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Anatomy of a Renovation

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Abstract: The seeds of innovation are changing how libraries use their space and plan for future remodels, renovations or expansions, especially post-COVID. Examples of this range from converting space from materials storage to user space needs along with technology enhancements. Technology driven initiatives that impact space usually start as small ideas or seeds of innovative initiatives, such as makerspaces, but are growing into digital media centers, video and imaging rooms, gaming labs and augmented reality spaces.

This presentation shares a case study approach to a master space planning project but goes beyond the typical consultant led project into developing a boarder perspective on the factors related to addressing innovative changes and initiatives for both present needs and future developments. As part of renovation planning, an assembled team, representing a wide range of interests conducted site visits to selected academic libraries to visualize and discuss trends and initiatives impacting space planning. This information was shared with stakeholders in a focus group format to vet out potential seeds of expectation on how the use of library space can contribute to the success of individuals, groups and the larger institution.

The drivers for creating goals in the planning effort went beyond the library walls to include community, digital scholarship and convening spaces. Research was conducted regarding the pedagogy that libraries can offer, in order to create environments that promote and support knowledge creation. The library should be considered the learning hub on campus and be integrated into each level of the educational mission to ensure student success and faculty research support.

This paper/presentation breaks down how small seeds of ideas, new concepts or futuristic thinking can be incorporated into space design and renovation efforts. This anatomy of a renovation will be very visual and active in its delivery.

Keywords:

Renovation, funding, assessment, design, stakeholders, programming

Keeping up on a small scale

Library renovation is not a new topic, but it does come in different shapes, forms and processes based on opportunities presented. Whether a renovation is small or large, a particular set of criteria should be established and followed to preserve conventional best practices and inform future efforts. Walter Clinton Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro opened a main building in 1950, added a book tower in the mid-seventies and connected to the student union in 2005.

These milestones were not enhanced until 2008, when a space study was conducted to "refresh" aging space. Some work was completed[i] but economic dips prevented a large-scale scope of work as was hoped, instead the next 11 years brought forth a series of small-scale upgrades and changes to select parts of the library as a placeholder. This included creating a closed stack environmental controlled space for archival materials, creating a Digital Media Commons to facilitate digital pedagogy efforts and cosmetic enhancements with carpet, paint and new furniture.

It wasn't until 2017 that a new Master Space Study was commissioned to address changing user needs, determine the potential for a capital investment moving forward and prioritize infrastructure issues that were out of compliance and needed to be updated for life/safety issues. These small projects and now this master space plan, which has been funded follow the steps outlined in this paper, with a nod to environmental and societal issues that have occurred in the process, i.e. COVID.

As a general reference, much of this work follows the guidelines set forth in the publication by Schlipf and Moorman[ii] on library architecture in the concepts and processes. These processes were followed in similar fashion by designers and architects engaged in the small projects as well as verbally expectations set by a designer now on board for the larger renovation.

Why is a Renovation needed?

Jackson Library is located in the geographic center of campus and is ideally positioned to be a thoroughfare, a destination and a hub of activity connecting students and faculty to academic, cultural and social centers on campus. As a public university Jackson Library is accessible to the larger Greensboro community as well as serving a role in the state university system collection of resources. Pre-pandemic traffic counts were well over a million annually.

Anecdotally the need for a renovation has risen over the years, some items addressed with smaller projects mentioned earlier but also with state renovation and repair projects such as an elevator update seven years ago and a new roof for the main building 4 years ago. Over time the needs have presented themselves in these categories:

- Age of building(s), cosmetic decay
- Out of date esthetics, not appealing to contemporary students
- Technology changes that isn't supported by the infrastructure
- Changes to pedagogies that transition into library instruction and services
- Safety issues not in line with current code
- Growth of the student population
- Changes to the curriculum
- Changes to library's mission and larger campus needs
- Changes to user's expectation and how space is used
- Competitive marketplace for information acquisition and areas of study on campus

Every campus and their library is different so other "needs" might exist in different areas but those needs should be vetted at the beginning of the process to help determine overall success at the end.

What are the steps?

This flowchart outlines the steps to be taken in a renovation process:

Anatomy of a Successful Renovation

Funding	Environmental Scans	Approvals	Programming	Design	Design Document	Construction Documents	Renovation Complete
• Government • Development • Other • Budget	• Site visits • Data Gathering • Stats	• State Codes • Local Codes • Oversight	• Stakeholders • Services • Campus expectations	• Initial (d) • Tweaking (d) • Sequencing • Staging/Logistics	• Review • Revision • Approval	• Communication of process, expectations	• Press release • Celebration

Oversight Committee
- Troubleshoot
- Mediate conflict (d)

Figure 1. Flow Chart of Steps

Once a set of needs are developed, this forms the foundation for the vision of renovation goals as well as establishes mission objectives for moving forward.

