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Cincinnati, also "approach the forthcoming years with a sense of unusual opportunity." "With the help, support, and active work" of every ACRL member, we, too, will succeed.

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The University of Florida's moving experience

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University of Florida

Consolidating branches into a central science library.

In February 1987 the Marston Science Library at the University of Florida first opened its doors to the public. At that time, four branch libraries were closed and the agricultural, biological, physical and earth sciences, and mathematics libraries were consolidated in the new location. This article discusses the phases and events that led to the opening of the new library, from choosing an architect to the final integration of collections and staff in the new facility.

Background

The idea of a centralized science library at the University of Florida was conceived more than twenty years ago, but it did not have widespread acceptance among the science faculty, university administration, or state legislature at that time. There were four departmental branch libraries on campus: agriculture, chemistry, engineering, and physics/astronomy. Other science disciplines (except medicine) were served by the main library.

By the middle to late 1970s, the branch locations as well as the main library were becoming seriously overcrowded. Limited budgets had necessitated the cancellation of most duplicate journal subscriptions, forcing some science researchers to use up to five different libraries on campus in order to do their research. The theft rate had increased dramatically in libraries with 24-hour key access and/or limited security. To secure these libraries would have meant the elimination of faculty and graduate student key access and expensive alterations to the buildings. Gradually, support for a central science library grew among the faculty and administrators. After a number of years of jockeying for position on the state's building priority list, the library was funded in the early 1980s.

Designing and refining the building

Library committees were formed to provide input on programs and issues that would directly affect the design of the library: circulation/reserves, automation, interlibrary loan, documents, etc.

The library administration used information from the resulting committee reports to write the building program. The project was subject to the state's bid process, and the Board of Regents along with the university administration and the UF Facilities Planning Unit made the final selection of the architect. After some further consultations with library staff, the architect began to design the building.

A team consisting of Facilities Planning, the architects, the engineers, library representatives, and various personnel from UF's Physical Plant Division had regular meetings to discuss the evolving building design and floor plans. Library staff wanted a modular design with no immovable obstacles in the middle of the room. Thus stairwells, bathrooms, and offices were located on the perimeter of the building. However, for aesthetic reasons the architect wanted a three-story atrium with stair access in the center of the building. Library staff were able to eliminate the stairs, but a two-story, thirty-foot-square atrium remains above the information/reference desk. While artistically pleasing, it eliminates valuable floor space for current periodicals and causes considerable sound reverberation.

The completed building has a total of 112,000 square feet (91,000 assignable) on five floors (see Diagram 1 for collection layout). It was designed so that additional interior rooms may be built on any floor in thirty-square-foot increments as the need arises. In addition, all of the supporting columns are equipped with conduit for computer applications. More than 300 computer outlets are available throughout the building. The first and fifth floors and one thirty-foot-square module on the second floor are reinforced to hold high density (compact) shelving. Seventeen modules of movable compact shelving were installed on the first floor

and one module on the second floor. The shelving on the first floor will hold approximately 500,000 volumes, over half of current capacity. There are 1,295 seats in the building, including tables, study carrels, and carrels containing power outlets for micromaterial, audio/visual, and computer equipment.

The architect chose the colors of the building with each floor having a different accent color. Library staff worked with an interior designer who wrote specifications for the color coordinated furniture. Both furniture and shelving (except compact shelving) are freestanding and may be rearranged as future needs require. The custom colors are aesthetically pleasing, but any additional shelving or furniture needed will have to be specially ordered to match.

The construction phase

Ground-breaking ceremonies took place in April 1984, and the library expected to move into the new facility in the summer of 1986. The project ran ahead of schedule throughout most of the construction period. However, several events prevented the move taking place when planned. The bids for the furnishings were delayed, the compact shelving on the first floor was not installed on schedule, and one Saturday night an air conditioning water line broke, dumping 55,000 gallons of chilled water into the first and second floors before it was discovered. The north end of these two floors sustained considerable damage, requiring reconstruction of the walls and recarpeting. These events delayed the move until February 1987.

