University of North Texas Libraries

Willis Library
Second Floor Renovation

Site Visit April 18, 2014
Report and Recommendations

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May 22, 2014
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Introduction
At the invitation of Dean of Libraries Dr. Martin Halbert, on Friday, April 18, 2014, I conducted a one-day site visit to the UNT Libraries, encompassing a brief tour of facilities, meetings with staff, a workshop with library staff, and a second workshop with a more broadly-based group of library staff, students, and other UNT stakeholders (see Appendix 1).

The results of the site visit are summarized in this report in three main sections:

- Facilities tour observations and general comments;
- Summary of workshop results; and
- Recommendations for processes to engage and communicate with stakeholders regarding the needs and opportunities for a renovation of the second floor of Willis.

Summary of workshop results
Two workshops were held during the site visit, the first with library staff and the second with a more broadly based group of library staff, students, and other UNT stakeholders. Workshop participants were invited to share their perceptions of the Willis Library in both its functional as well as symbolic roles on campus, and to offer their ideas, suggestions and aspirations for a renovation of the second floor.

The Library’s functional role
Participants recognized the continuing importance of the library’s role in offering campus access to information such as database, and services like interlibrary loan and printing. In addition to providing access to individual computer workstations (of which there are never enough!), there was acknowledgement of the emerging role of the library as a center for digital scholarship. Signage and wayfinding were mentioned as important for helping students navigate this increasingly diverse and complex physical environment. And more power outlets would be a good thing.

There is a need for differentiated spaces based on level of activity, with separation of quiet or silent use from active use. Space for group work was mentioned several times, supported by tools for collaboration such as whiteboards. The coffee shop is seen as an asset, and longer hours would be great. Library access twenty-four hours seven days a week (24 x 7) is important, for both residential and commuter students. There was mixed feeling about the Library’s designation as “Club Willis”; some staff feel that the designation should be embraced and even celebrated, while other staff want to make sure the academic purpose stays front and center.

The Library’s symbolic role
The Willis Library’s role as a repository for information storage is expressed as “books on a shelf”. Central to the campus mission for teaching and research, Willis’ imposing and impressive façade looks to its past. The Library wants to be seen as a center for innovation, and as a hub for interaction and activity, though socialization is seen as both good and bad.
The fourth floor is identified as a quiet, peaceful space. But there is no large, quiet classic reading room in Willis, which is identified as a lack. One group said that there is something compelling and inspirational about such a traditional library space.

The user experience in the Library
One group posed the question: How do we transform the 2nd floor into an inviting space for students not only to meet with groups of peers, but also with faculty, advisors, and tutors? The theme of space for multiple types of activities and interactions was struck again and again.

Workshop participants expressed a desire to create spaces that are inviting, and that combine learning and socializing in a relaxed environment that also supports and encourages academic productivity. Seating should be comfortable, and furniture should be movable, able to be configured in different ways. The word “lounge” was used in specific reference to a “graduate student lounge” but also to evoke the more general idea of a comfortable, relaxing environment that nevertheless supports serious collaboration. The new space should be clean, “new age”, embracing technology, but also more learning-focused than socially focused.

Several groups mentioned the need for quiet space. Space for individual learning and self-discovery was seen as an important component of the library experience.

These quiet spaces of course need to be separated and acoustically isolated from the more active, group and collaborative spaces that were also identified as important to the user experience of the library. Group spaces that were mentioned by many participants included:

- Group studies, sized up to 10 to 15 students
- Small conference and consultation rooms
- Instructional spaces, including computer equipped rooms for large classes
- Meeting rooms, including use by student organizations
- Space with equipment for students and staff to record presentations
- Both closed and open collaborative spaces

Service remains a primary driver of thinking about library space. Participants wondered about the service program for the floor, including what type of staff assistance will be provided, and will there be a service desk for help?

Planning and implementation
One group wanted to work toward clarity of purpose for the floor, suggesting that the program focus on creating an “active learning environment”. The library needs to be aware of other programs and initiatives on campus, especially the Union currently under construction, and the Gateway Center. One group asked: What will differentiate us from all other facilities on campus?

Specific goals are important along with solid measurement, evaluation and assessment, to determine if the library project on the second floor will meet the needs of faculty and students. It was suggested that the effort tie in with programs such as “Succeed at UNT” (success.unt.edu)

Specific questions were raised about project planning and implementation,
including can offices move (e.g., admin, facilities & systems, external relations), and what is the budget? Attention needs to be paid to communicating these changes as they’re being planned. A suggestion about how to get the word out to students about library services encompassed a “Grand Opening” for the 2nd floor—with free food!