The first step will be centered on funding and determining what it takes financially to make that vision a reality. Funding can come from multiple sources and restrictions might vary from state to state, but a financial plan is needed first. Most library renovations start or are funded in full by a capital allocation. Other options might include a campaign to raise funds from donors or some type of grassroots advocacy from stakeholders who want to see some improvements. A combination of funding sources might also be possible as it relates to the diversity of use, i.e., building structure or components in the building.

The broader scope of costs can possibly include many items not recognized as part of a renovation but become secondary expenses in order to make the renovation possible. Examples are:

- Relocation or deselection of the print collection
- Storage and retrieval operational costs
- New technologies
- Updating furnishings (sometimes outside the scope of the building work)
- A wide range of misc. costs related to staffing, signage, and expenses related to communication with stakeholders

Once funding is identified information will be needed to make decisions moving forward. This next step is to start gathering information that will be needed by doing an environmental scan. This can include a wide range of areas that might be considered competition or duplicate efforts to your use of space and the investment you are planning to make. This doesn't mean other libraries, this means spaces that can serve or offer similar services or instructional needs, which might conflict with your mission. These areas could be on campus, in the immediate surrounding area of the community or in virtual mode, drawing on pandemic practices to direct stakeholder needs.

Many libraries have focused on the "Third Place" concept of creating spaces that are useful for students and faculty to feel comfortable in, knowing what else is available on campus and how it is structured and used would be helpful in decision making about similar library space.

Other information that is important to this project falls into 2 categories; primary and secondary data. Secondary data will be reports, statistics, publications and any information that is documented that can inform the goals of the renovation. This might also include purchased data, regarding trends in the

profession or from studies that have conducted research on a particular aspect of the project that is new. It might also be in the form of benchmarking what other institutions are doing or looking at professional association reports of best practices in a larger venue.

On the other hand, primary data is going to be data gathered firsthand, specifically for the project and customized for the situation surrounding the renovation and campus. This is also considered your assessment data; assessing the perception and desires of your stakeholders and will lead to programming elements next. Data gathered here come in the form of surveys, interviews, focus groups, observational studies and running pilot situations to test reactions. This helps convey user expectations of what the project will mean once completed.

Multiple assessment methods are useful in examining a diverse set of circumstances and perceptions across different stakeholder groups. This provides detail and scope to broad ideas and concepts. Observational studies in particular can help determine behaviors or reactions in multiple settings or conditions and can help inform decisions on potential changes.

Site visits can be an important way to combine environmental scans with assessment, to both see what other organizations are doing but also observe new features and services and see the interaction that stakeholders have with the space. Site visits also generate ideas for your own library to consider, the potential value of new products and services or adjacencies and use or space. This might not only inform building design but also future furnishing decisions and ideas. It might also be helpful to view visits to other library spaces through a lens of staffing and how modified space will be staffed or what type of activities should be present.

Overall a strategic purposeful assessment of space should consider how the users will engage and interact, how services fit into the space and how the library is a partner in the learning priorities of the academic mission for each student. This is best determined with a variety of assessment methods, that provide useful data for decision making.

Designing the Ideas

Once you have a vision, the funding and approvals to move forward and you've done the homework to engage the environment of both competition and similar institutions and you know have the data from assessment to inform decision making, it is time to start a design. The design process highlights initial concepts and ideas in an informed way but pulls it all together to show how it will be used and how the parts connect to a whole. Thus, a series of draft presentations, gathering feedback in order to make tweaks or modifications and providing the venue for feedback and reflection can occur to develop a working design.

Logistics become important as consideration should be given to how the design will be implemented, so sequencing, staging and addressing logistical barriers must be part of the process. This could include identifying the adjacencies between departments or services so that they have a logical flow to the users and traffic patterns within the building.

Most design work starts with concept maps that show all the components needed in any given space as well as the adjacencies and relationship to each other. This will highlight, without showing furniture, fixtures or equipment, the type of work or activity expected in each area of space.
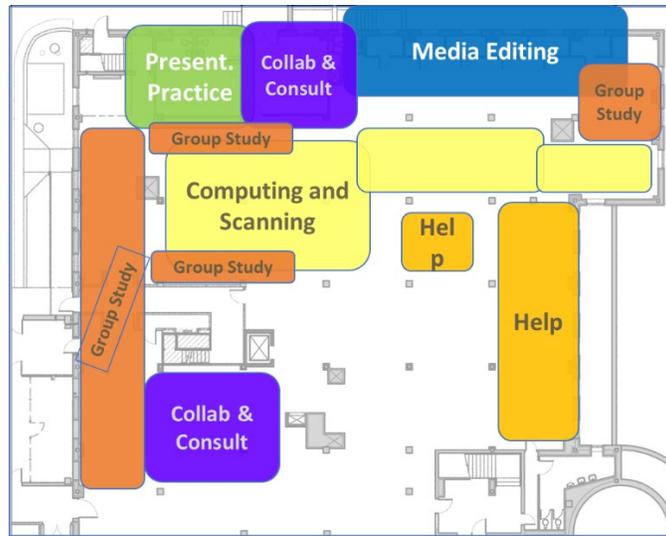
Figure 2. Concept Map of Adjacencies