Staff integration

While the building was being completed, the formidable task of integrating the staff and collec-

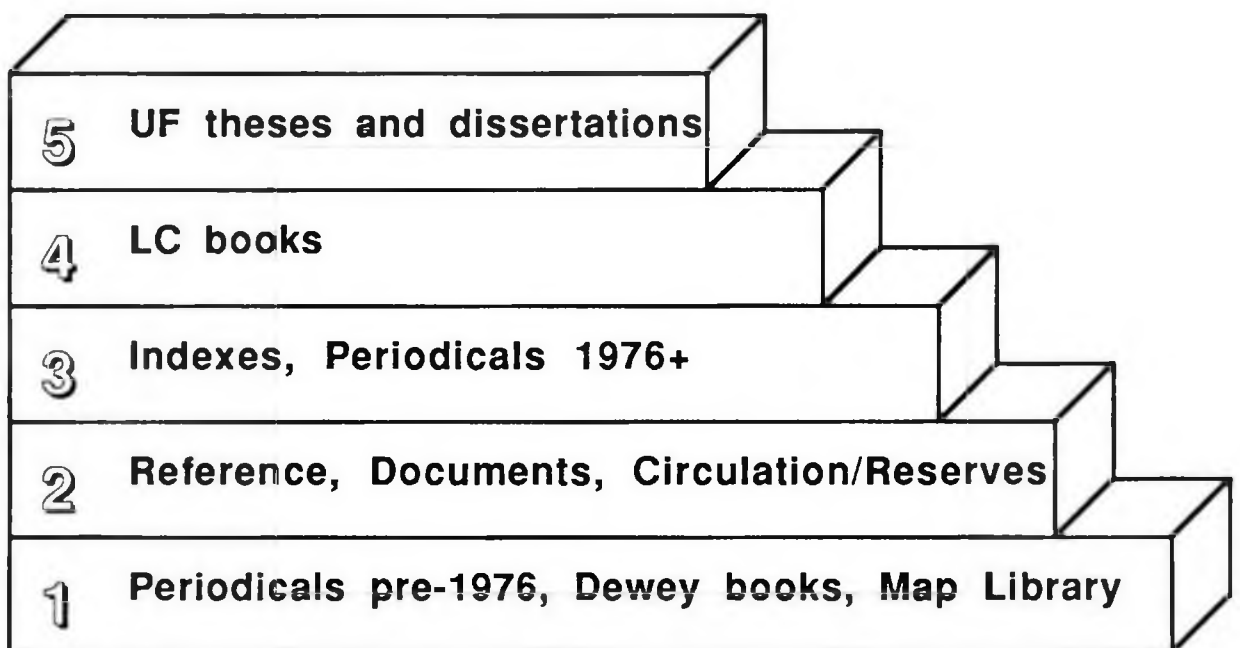


Diagram 1: Collection layout in Marston Science Library. Entrance/exit and most staff offices are on Level 2.

tions began. Integrating staff from four specialized branch libraries into one central science library represented a considerable challenge to both administrators and staff. Consolidation required a total restructuring of positions and responsibilities, including the provision of reference service in unfamiliar subject areas.

The staff felt varying degrees of enthusiasm and concern about the change and uncertainty ahead. The new library promised a nicer physical environment, greater resources, and increased opportunities for professional growth. However, almost everyone felt comfortable with their existing jobs and working relationships, and were concerned about the changes involved in moving from a small branch to a much larger library. Giving the staff input as job changes were being considered, providing opportunities for the future Science Library staff to meet, and offering tours of the new building as construction progressed helped to alleviate fears and bolster staff enthusiasm.

To help reference staff gain competence in new subject areas, a committee was appointed in the summer of 1985 to plan and implement cross-disciplinary training. All librarians and library technical assistants who would be providing reference services in the new library were included (see "Training Reference Staff Prior to Consolidating Science Collections," pp. 473-74).

