Building a 21st Century Learning Environment: The Power of LibQUAL+
Information to Foster Change at the Atlanta University Center
Robert W. Woodruff Library

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About the Library
Established in 1932, the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Robert W. Woodruff Library serves the instructional, informational and research needs for member institutions of the world’s largest and oldest consortium of Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Clark Atlanta University, the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, and Spelman College.

The Challenge
One of the priorities articulated by key stakeholders of the AUC Woodruff Library in the 2006 Strategic Plan was to build a 21st century learning environment. The building was dated, and the Woodruff Library’s resources and services did not adequately support the growing needs of the AUC community. We heard from our stakeholders that:

“\nThe Library is archaic in its ways; they need to improve on a lot of things. I suggest visiting other major campus libraries and taking advice from them.”

“The Library needs an upgrade on furniture, computers, books, air conditioning, and just a more learning conducive environment.”

“Library should acquire space across the street and install copying center, cafe.”


To give our patrons the learning environment that they needed could only be accomplished through enhancement of resources, services, and technology; as well as the transformation of the physical space. We listened to them and visited other libraries, incorporating the best of what we saw. We had a reason for change, and the next step was to build the case to renovate.

Laying the Foundation

Building the Case Renovate
We had to lay a strong foundation upon which to build the case to renovate. This foundation was comprised of the following key components:

• Strategic Plans – improving the physical environment was top priority area in 2013 & 2006 plans
• Conceptual Plan – a re-envisioning of the Woodruff Library
• Feasibility Study & Funding Strategy – determine who would give money and how much
• LibQUAL + 2006 survey implementation – statistical evidence from key stakeholders to move forward

Documenting the Evidence

LibQUAL + 2006 survey was integral in providing the hard data we needed. We learned what our stakeholders truly cared about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LibQUAL Attribute</th>
<th>Overall Rating</th>
<th>Percentile Rank</th>
<th>Gap (D-P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space impression</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client orientation</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty &amp; student learning</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable and inviting location</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to equipment not campuses</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual attention</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Validating the Evidence

LibQUAL + 2006 feedback (statistical ratings and verbatim comments) focused on the Woodruff Library’s space, confirming for us the changes our users wanted to see. We created a “Transformation Furniture Showcase,” where they voted on furniture options. We consequently purchased more than 90% of their recommendations.

Framing “Our” Story to AUC Institutions

Customizing the Woodruff Library messaging, marketing, and user benefits for each stakeholder group, we created “our” story to support the renovation. “Our,” however, meant something different on each campus. We had to shape a renovation story that appealed to each of the AUC school’s unique needs to encourage them to contribute to funding.

• Morehouse College – an all-male liberal arts institution
• Spelman College – an all-female liberal arts institution
• Clark Atlanta University – an undergraduate and graduate research institution
• The Interdenominational Theological Center – a graduate interdenominational seminary

Funding Strategy

To bring the plan from concept to creation, the Woodruff Library commissioned a feasibility study to assess the viability of a capital campaign to fund the renovation. The 2006 study detailed the two-phase renovation, its costs, and the benefits. The study revealed favorable conditions for pursuing $16.2 million to fund a Phase I renovation. The Library Board of Trustees approved the campaign to raise funds.

Major campaign contributors:
• Bank of America Charitable Foundation
• The Woodruff Foundation
• AUC Member Institutions (student renovation fee)
• The Coca-Cola Company

Showcasing the “center of the Center”

LibQUAL Ratings: Then and Now

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUC Undergraduate</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>7.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC Graduate</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>7.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC Faculty</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>7.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>7.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the completion of the Phase I renovation in August 2010, we built a 21st century learning environment that is truly the “center of the Center” and has become the intellectual and social hub of the AUC.

Our Woodruff Library users were excited and impressed by the transformation. How did we know? They told us in the LibQUAL+ 2010 survey administered post-renovation. Overwhelmingly, the response was positive. Selected comments include:

“Absolutely love coming to the Library; my second home!”

“It has become COOL to come to the Library; WOODI rocks!”

“I can say that the upgraded interior has increased my urge to learn! There is something about a ‘new look’ [that] inspires the urge to pursue anything foreign to the norm so I’ve personally be able to change my own study habits by the new look.”

“Thanks for creating an atmosphere enabling academic success!”

Before and After: The “Third Place”

With the Phase I renovation, we created an inviting atmosphere designed to be a “third place” beyond the classroom and the dorm rooms for the Atlanta University Center community.

Scan to hear from students what makes Woodruff a great library!