ Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners et al., *Grangegorman: An Urban Quarter with an Open Future: Masterplan* (2008), A-20. <https://>

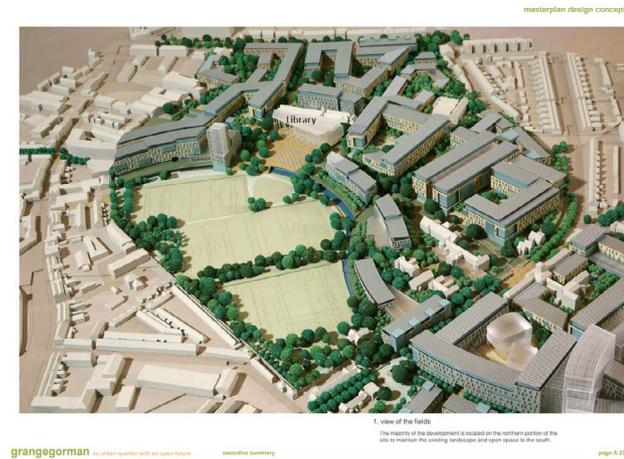


Fig. 2: View of the Fields (source: Moore Ruble Yudell, 2008)

4 Library Location

The location of the library building is at the site of the North House, which is one of eleven protected structures in Grangegorman. An adjacent annexe was added in the twentieth century and is not protected.

The North House was completed in 1854, having been designed by Murray & Denny architects. Its original use was as the ward for male patients in the Richmond Lunatic Asylum and it was used as part of St. Brendan's hospital until 1995. The building was then unoccupied until 2014 when it was used by TU Dublin's School of Creative Arts to house print workshops, dark rooms and art and design studios.¹¹

Guidelines for the conservation of the building include to ensure that the form of the protected structure, particularly the tower and roof form, should remain readable. New additions should not extend past the extremities of the original structure and the open plan layout and the views towards the Dublin mountains should be retained, as should the entrance hall and connecting stairs in the west wing.¹² There is a prescribed massing height of four to six floors.¹³

ggda.ie/assets/081030_MasterPrint_ExecutiveSummary_Part2_small.pdf. Accessed October 18, 2022.

¹¹ "TU Dublin Academic Hub", Grangegorman Development Agency, n.d. <https://ggda.ie/agency/dit-academic-hub>. Accessed October 21, 2022.

¹² Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners et al., *Grangegorman: Masterplan*, C-16, https://ggda.ie/assets/081103_Master_Print_Part7_small.pdf. Accessed October 18, 2022.

¹³ O'Donnell and Tuomey. *Grangegorman Academic Hub: Architectural Design Report* (Dublin: O'Donnell and Tuomey, 2017).



Fig. 3: North House & Annexe (photo: Barrow Coakley Photography courtesy of the Grangegorman Development Agency, 2017)

5 The Academic Hub

The library complex – the Academic Hub – will be a focal point of the Grangegorman campus, located between the Central and West Quads and overlooking the playing fields. It will combine old and new, incorporating the protected structure of the North House into a modern building. It will have five floors and will be home to a range of academic supports in addition to the library. The Academic Hub will be TU Dublin's first standalone library building and will be the largest of TU Dublin's libraries. It will be the first new library at TU Dublin in 20 years and will provide a once in a generation opportunity to enhance TU Dublin's library services.

The Academic Hub will welcome students, teaching staff, researchers and administrative staff and will play a key role in engagement with the local community. It will provide a variety of spaces offering different services to meet the varying needs of users and will house a range of support services for students and staff.

Dublin based O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects were appointed as the design team for the Academic Hub in 2016. This firm has experience of integrating a protected structure into a new building, including from their design of the library at the Central European University in Budapest, which involved the transformation of five adjoining, previously disconnected, historic buildings and the construction of two new buildings.¹⁴

The Grangegorman masterplan envisages the North House at the centre of the plot for the Academic Hub. Therefore, O'Donnell + Tuomey's design of the Academic Hub encompasses a cluster of buildings, with the North House at

¹⁴ "Central European University Phase 1: Budapest, Hungary." O'Donnell and Tuomey. n.d. <https://odonnell-tuomey.ie/central-european-university>. Accessed October 21, 2022.

