

Main Library Renovation  
Faculty Focus Group  
May 22, 2003

**Attendees**

Faculty:

Steve Acker, Journalism/Communication  
Sylvia Berryman, Philosophy  
Cynthia Brokaw, History  
Ken Goings, African-American and African Studies  
Rebecca Haidt, Spanish & Portuguese  
David G. Horn, Comparative Studies  
John King, English  
Sally Kitch, Women's Studies  
Sebastian Knowles, English  
Linda Mizejewski, Women's Studies  
John Mueller, Political Science  
Christopher Reed, History  
Phil Smith, Education  
Lewis Ulman, English, Council on Libraries and Information Technology  
Sabra Webber, Comparative Studies/Anthropology

Architects:

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

University:

Wes Boomgaarden, University Libraries  
Joe Branin, University Libraries (JB)  
Scott Conlon, Facilities Planning and Development (SC)  
Betty Sawyers, University Libraries (BS)

JB: These meetings are the kickoff of the programming/design phase of the project; preliminary planning has been going on for two years, and we are now moving ahead with a \$99M project. This is one of the biggest academic building projects on campus; one of the biggest library renovations in the country. George Acock is the Architect of Record; Graham Gund is the design architect. We will be meeting with the architects twice a month; there will be other opportunities like today's over the next few months.

GA: We're hearing many conflicting things, but it's good experience to have these meetings, as it helps with programming. Change is inevitable; at some point will have to make tough decisions and the input here will help

GG: It's a fact that we won't have enough books, rooms, or computers. The information we learn in these sessions will help us prioritize. We want to be able to accommodate changes over time. What we do here has ramifications nationally.

Page Hall is showing us that almost anything is possible. What exactly is possible here? GG: Restoration of the Grand Reference Hall and the East Facade is a given; also a new entrance on the West and how to tie the two together. Having West and East rather than East, North and South should help the flow through and around the building.

Why get rid of the North and South entrances? GG: Not a dignified way to enter the building--ramp is unwieldy--ADA access will be accommodated adequately in other ways.

Will the West entrance have the same grandeur as the East? GG: Hopefully, yes; once the wings on the front are removed the lack of North and South entrances shouldn't be much of a problem.

University is lacking in great spaces, but has no lack of nice facades. Need large congregating spot that's grand. Hope there will be room for an additional large space for students to congregate; atrium? auditorium? GG: Currently no hierarchy of spaces within the building. Need to have a variety of spaces, as well as adding to the esthetics and ease of use.

Wouldn't be able to use computers in the atrium; students gravitate to computer/technology spots. JB: What can be predicted about technology changes? May not need books; computers will be as usable as books are now. Computers will improve the size of displays, portability and personalization. We must maintain flexibility to be able to integrate new technology.

Don't subordinate book functions to computer functions; computers can be anywhere, but books are only in the library. Libraries like Huntington, etc. have computers available, but they don't access the Internet. What is the future of the print collection? In a rapidly changing information environment, terminals are being used as much or more as the collections. In many fields they are moving very quickly to embrace the electronic environment. JB: I'm print oriented, but we may not be the best ones to envision how things will be in the future. Need help with identifying the correct balance.

It's very important to make distinctions between different kinds of print. Older materials have to be available to access; much of the more recent stuff has been digitized. If use older sources, you must have access to materials.

How much are we committed to providing study and computer space to students? Couldn't those types of spaces be located anywhere, not necessarily in the library?

Are there plans for work spaces for faculty? JB: Kentucky included rooms/carrels for faculty and graduate students; those for graduate are well used, but not those for faculty. The same thing has been true at Rochester.

What about the existing language and subject Reading Rooms/Libraries? JB: There's no intent to disband, but they may be located differently. A high priority should be given to keeping separate collections together. Are there any collections here that could do just as well somewhere else? E.g., moving Map Room to SEL; moving EHS here and move non-collection areas, e.g., Technical Services, Administration, and Information Technology to Sullivant Hall--REALLY GOOD IDEA. It's also a good idea to bring in TRI and CGA. RAR is now in not good space; hope that they'll stay and be in a prime location. User space in RAR is very inadequate and there's no real exhibit space. (There was general agreement that Spec Col should be in Main.) The staff in RAR is good, but the space is bad; staff and users are mixed together; could be separated by glass to have an observed quiet area to study. Lighting at the desks should be under the control of the users; there should also be outlets and computer connections. Special Collections is a "face" for the library. Would hate to see it go to Kenny Road; has fantasized

about a separate building, but can't see where it could be.

The stacks tower was designed to be a book warehouse for staff only. Security and efficiency are a problem when used as an open stack. Could it be used for offices and convert current offices to collection space, e.g., ground floor. It's probably not realistic to think about expanding the tower.