In addition to preparing the staff for the move, efforts were made to prepare library users. As the reality of a centralized science library drew nearer, a committee of academic faculty from the scientific disciplines was formed. They met on a continuing basis with library administrators, exchanging information with and providing feedback from colleagues. An acting head of the science library was appointed, and she met with many faculty groups. At these meetings floor plans, collections integration, projected move dates and plans, and other topics of concern were discussed.

Integrating the collections

Since the new library would consolidate materials from thirteen different locations and arranged in many different schemes (including LC, DDC, NAL, SuDoc, alphabetical, and other), integrating these materials into call number sequence in the new building was a major effort. Factors that affected planning included the online environment, delays in building completion, and the decision to hire professional movers.

In 1983 the University of Florida Libraries began using the NOTIS system for its online catalog. Since creating a complete card catalog for the new library would involve not only interfiling three branch catalogs (all arranged under slightly different filing rules) but also duplicating cardsets for those materials being moved out of the main campus library, a decision was made two years before the move to depend solely upon the online catalog

in the new library. This was a tremendous boon in two ways: 1) no card catalog was needed in the new library, and 2) call numbers and locations of materials could be easily changed online.

Special efforts were made by branch and cataloging staff to ensure that most science materials would be represented in the online catalog and that users were familiar with the system prior to the move. To reduce problems caused by multiple classification schemes, reference materials and serials were reclassified to Library of Congress (LC) classification. Where shifting was possible, new labels were made and placed on the materials, and the call numbers were changed in the online catalog. Those materials that could not be rearranged in advance of the move were left in their old order. They were temporarily labeled at the top of the spine with the new LC numbers. After integration into LC order in the new library, permanent labels were affixed over the old labels.

On the weekend of the move, the call numbers of these materials were changed in the online catalog, a process which took a cataloger about 15 hours. The old call numbers were retained in a note field in the technical mode of the online catalog. This proved useful in retrieving volumes missed during relabeling. Location changes for materials moved from the science branches and for the designated call number blocks moved from the main campus library were done overnight by computer.

To assist shelving in the new library, the staff devised a marking system which used strips of colored book tape to identify materials shelved in special locations such as reference, reserve, and periodicals. Monographs and documents were not marked, and periodicals were taped during the Dewey to LC reclass project. The same colors were also used in the movers' tagging system, which involved color coding each floor or special location. The colored tape has served as a permanent marker to alert shelvees to appropriate placement of materials.

Branch staff attempted to weed unwanted items in advance of the move. Short, unbound runs and materials in a physical condition too poor to move were prime candidates. Duplicate subscriptions were canceled, but time did not allow weeding of existing duplicate serial and monograph holdings. The largest duplicate sets were pulled out during integration to a separate area of shelving, so that they could be inventoried and evaluated to determine the appropriateness of retaining multiple copies prior to withdrawal.

The delays in completion of the building and installation of shelving pushed the move into the middle of the spring semester, traditionally one of the libraries' busiest times. Thus, accomplishing the move with as little disruption of service to patrons as possible was a primary goal. The logistics of moving from such a variety of old buildings and the desire to complete the move as quickly as possible led the library administration to agree to hire

professional movers. This meant that all materials had to be moved out of all locations within the two-week period the movers allocated for the job, and the timing of the bid process gave staff only one month to do all of the final planning and preparation from the date of meeting the movers to beginning the move. These constraints limited the integration options available.

The consultant who assisted in pre-move planning recommended an integration method with one variation for periodicals and another for monographs (see Diagram 2). Using measurements of the number of linear feet held, materials in a particular call number group were assigned a block of shelving in the new library. Within that block of shelving, particular shelves were assigned to materials coming from each location.

This plan was chosen because it would allow materials to be moved in any sequence, and from several sites at once if desired. Theoretically, if the shelf assignments were made in proportion to the amount of materials coming from each location, items with similar call numbers should end up near each other, and could be integrated after the move was completed with a minimum of shifting. In the

phase between moving and integrating, it would be possible to locate items within broad sections, without needing to know the former site. Actual success depended upon the accuracy and level of detail of linear feet measurements taken at each previous site, and the time available for planning shelf assignments.