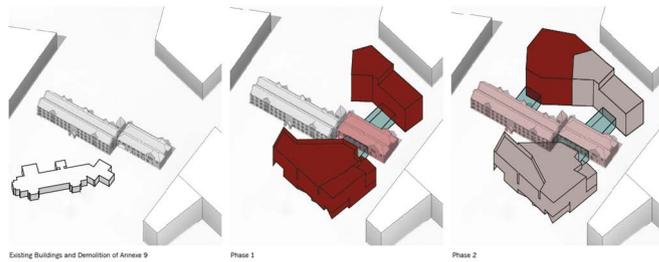


Fig. 4: Phasing of Academic Hub
(source: O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects, 2017)



Fig. 5: Academic Hub (source: Picture Plane, 2017)



Fig. 6: Integrating the North House: External View
(source: Picture Plane, 2017)



Fig. 7: View of Learning Commons
(source: O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects, 2017)

its centre. The North House comprises a pair of buildings, with the North House West rising to three stories and the North House East to two. The Academic Hub is to be built in two phases with a gap of several years between each phase.

Phase one will connect two new buildings or blocks – one to the north and one to the south – to the renovated North House. In phase two, an additional block will be added to the northwest. The new buildings will be connected to the North House by two north-south library bridges, thereby creating a continuous library space on the first floor. The new buildings wrap around the protected structure, while preserving the legibility of the existing structure.

The shallow plan of the North House lends itself to natural ventilation. While it is not suitable for taking heavy loads, the open plan layout means that it is ideal for staff accommodation, seminar rooms, collaborative study areas and a Learning Commons. The North House West will allow for the provision of late night study access as required when the rest of the building is closed.

The first phase of the Academic Hub will provide 12 500 m² of a diverse range of spaces across five floors. The building is designed to get quieter as the user moves up through it. The ground floor will accommodate the building's reception space; academic support services and the University's Learning Teaching and Assessment team; some library staff accommodation; the Learning Commons and collaborative study areas; seminar rooms; a flexible classroom; and a publicly accessible café and exhibition space.

The library entrance will be on the first floor with individual and group study spaces offered throughout the library. The postgraduate study room will be on the third floor, and the Special Collections reading room and climate controlled storage area will be housed on the fourth floor of the north block, with a rooftop terrace and event space located in the south block.

The Academic Hub will become a central location for academic supports, located at the heart of the campus. It will consolidate the collections and library teams of what were, until 2021, five different libraries located in Dublin city centre. The Academic Hub will also be home to the Academic Writing Centre, the Maths Learning Centre, the



Fig. 8: Cross Section View of Academic Hub
(source: O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects, 2020)

Career Development Centre and the Disability Support Service, together with the Learning Teaching and Assessment team, which provide support to the University's academic staff.

Library Services has a long track record of collaborating with many of these teams, but the co-locations provide opportunities for closer collaboration.

The Academic Hub will be an important point of contact and engagement between TU Dublin and the surrounding community. The public spaces – the café and exhibition space on the ground floor and the event space and rooftop terrace on the fourth floor – are designed to support community engagement and so are outside the security line of the library.

The Academic Hub will play a significant role in the consolidation of TU Dublin's city centre campuses into the new campus at Grangegorman.

6 Migration to Grangegorman

Until late 2020, TU Dublin had six campuses in Dublin city centre alone, in addition to its Blanchardstown and Tallaght campuses.

The consolidation of the city centre campuses into a new campus at Grangegorman, as envisaged in the Master Plan, began in 2014 with the migration of 1100 students and

their library from another campus in Mountjoy Square to Grangegorman.

A further migration of 10 000 students and staff from three major city centre locations and some smaller buildings into newly constructed buildings (the East Quad and Central Quad) was scheduled for 2020. Four libraries and Library Services' Central Services Unit were also included in this migration.

Additional migrations will take place in the coming years until ultimately all city centre locations have migrated to Grangegorman. At that stage, TU Dublin will have three campuses located at Grangegorman, Blanchardstown and Tallaght.

With a campus population of 10 000 expected in 2020, the Grangegorman campus clearly required a library building, even before additional migrations were due to take place. Because the School of Creative Arts was using the North House, however, construction of the Academic Hub could not commence until the School had relocated to its final home in the East Quad. Thus, construction of the Academic Hub could not begin until construction of and migration to the East Quad was complete. Consequently, the expected completion date of the Academic Hub was 2022, two years after the migration of 10 000 students and staff to Grangegorman. An interim solution was therefore required to provide library services at Grangegorman during the construction of the Academic Hub.