Has there been any thought given to going down? SC: Utilities and tunnels would be a problem—it's the most expensive option.

My priorities are 1) accessibility to print matter that isn't available otherwise; 2) have capacity to have access to the subject/language collections—perhaps a number of these collections could be arranged surrounding a big reading room that would be used by all; 3) accessibility to microforms and reader/printers/scanners that could allow transmission of the images. We may be moving away from creating new microfilm, but a mother load of material already exists and will be around for a long time.

Processing time for new materials is very poor—it sometimes takes six months from the time a new item is received until it is available for use; should be available in three weeks. If having more space would help to get materials processed more rapidly, then allocate more space to Technical Services.

We need to capture the students and get them into the library in order to get them interested in providing funds for future endowments once they get out into the workforce.

He's been here six or seven years and has seen much more involvement in the library over that time. Opening up the Grand Reference Hall is absolutely essential. There is also need for some sort of permanently open study area for students. It's imperative to get students into the library. Good space is important. The Bobst Library at NYU makes great use of natural light in its reading rooms, which are located around the periphery of the building. That building serves as a focal point on the NYU campus; we need to get this library to serve as a focal point on this campus.

The function of the Main Library must be discussed within the larger mission of the university. It's important to get the students to the library; they think everything is online and are missing resources that are in print or the databases that are being provided by the Libraries. Specialized spaces are important, and we need to get undergraduate to use these specialized spaces. LAT has two shelves of Spanish history; they go online and think they've found everything--miss both print and online resources that aren't available through Google. Undergraduates need an on site, physical orientation to library, which is best done by a joint effort by the classroom faculty/librarian.

Should the option to have books sent to faculty offices be expanded to students [not presently possible]? Open stacks are a necessity. Returning books is currently a nightmare.

YJ: We're not just designing, but solving problems as well. What are the possibilities for modification? We're looking at infrastructure, which will give us an idea of what is in the realm of possibility. Money is a very sobering aspect that keeps us focused. We need to be realistic and know what the tradeoffs are—the consequences of alternatives. We'll be working over the summer and come back in October with possible alternatives; discussions can be much more focused then. We'll agree on and move ahead with a general concept, but will continue to come back with alternatives.

This is our one shot for many decades; are there things that can be done to make future changes easier and cheaper? We need to identify places for people, as well as non-people places. We need to try to build in flexibility for changes, but too much flexibility can lead to lack of character. We must strike a balance between future needs and what is needed now.

It would be nice to have a half dozen rooms smaller than 122, containing conference table that could be used for doctoral defenses, etc—quality spaces that could be used by the faculty.

There needs to be provision for viewing of AV resources so they can be more easily used on site for classes without having to take them to the classroom.

There should be better definition of quiet and noisy spaces, with quiet areas identified as such and vice versa.

Would like the library to be an academic gathering place; uses by undergraduates and graduate students/faculty differ.

We need to build inviting spaces, but are we building for the 50s, today, or tomorrow?

The following comments were supplied by a faculty member via e-mail following the meeting:

Thank you for arranging the meeting this afternoon--it was quite informative. As I had to leave a little early and did not get a chance to give my views, I thought I would send them to you via e-mail. If this is not appropriate, please just ignore this message.

First, I would like to add my voice to those supporting print culture and the idea that the library should be primarily a book-collection site. Most of my reasons were mentioned at the meeting: Not all books, particularly those from before the 19th c., will end up in digitized form. Websites are still not consistently reliable sources of information and until they become reliable, students should be encouraged to consult books as well. Finally, books are not just sources of information--they're also physical artifacts and as such cannot be fully reproduced by computer technology. Computers offer more or less identical services--as one of the participants pointed out, one does not need a library to use a computer. If libraries do not continue to offer access to books, then they have lost their purpose.

Second, I also very much support the idea that smaller specialized collections (with attached reference and reading rooms and "resident" librarians) should be retained. If one of the goals of the new library is the attraction of more undergraduates, then I think that these collections are essential, for it is in these smaller, more intimate settings that students can be taught to use books and do paper research.

The combination of all collections would also be disastrous for special-language collections. The East Asian collection, for example, should, without question, be kept separate from the western-language books--I do not know of any library that has successfully incorporated its East Asian collection into the western-language stacks.

Third, I would very much oppose any effort to close the stacks. Browsing is one of the best ways of finding additional texts on research topics, and though computer browsing will yield nearby titles, it is no substitute for looking through real texts. I am very pleased with the book-order system here, but would prefer to see it abolished if it is linked in any way to an effort to close the stacks.