Multidisciplinary Rethinking and Redesign of Library Space

Association of Research Libraries Library Assessment Conference
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Nancy Fried Foster, University of Rochester
Patricia Steele, University of Maryland
A thick, fat building designed for objects, not people.

The Vault – 1980’s

The Thicket – 1950’s
The Thicket
FOR ACCESS TO 5 STACKS PLEASE RETURN TO THE 4 FLOOR AND TAKE THE ELEVATOR TO 5

Thank you
PLAYERS

• School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

• Department of Anthropology

• Ayers Saint Gross architectural firm

• Nancy Fried Foster
ARCHITECTURE

In unstable times a physical re-programming can no longer depend on traditional, professional experts (architects and librarians), for whom precedent is now unreliable. We looked to our user community’s expertise.

-David Cronrath, Dean, UMD School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation
PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

- Many more people participate
- Each contributes his or her own special expertise
ETHNOGRAPHY

• Prof. Michael Paolisso
• “Methods of Cultural Analysis” (ANTH 606)
• How do undergrads and grad students use the library?
  – Observations
  – Interviews
CHALLENGE

In the fall of 2011 graduate students in the Department of Anthropology conducted extensive interviews.

The startling conclusion: students view the current library as a form of purgatory – a place to avoid.
ETHNOGRAPHY

• Students do different kinds of schoolwork
• Students have varied work styles
• Students want control over their work environments
• Students need physical access to a wide variety of resources
• Students need ancillary supports in order to use library resources
ETHNOGRAPHY

• Program recommendations:
  – “Radically different” library
  – Large, open, welcoming atrium
  – Higher ceilings
  – Abundant natural light
  – Customizability
QUANTITATIVE PROGRAM

• Graduate students in architecture
• Working with building plans
• Calculating usable space
QUANTITATIVE PROGRAM

Space Usage Plans

Admin/Office
Instructional
Stacks
Circulation
Study
Lounge
Study Services
Storage
Utility / Building Services

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PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

• Librarians and library staff
• Included faculty members, grad students, undergrads and staff
• Three methods:
  – Structured observations
  – Design workshops
  – On-the-Spot Interviews
OBSERVATIONS

• 8 locations in library
• 3 times a day for seven days
ON-THE-SPOT INTERVIEWS

• 33 interviews
• 4 outdoor locations (not library)

• Last time they studied for a test, worked on a paper, or worked on a lab or project
  – When?
  – For how long?
  – Why there?

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Imagine that we could create a new space inside the library that would be exactly as you want it. Imagine that we ask you to design it and then we get a team of people to come in and build it. You walk into the space and it’s perfect. It meets your needs and enables you to take full advantage of your academic opportunities.
DESIGN WORKSHOPS

• 5 workshops
  – 20 undergraduates
  – 17 graduate students
  – 20 faculty members
  – 20 members of the library staff
I NEED TO ...

• Read, think, and write in a deep, sustained way
• Connect deeply with the collections, in a variety of formats
I NEED TO ...

• Connect to the world of nature and culture
I NEED TO ...

- Collaborate with colleagues; hold seminars
- Converse with colleagues and others and build community
I NEED TO ...

• Explore through library work my own identity as a scholar, a worker, or an emerging adult
I NEED TO ...

• Develop a sense of connection to my discipline
- Provide enough tables for students to show their work / books / computers.
- Provide more tables. Number: I can stand and write PH.D, but I need a lot of space. Can someone suggest where tables are shippable?
- Put some of the glass facing in the thing.
- I like the design of 2nd floor and study rooms. Be sure they continue on single floor.
- Change in front of section: take the order of section. Add the floor next to the main floor.
- Add the rooms -- study rooms.
- Add more floors to the main floor.
I NEED TO ...

• “Settle in” – physically and psychically – so I can do demanding work and stay with it to the end
The two entry volumes, one from the original entry to the building, and the other from the new entry seam between the original building and its addition. The volume on the right is from the original entry and the volume directly ahead is the new seam space. These two volumes meet to provide orientation and order to the proposed renovation. The reading room is to the left.
View from new second floor entry connecting to Student Union

Elevated bridge connects to north side of central campus mall. The entry leads into the central seam between the existing building and the renovated 1980's addition with new exterior skin. The new double glazed exterior skin permits warm air trapped between the layers to be brought to the north side of the building to reduce heating loads in summer.
View from third floor looking into new main reading room

The new main reading room is light filled and surrounded by student study areas and new collaborative work rooms. The new configuration creates multiple edges from which students can look down onto other students. This preferred location and arrangement for student study was the result of an extensive study conducted by graduate students in anthropology. Note the view of the book stacks in the distance.
Campus Response

• Buy-In
• Model (Mall project)
• Experiential
• Student engagement
  – Art students
  – Business
  – Engineering
  – Division of Information Technology
Internal Response

• First floor re-visioning
• New methods for future
• Excitement
Process

Innovative and Entrepreneurial