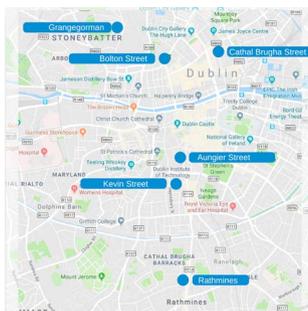


Fig. 9: TU Dublin City Centre locations in 2020
(source: Google Maps, 2020)

7 The Interim Library

In 2014, TU Dublin purchased Park House, a building on the North Circular Road that is adjacent to the Grangegorman campus. Park House was originally designed as a hotel, although never used as such, and was completed in 1970, offering approximately 10 500 m² of accommodation.¹⁵ It

¹⁵ "Allsop Space Investment to Sell Park House, Dublin." *Allsop Space Investment*. Jan 23, 2014. <https://www.allsop.co.uk/media/allsop-space-investment-to-sell-park-house-dublin/>. Accessed October 25, 2022.



Fig. 10: Park House Entrance (photo: Donal Murphy Photography, 2021)

was used exclusively as office space since its completion, so shortly after acquiring it the University applied to Dublin City Council for permission to change its use to being for educational purposes to allow it to be used as an interim library.

At the time of purchase, a number of commercial tenants who have remained in place occupied the building. A number of TU Dublin administrative functions were also located there. As a result, only three floors and a portion of the basement floor were available for use as an interim library. This provides considerably less space than the 12 500 m² that will be offered by the first phase of the Academic Hub, but was – at least superficially – comparable to the space offered in the four small libraries whose collections and teams were due to relocate there. The interim library was also intended to incorporate the academic support services which will be located in the future in the Academic Hub, i. e. the Maths Learning Centre, the Academic Writing Centre, the Career Development Centre and Disability Support Services. It was also to include a café on the ground floor. Mahoney Architecture, a Dublin based firm, was engaged to design the interim library.

8 Challenges Presented by the Interim Library

Because the original building was not designed as a library, it presented a number of challenges. A key challenge was floor loading, with the floor plates being unsuitable to support the library's print collections. This was resolved by the installation of structural steel supports as shown in



Fig. 11: Steel Supports for Shelving (photo: Catherine Cooke, 2020)



Fig. 12: Structural Steel Supports in Use (photo: Catherine Cooke, 2020)

Figures 11 and 12. While this limits flexibility in relation to the location of shelving in the library, it does ensure sufficient floor loading to support the shelving.

Shelving that had previously been used in the various libraries that relocated to the interim library was reused wherever possible in an effort to minimise costs in fitting out the interim library. As the ceiling height in Park House is lower than in a number of the libraries whose collections moved there, this meant that in some cases shelving had to be cut in order to fit. Bespoke wooden shelving was added to provide additional linear metres of shelving.

The planning permission granted to allow the building's change of use from administrative to educational re-



Fig. 13: Location of Park House in relation to Academic Hub (source: Google Maps, 2018)

quired the addition of more fire stairs. This contributed to the cost of refurbishing the building, but supports the use of the building for a range of purposes in the future.

The space available in the interim library at Park House is considerably smaller than the space the Academic Hub will offer. Combined with the large number of pillars in Park House due to its original design as a hotel, this means that space is further restricted. In preparation for the migration to the interim library, Library Services engaged in user consultation via focus groups to determine whether library users prioritised study space or easy access to collections (i. e. open access shelving). Perhaps unsurprisingly, library users prioritised both. To accommodate users' requirements as much as possible, the design team was tasked with replicating the number of study spaces provided in the four small libraries which were relocating to Park House and maximising the amount of open access shelving. Less frequently used items in the collection were accommodated in closed access high density shelving in the lower ground floor, from where they are available for retrieval on request.

The location of the interim library – adjacent to the rest of the Grangegorman campus, but across a busy road – presents a number of challenges. The libraries, which consolidated into the interim library at Park House, were all located in buildings in which teaching activities took place. This adjacency facilitated frequent and brief visits between lectures by users to the libraries, whereas the interim library is located five to 10 minutes' walk from the Central and East Quads where teaching takes place. Library Services' Client & Faculty Services team plan to experiment with "pop up" libraries in the Quads at key times of the academic year to help to address this issue of loss of adjacency. If successful, this concept will also be used after the migration to the Academic Hub.

Planning for two new libraries and simultaneously reviewing two different design teams' drawings for two different libraries was challenging and the logistics of stag-

gered moves to the interim library, with changing timelines due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, were complex.