These adjacencies will be presented to the owner and stakeholder groups for feedback and determination of the relationships are appropriate. The expectation is to tweak details using the feedback and to then start applying walls or space breaks or other physical features that are already present or in need of consideration. This might include stairwells, load bearing walls, building features that cannot be altered, etc.

Figure 3. Concepts applied to Building Features

Figure 3 takes the concept adjacencies and applies them to the building configuration to get an overall view of the space dedicated to each area, service or activity. This bird's eye view enables decision makers to understand at a glance how much space is dedicated to each area and make adjustments as needed.

Design Documents

Final design documents will apply furniture expectations or suggestions and align with occupancy standards and any other equipment or fixture needs. It should include active workspace elements that will be used to apply infrastructure needs such as electrical, data and plumbing. Along with lighting schematics, fire alarm/sprinkling systems and HVAC pathways, this moves into the creation of construction documents that are presented to the contractor for construction.

Figure 4. Design Documents

Other considerations

Some projects will engage in a Construction Manager at Risk feature as a delivery method which entails a commitment by the Construction Manager to deliver the project within a Guaranteed Maximum Price which is based on the construction documents and specifications at the time. These are usually larger renovations which carry a greater risk to the owner and have a lot of sub-contractors to be managed.

A project might also employee an Oversight Committee which is designed to provide campus representation to the process and helps coordinate communication and feedback avenues for stakeholders. This group can be tasked with vetting out issues and concerns and taking points of conflict back to stakeholders for mitigation. This committee should be formed at the start of the process and communicated broadly that it exists.

Understanding the lingo used in a renovation project can be a pretty important step in success. Many examples exist of architectural vocabulary and becoming familiar with the language used by facilities personnel, designers and construction folks can say a great deal of anxiety and problem solving. This is one example: https://pravdaarchitecture.com/common-architecture-terms/ but others are out there and easy to find with a Google search.

Finishing the Job

Once complete there should be a lot of celebration, pride and boasting of the new space. Also recognize that a punch list will be created to ensure the finished product is what it was meant to be, both from the vision point of view, but also contractually from the designers and contractors. Depending on the size of the project a punch list could create a bit of time, also recognizing some of the incomplete items might have been supply problems or reconfiguring a problem situation.

In her memoir[iii], so to say, of her experience renovating the Georgia Tech Library, Catherine Murry-Rust in her book *Library Next*, encourages readers and future renovators to make bold, aggressive plans that provide an exciting and futuristic view of the next generation of academic libraries. Being transparent and publicly sharing the experience along the way will encourage stakeholders to embrace the finished product and provide ongoing support.

A recent publication from the Chronicle of Higher Education[iv] advocates for the value of the academic library and reflects on the changes to the library profession, higher education and the role that academic libraries play in within the larger campus mission. This is timely and valuable in a planning process; to not just accept a refresh of something old, but to repurpose academic libraries as we know them and direct spaces into places that are conducive to academic success. Ensuring that the library remains crucial to the campus and the center of learning, starts with a facility that have been renovated to grow all aspects of pedagogy and teaching.

Conclusion

The presentation of this paper includes our story at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro so far. We have patched and refresh our building for many years and are now entering a major renovation effort. The final version of this paper will apply more details to our experience with consideration for moving from a refresh effort to proving something transformative. The steps will all still be taken but with a learned effort to product a library for the next generation of students, faculty, staff and community members.

[i] Crumpton, M.A. (2018) A Phased Approach to Creating Updated User Spaces. In Dearie, T. N., Meth, M., & Westbrooks, E. L. (Eds.). (2018). Academic library management: case studies. ALA Neal-Schuman, an imprint of the American Library Association.

[ii] Schlipf, F. A., & Moorman, J. A. (2018). The practical handbook of library architecture: creating building spaces that work. ALA Editions.

[iii] Murray-Rust, C. (2021). Library next: seven action steps for reinvention. ALA Editions.

[iv] Carlson, S., & Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc. (2022). The library of the future: how the heart of the campus is transforming. Chronicle of Higher Education.