

Main Library Renovation
Advisory Committee
May 21, 2003

Attendees

Members:

Gene Holland, Faculty, Comparative Studies
Sarah Johnston, Faculty, Greek & Latin
Karen Lawson, University Libraries
Tony Mughan, Faculty, Political Science
Joy Reilly, Faculty, Theatre
Dona Straley, University Libraries
Julia Watson, Comparative Studies

Architects:

Pete Confar, Acock Associates Architects (GA)
Graham Gund, Graham Gund Architects (GG)
Youngmin Jahan, Graham Gund Architects (YJ)
David Zenk, Graham Gund Architects

University:

Joe Branin, University Libraries (JB)
Scott Conlon, Project Manager
Betty Sawyers, University Libraries

JB: The project has been underway for about two years. A Feasibility Study looked at some programming to determine what could be done and how much it might cost. Four alternatives were identified and the one costing \$99 million was chosen; \$30M must be raised privately, with the remainder coming from State funds. The architects are here today and tomorrow to obtain input from the user community. Earlier today there was a Student Focus Group; this afternoon and tomorrow morning there will be open meetings for the campus community; and tomorrow noon there will be a Faculty Focus Group. The architects will be on campus every two weeks during the summer and fall.

The Senate Steering Committee was interested in having more involvement with the process, and the Libraries readily agreed to setting up an Advisory Committee to be composed of faculty, students, and Libraries' personnel. The group is meeting for the first time today and will meet once more over the summer; the critical time will be this fall, however, by which time we will have something to react to and options to review.

The alternative chosen will add some assignable square feet to the building and provides an opportunity to rethink the building as it currently exists.

YJ: A decision has not yet been made concerning the fate of the book tower. We need to study the structure of the book tower and will be coming up with options. We're in the process of gathering information about the present building from consultants and engineers. We'll be identifying what's usable and what needs to be replaced. We'll also be checking out the envelop and looking at programming and site issues. Variables will be synthesized to come up with options by fall complete with budget estimates. We'll be reassessing all the data rather than accepting any of the options from the feasibility study.

Faculty: A strong concern of folks from the Humanities is to keep as many books in the building as possible; if compact shelving will keep more books in the building, they're for it. Their primary concern is having books immediately available. Delivery from the Book Depository is not entirely satisfactory; takes two days to a week. Browsing is very important. It's also important to retain the subject/language reading rooms; it's important to be able to survey the prime texts in a discipline. Much research involves leapfrogging from discipline to discipline. If you have 15 different articles that need to be retrieved from the Book Depository, it's a definite impediment to research if you have to wait for them to arrive. The subject/language reading rooms are invaluable for having the major materials together in one place with space to sit and study them.

Faculty: If we don't have data about the importance of browsing to faculty, it would be helpful to try and obtain some. Browsing is considered very important to researchers in the Humanities.

JB: What should be the balance of print to electronic? Virtually all work in Astronomy is electronic; History is exactly the opposite, with Social Sciences falling somewhere in between. We're moving to a digital storage world, but still tend to go to print format to read and use. Some fields are moving to digital more quickly, but there is still a great deal of concern about print in the Humanities.

Faculty: Undergraduates are the biggest constituency; we need to get the students into the library. It's vital to provide more seating space for students, both undergraduate and graduate; their voices need to be heard.

JB: Graduate research facility vs availability to undergraduates--needs to attract all.

Libraries: Some areas of the world such as the Middle East are not going electronic and are not likely to.

JB: It's a matter of balance. What should be here? We're provided with an opportunity to rethink everything. Which collections are appropriate to be together? What would be involved in adding Social Sciences to Main; e.g., move Technical Services, Administration, and Information Technology to Sullivant Hall. The possibility of moving Special Collections to Sullivant Hall could also be considered, but that building wasn't designed to be a library—the floor loading capacity isn't sufficient.

Faculty: It's frustrating for researchers to have to continually physically relocate to get at related collections; it would be better to enhance rather than fragment the collections.

The Theatre Research Institute and the Cartoon Research Library could be moved into Main, bringing all of the Special Collections into the building. Sometimes the single copy of a title is in Charvat or other Special Collection.

JB: The volume capacity of building is important. The Book Depository was begun 10 years ago; it provides better management of infrequently used materials, and is a growing trend throughout the country. Buildings just don't keep up with the influx of materials; depositories provide a safety valve for keeping materials. Bringing materials back from the Book Depository is not a realistic possibility.

Faculty: How do we decide what goes to the Depository? What kind of data do we have about which faculties need browsing or what are the needs of undergraduates. Maybe there's a larger demand than we know from undergraduates. JB: We can measure by imprint date, by language, and we have survey data available; Libraries' personnel are familiar with trends; and we're also conducting focus groups today and tomorrow. Everything will be a compromise to arrive at the best balance. Choices will need to be made, and we'll need to look at things in analytical ways.

Faculty: How are needs to be formulated and what is the timeline? Opinions are important, but how can we obtain data to verify that opinion? Perhaps there should be self studies of departments to identify their needs.

Faculty: Who determines what the budget is? Who determines the size and shape of the building? The Library is the most critical building on campus--why are we being limited in the state-of-the-art for the library? Undergraduates should be welcomed.

Faculty: Improvements are needed in many areas. Reserves have been improved, but still need more. There should be spaces in the building for holding both graduate and undergraduate classes. She's looking forward to having TRI here; the availability of Special Collections lets people realize the library is a living thing. Copy machines should be easily accessible and reasonably priced. What will be the size and shape of the building? YJ: First we must determine the program--number of volumes to be housed is key.

JB: At one point 2.5 volumes had MAI as their home; when he came there were books on floor, etc.; he pushed for use of the Depository. The collection is now down to 1.8-2M volumes; once decide on the volume capacity we will be held to zero growth. Lesser used materials go to the Depository, but can be brought back if the usage increases. A study conducted in the early 70s over 8 years found that 50% of the volumes were never used; 80% of circulation was of 20% of the collection, including in house use.

Faculty: Would rather have the library as a people friendly place with books in the Depository to be retrieved.

Faculty: If materials were more rapidly retrievable that would make it better—not great, but better.

Faculty: How does our circulation match with other libraries in the Big Ten? BS: we rank first or second in circulation and ILL with our ten peer institutions, many of which are in the Big Ten.

Faculty: She would like to see a marketing campaign; she'd be interested in helping. She thinks it's important to be a big lender. We need to get the message out about our extraordinary collections—create a “sexy” image. Budget growth will not come from the legislature; it needs to come from the community.

Faculty: Are there any collections that will be contracting? Not so much in the Humanities.

YJ: We want to have the program pretty well defined by the first of July. Some things can begin for the design before the program is completed. The program needs to be looked at in totality--collections, user needs, etc. What collections and units should be in this building? How many reading rooms? What could or should be added or consolidated?