Engaging stakeholders in Willis Library second floor renovation
To reimagine the second floor of the Willis Library as comfortable, inviting space that supports learning and scholarship, it is important to understand what would make it so for student and faculty. Some approaches to doing this are described below in the general categories of observation, inquiry and collaboration.

Observation
The use of library facilities, and trends in use over time, can be measured by gate counts at the entrance or exit. The addition of demographic data enhances the value of gate count information. Use can also be measured by occupancy levels or head count, often captured by sampling.

Observing what those occupants are doing can help inform future planning and design efforts. Observation can be unobtrusive, or permission can be solicited at the point of observation, especially in a photographic study. Any ethnographic study of user behavior in the library should be reviewed by the University agency responsible for human subject research.

Inquiry
Users can be surveyed on a regular basis, often annually, or on a targeted basis. Surveys can be administered online or on paper (often at point-of-use for targeted surveys).

Survey data can often reveal perceptions or trends that merit further study. Focus groups are a good method for digging down into survey data and results, for clarification and additional information. Focus groups can also be managed as planning sessions, involving brainstorming, or even architectural planning in the form of a design charrette, where architects or interior designers put pen to paper and draw real-time in response to user input.

Collaboration
Library governance groups such as a faculty library committee, or a student advisory group, offer an excellent channel for user input on proposed library projects and initiatives. Student governance such as a student government association, student council or college council offer ready-made groups of student stakeholders.

Library staff themselves are often a good source of anecdotal evidence about student behavior and expectations, especially those staff that supervise library student employees. Our student staff are, after all, students first and library employees second. Because of their “inside” knowledge of the library, they can be excellent informants in formal and informal assessment processes.
Recommendations

1. Continue regular surveys of users such as LibQUAL+ or LibQUAL+ Lite.
2. Systematically solicit staff perspectives on student behavior and needs through regular staff meetings, workshops, and regular reporting lines.
3. Visit peer institutions as well as exemplary and aspirational institutions for perspectives on current best practice, feasibility and inspiration. Consider taking student, faculty, and stakeholder representatives on such visits.
4. Use existing library governance groups to solicit and review proposals for Willis Library second floor renovation. Consider establishing groups if they don’t yet exist, e.g., a graduate student council.
5. Conduct additional workshops with various students, library staff, strategic campus partners, and administrators, focused on goals and opportunities in the Willis Library second floor renovation project.
6. Consider student charrettes, where students are given a blank floor plan of Willis Library second floor and invited to design the way they’d like to see it look and operate.
7. Consider hiring professional architectural or interior design consultants as part of any or all staff and stakeholder design workshops or charrettes.
Appendix 1: UNT Libraries site visit, April 18, 2014

Overall Purpose
A) Conduct a series of planning and orientation meetings with UNT Libraries to prepare the institution for upcoming space planning efforts focused on renovating the second floor of Willis Library;
   B) Provide a succinct report to the UNT Libraries suggesting processes for engaging and communicating with stakeholders regarding the needs and opportunities for user spaces utilizing the second floor of Willis.

Schedule

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM: Breakfast w/ Halbert, transition to UNT

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM: Tour of Willis Library, other locations

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: Meeting with Halbert, Hartman, Paz, Sears, and Jackson (Location: Dean’s Office)

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Seminar: Introduction to Programmatic Space Planning
   (Location: Willis Library 136)
   Welcome (Halbert)
   Presentation: 5 Phases of library renovation (Forrest)
   Group exercise, report out: What are your key questions in your process? (All)
   User needs and the planning process (Forrest)
   Group exercise, report out: What tools can you use? (All)
   Wrap up and next steps (Forrest, Halbert)

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch w/ Halbert and others

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM: Willis Library Second Floor Space Planning: Stakeholder Summit
   (Location: Willis Room 443)
   Welcome (Halbert)
   Presentation: Environmental assessment (Forrest)
   Group exercise: Design as relationship [four chairs] (All)
   Presentation: The Library: Functional and symbolic (Forrest)
   Group exercise, report out: Vision and narrative (All)
   Wrap up and next steps (Forrest, Halbert)

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM: Drive w/ Halbert to DFW airport
Appendix 2: Facilities Tour
observations and general comments

Eagle Commons Library

The Eagle Commons Library in Sycamore Hall focused on physics, chemistry, biology, art, psychology, and mathematics. A major shift is now underway to move science collections to Willis Library, and move government documents, political science and law materials to Eagle Commons.

The facility contains the original stack tiers, still in use for active collections. The stack tiers are self-supporting and as is typical in such a design don’t correspond to the regular floors of the building. The stacks include some individual study spaces, but are very inflexible.