The month before the move was spent identifying which shelves would hold which items from which locations, training the staff and student assistants how to mark items to be moved, assembling and organizing all necessary supplies, and scheduling staff to cover all the work involved. The actual procedure for tagging materials to be moved was formulated by the professional movers. Library staff affixed numbered stickers on groups of items; corresponding numbers were put on the shelves in the new library where those items were to be placed. This method worked well with the integration plan chosen. Also, by tagging materials in the desired rather than existing sequence, reclassified periodicals which could not be shifted into the new call number sequence before the move were packed quickly, then unpacked into their new call number order without need for a staging area.

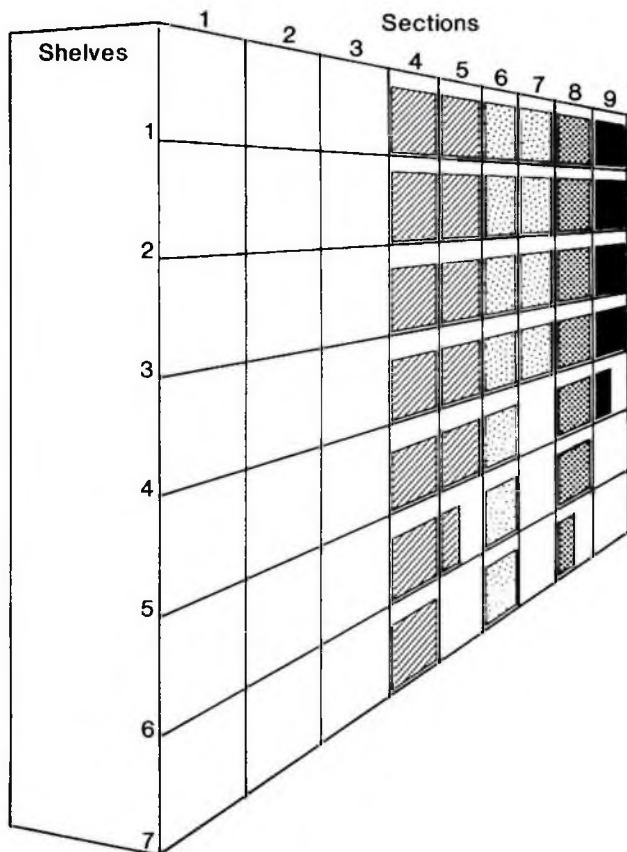
Diagram 2: Integration methods

Assignments to Sections
(Suited to serials)

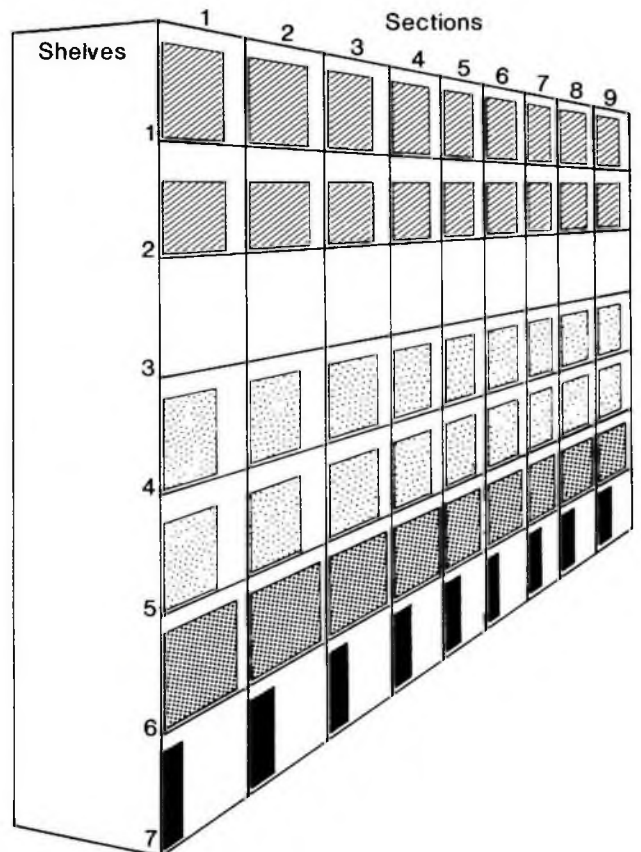
Assignments to Shelves
(Suited to monographs)

Example: Class QC

Volumes with QC classification from 4 sources are represented by the 4 varieties of shading.