Work in relation to the change management aspect of both library projects began in early 2019. Library Services embarked on a series of change management and planning workshops throughout that year. The workshops led to the development of plans for new ways of working made possible by the people and collections based in multiple smaller libraries consolidating into a single location. Layered on top of this change was the impact from March 2020 onwards of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting necessary changes to the operation of all libraries. Further complexity was added by the restructuring of Library Services to form a fully integrated multi-campus service as part of the wider merger of TU Dublin's three founding member institutions to form Ireland's first technological university.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the migration to and consolidation of multiple libraries into the interim library was successful and the library is operating effectively today. The interim library project also provided some valuable lessons that will inform the building and operation of the Academic Hub.

9 Interim Library Informing Planning for the Academic Hub

The development and operation of the interim library has helped to inform planning for the library's final home in the Academic Hub.

Seconding a member of Library Services' senior management team to the interim library project contributed to the success of that project. Consequently, the same senior management team member has been seconded full-time to the Academic Hub project to work closely with the University's Campus Planning team, the Grangegorman Development Agency and the design team to help to bring the



Fig. 14: Interim Library at Park House (photo: Donal Murphy Photography, 2021)

project to a successful conclusion. Similarly, following some issues regarding furniture for the interim library, she will play a key role in tender specification for library furniture and equipment.

Several concepts intended to be implemented in the Academic Hub are being trialled in the interim library. The use of self-issue machines and self-service laptop lockers is being maximised in the interim library and proved particularly helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Academic Hub will similarly operate with a self-service model with the addition of a book sorter machine to allow library team members to focus on other services of more value to library users.

The loss of adjacency to teaching activities has impacted on the manner in which library users visit and use the interim library. The location of the Academic Hub at the heart of the Grangegorman campus, between the Central Quad and West Quad, will largely address this issue, but the practice of pop-up libraries in the teaching spaces will continue after the migration to the Academic Hub if proven to be of sufficient value during the lifetime of the interim library.

The study spaces in the Academic Hub are designed to intersperse study desks and library stacks, both as a noise insulation measure and to create an environment and ambience that invites study and concentration. The interim library's design is similar and has proven very effective in minimising noise in the study areas, thus validating the intended design of the Academic Hub.

Another contribution the interim library is making to the Academic Hub project is regarding the use of the interim

library's café, located on the ground floor. While we expected the café to be popular with library users, the degree to which students use it as an informal learning space has been surprising. This is providing an insight into likely user behaviour in the Academic Hub's Learning Commons and is informing the fitout and choice of furniture for that space.

10 Timelines and COVID-19 Pandemic

Delivery of the Academic Hub and interim library projects was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic halted all but essential construction in Ireland for almost two months and all of the University's building projects were delayed. Ultimately, the East Quad was completed in December 2020 and the Central Quad in 2021. The interim library at Park House, which was originally scheduled to open in September 2020, instead opened in January 2021. Construction of the Academic Hub was due to begin 2020, but in fact only began in 2022. It is now scheduled to be completed in 2024.

By late October 2022, all groundwork on the foundations had been completed, and loose and fitted furniture workshops will start in early 2023.



Fig. 15: Academic Hub: View from St. Brendan's Way (source: Picture Plane, 2017)

11 Conclusion

The Academic Hub project represents a significant milestone in TU Dublin's evolution as Ireland's first technological university. It offers a unique opportunity to enhance library services while consolidating the collections and staff of several libraries into a single, purpose built, state of the art building that benefits the university and the wider community.

While presenting its own challenges, the consolidation of a number of smaller libraries into an interim library housed in a refurbished office building in advance of the migration to the final home in the Academic Hub has presented an additional opportunity to experiment with design concepts and operational models in advance of the final move. In fact, this detour to an interim library has the ability to offer important lessons that will help to enhance the library's ultimate home in the Academic Hub.

Information: Dieser Beitrag entstand auf Basis eines Vortrags, der im Rahmen des 87. IFLA „World Library and Information Congress“ in Dublin gehalten wurde. Die „Library Buildings and Equipment Section“ organisierte am 28.7.2022 eine *Open Session* mit dem Titel „Something Old – Something New: Transforming an Existing Building Into a New Library“.

Author Information



Allison Kavanagh
 Head of Library Services
 Technological University Dublin
 Library Services
 Park House Grangegorman
 191 North Circular Road
 IE-Dublin
 D07 EWW4
allison.kavanagh@tudublin.ie
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9861-7564>