Some interesting work has been done to mock up workspaces using the existing supports in the stack tiers, but the result has been deemed less than successful.

The new Collaboration and Learning Commons enables students to study in groups, create multimedia projects, and record presentations. Though modest in scale, this project has been judged a success.
Research Collections Library

A former cosmetics factory, the Library Annex is home to the Library’s Preservation and Conservation Lab, and Technical Services.

The bulk of the Annex is given over to collection storage, including significant LP holdings, unclassified but shelved by record label numbers.

The collection space is nearing capacity. Staff in Technical Services echoed two big challenges that the UNT Libraries face:

• Running out of space for collections

• Lack of collaborative workspace for students and staff

The Library Annex has recently been supplemented by the addition of capacity for collections in a new offsite facility, a partially renovated warehouse space.

The new offsite facility enables the library to more effectively process and house its current collections. Future renovations will further enhance capacity and create space for user access to library holdings.
**Digital Scholarship and Innovation Commons**

Across the corridor from Eagle Commons Library in Sycamore Hall, the Digital Scholarship and Innovation Commons hosts the Digital Scholarship Cooperative (DiSCo) and the Innovations Greenhouse.

The suite includes a well-equipped videoconference room suitable for small groups.
### Appendix 3: Stakeholder Summit sign-in sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Student?</th>
<th>Grad Student/TF</th>
<th>Staff?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristan Foast Ewin</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Grad Student</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura McInnion</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kris Helge</td>
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<td>Shellie Sumter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angela Burr</td>
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<td>Blaine Berend</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Sears</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Jackson</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Conover</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Quintana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lettenmeyer</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryann Ferguson</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Forrest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student: Shellie Sumter@myunt.edu
(USA, Kristan Ewin@my.unl.edu)
Ryann Ferguson@unt.edu - Learning Center
Blaine Berend@unt.edu
Appendix 4: Brainstorming results from Stakeholder Summit – transcribed (flip chart images follow below)

(1) Functional
   - Database
   - ILL
   - Meeting Hub (Club Willis)
   - Study Groups
   - Printing
   - Digital Scholarship (Access)

Symbolic
   - Research
   - Innovation
   - Books on a shelf
   - Information storage

(2) 2d floor Story & Exp.
   - Relaxed
   - Tech
   - Study
   - Socialize
   - New age
   - Quiet: silent
   - Inviting
   - Reading
   - Clean

(3) Functional
   - Printing works well
   - 24 x 7 access
   - New “study” coffee shop (although would be great to have until 2am)
   - Whiteboards (want more) esp. for study groups
   - Computers (want more)
   - Differentiated spaces (quiet/loud)
(4)
Symbolic
  Facade of library (imposing, impressive, 2001)
  Quiet giant reading room (something compelling about the retro)
  Fourth floor is quiet, usable, peaceful
  Socialization (loud) is both good and bad

(5)
Story/experiences
  Group studies (round tables for clusters of students)
  Both closed and open spaces are useful for different purposes
  Study rooms for 10-15 students sessions
  Small consultation rooms

(6)
Functional
  Group work – 1st & 2nd floor
  Availability 24/7 – great for commuter student, too
Symbolic
  Alcove windows
  Central to campus
  24/7
  Club Willis
Story
  Bring campus services to library where students are – maybe 1 week
  Individual/self discovery & learning
Experiences
  Combo: learning + social
  Learning on your own – self discovery
  Group activities – group study rooms/organizations
  Lounge – comfortable furniture, collaborative furniture
  Small conference rooms
  Furniture that can be moved & configured in different ways
  Interactive
    Tools to help set up research papers, for particular subjects
    [24 / 7 – no need for appts/person to be here]
Outlets

(7)
How to get word out to students about library services?
  Grand opening for 2nd floor
  Free food
(8) What is our program statement? (Active learning environment)
Instruction space w/computer stations/moveable spaces for large classes
What type of staff assistance will be provided on the floor?
Collaborative group study spaces that support technology/equip(ment) students are using
Enclosed rooms to support small group interactions

(9) Students and staff need space/equipment to record presentations
Dedicated spaces for services/students
Technology support/printing/large scanners
Group study rooms
How do we transform the 2nd floor into an inviting space for students not only to meet w/groups but faculty/advisors/tutors?

(10) Signage/wayfinding
Communicating new resources & changes
Collaborative spaces
Measurement/eval./assessment
Goals/target establishment
Tying in w/success.unt.edu
What other facilities are doing/will do
-Union/Gateway/etc.
Want this space to be more learning-focused vs. socially focused
What will differentiate us from all other facilities on campus?

(11) 2nd floor
1. Service desk for help?
2. H/T meet students & faculty needs?
3. Rooms for study, mtgs, instruction?
4. Can offices move? Ex: admin, fac & sys, ex relations
5. Do we need quiet space on 2nd fl?
6. What is the budget?
7. Quiet space: do we need more?
8. Comfortable seating
9. Grad student lounge
Flip chart 1 of 11

- What is our program statement? (Active learning environment)
- Instruction space w/computer stations/movable spaces for large classes
- What type of staff assistance will be provided on the floor?
- Collaborative group study spaces that support technology/equip students using
- Enclosed rooms to support small group interactions
Flip chart 2 of 11

- Students and staff need space/equipment to record presentations
- Dedicated spaces for services/students
- Technology support/printing/scanners
- Group study rooms

How do we transform the 2nd floor into an inviting space for students not only to meet w/groups but faculty/advisors/tutors
Flip chart 3 of 11

Signage/wayfinding
Communicating new resources & changes
Collaborative spaces
Measurement/eval./assessment
goals/target establishment
Tying in with success.unt.edu
What other facilities are doing/will do
-Union/Gateway/etc.
Want this space to be more learning-focused vs. socially focused.
What will differentiate us from any other facilities on campus?
Flip chart 4 of 11

2nd floor

1. Service desk for help?
2. IT meet students needs?
3. Rooms for study, mtgs, instruction?
4. Can offices more? ex: admin, fac/sps
5. Do we need quiet space on 2nd Fl.
6. What is the budget?
7. Quiet space: do we need more?
8. Comfortable seating
9. Grad student lounge
Flip chart 5 of 11

Functional:
- Databases
- ILL
- Meeting Hub (club Willis)
- Study Groups
- Printing
- Digital Scholarship (Access)

Symbolic:
- Research
- Innovation
- Books on a shelf
- Information Storage
2nd floor story:
- Relaxed
- Tech
- Study
- Socialize
- New age

- Quiet: silent
- Inviting
- Reading
- Clean
- Printing works well
- 24x7 access
- New "Study" coffee shop (although would be great to have until 2am)
- Whiteboards (want more)
  - ESA for study groups
- Computers (want more)
- Differentiated spaces
  - Quiet / loud
Symbolic

- Facade of library (imposing, impressive, 2001)
- Quiet giant reading room (something compelling about the retro)
- Fourth floor is quiet, usable, peaceful
- Socialization (loud) is both good and bad.
Flip chart 9 of 11

**STORY/EXPERIENCES**

- Group studies (round tables for clusters of students)
- Both closed and open spaces are useful for different purposes
- Study rooms for 10-15 students sessions
- Small consultation rooms
Functional
- Group work - 1st & 2nd floor
- Availability 24/7 - great for commuter student, too

Symbolic
- Alcove windows
- Central to campus
- 24/7
- Club millis

Story
- Bring campus services to library where students are - maybe 1x week
- Individual/self-discovery/learning

Interactive
- Tools to help set up research papers, for particular subjects [24/7 - no need for approx 1 person to be here]

Experience
- Combo: learning + social
- Learning on your own - self-discovery
- Group activities - group study rooms/organizations
- Lounge - comfortable furniture
- Collaborative furniture
- Move conference rooms
How to get word out to students about library services?

Grand opening for 2nd floor

Free Food
Appendix 5: Resources for stakeholder engagement

Appendix 6: About the Author

Charles Forrest has nearly thirty-five years of experience in academic and research libraries. After nearly a decade with the University of Illinois libraries, he moved to Emory University in 1988 where he has held a series of operational and administrative positions in the Library, including director of instructional support services, director of planning and budget, and, since 2008, director of library facilities.

Charles has served as library project manager for many library construction and renovation projects at Emory, including the Center for Library and Information Resources, a major addition to Emory’s main library. A member of the Committee on the Environment of Emory’s University Senate, Charles served as library project manager for the renovation of Emory’s original main library, one of the first LEED-certified renovation projects on campus.

Charles is active in professional organizations, and has served three times as a library juror for the American Institute of Architects/American Library Association biennial Library Buildings Awards. In addition, he has served as a library juror for the American Library Association/International Interior Design Association biennial Library Building Awards, and as a juror for Library Journal’s “New Landmark Libraries (Academic)” series. Charles is a regular presenter at conferences, workshops and institutes, and most recently was co-chair of the Academic Library Planning and Revitalization Institute, held in March 2014 in Denver, Colorado, featuring the recently renovated Anderson Academic Commons at the University of Denver.