Sections 1-3 are left vacant for integrating. Volumes are integrated and moved to the left, in exact call number order, into sections 1, 2, 3, etc.



Each shelf #3 in Sections 1-9 is initially left vacant. The volumes incompletely fill shelves 1-2 and 4-7; fill rate is proportional to the holdings in that class from each location. Each section is then integrated into exact order.

The move

In order to meet the goal of minimal service downtime, most of the final preparation of materials had to wait until the last possible moment. Branch locations remained open until the movers arrived, although in several instances access was limited to staff retrieval from closed stacks for a few days prior to moving. Items could not actually be tagged until the stacks were closed. Unbound items were string-tied or packed tightly into appropriately sized pamphlet boxes. Staff resorted to using rubber bands as well—a quick and efficient option, but one less highly recommended because of preservation considerations.

Immediately before moving began, notices were placed in the campus newspaper and on radio, and signs were posted campus-wide. Moving the largest collections was planned for weekends when the libraries had more limited hours and less patron use. Although most of the new library remained off limits to patrons until the movers were finished, a special area by the new circulation desk was roped off to accommodate users of reserve and paging services, and several copiers were provided.

When moving began, course reserves were the first class of items moved from each branch location. Reserves were unpacked immediately, and were available within a few hours. Book and periodical requests were accepted at the new library's service desk, and all requested items were to be retrieved within 24 hours. Factors affecting retrieval time included lack of available staff, the need to stay out of the moving crew's way, the amount of time it took before the movers had boxes unpacked from a particular area, and the difficulty pagers experienced in locating items. However, patrons often did not return to pick up requested items. The backlog of items held for users caused staff confusion and interfered with the space available for books being returned and shelving of reserves.

The move itself progressed relatively smoothly and even faster than anticipated. The biggest problems were related to lack of staff to finish last-minute preparation of materials halfway through the move. The service desk at the new library also had to be staffed, in addition to the old branch locations not yet completely emptied. By that point, most branch staff members were both physically and mentally exhausted. While they had expected to work long hours, the sheer volume of last-minute tasks was unanticipated.

Thankfully, two weeks after the move began the movers were gone and the new library was fully opened to the public. Although planning and preparation had been mentally and physically demanding, the actual move was exciting and relatively easy. Afterward, the slow process of integrating the collections and identifying and cleaning up most of the problems took another three months to complete.

In retrospect

Two years after the move, the library staff and its clientele are essentially pleased with the new library. As in all new buildings, a few flaws were not discovered until the building was occupied. For example, although the receiving room will accommodate oversized material and does lead to a freight elevator that will hold large items, the halls and doors that lead to the reading area on the first and second floors are only three feet wide. Therefore, large items can be brought into the building and the elevator but not out into the rooms.

Staff integration was an area to which more attention should have been paid. The cross-training program helped the staff understand the complexities of the literature in other science areas, and the staff meetings helped to prepare them for working with one another. However, no one was prepared for the stresses brought on by the move itself or for the changes dictated by working in a much larger centralized library. It was equivalent to starting a new job without being psychologically prepared for the move. Because none of the staff was leaving the University of Florida, they felt as though they were simply relocating their old jobs. On the positive side, library personnel were heavily involved with almost all phases of producing the new library, and are proud to work in a building they helped "build."

Recommendations for future library builders

Here are some pointers for other libraries which are embarking on building projects:

1. Involve as many of the library staff and the major user groups as possible from the beginning of the project, and keep everyone informed of progress.
2. Be sure that library representatives are appointed to the design and the construction teams.
3. Become conversant with the language of architecture and building construction early in the project so that you can become a part of their network. Learn to read blueprints!
4. Prepare the staff for working in their new environment.
5. Know the collection(s) to be moved. Get accurate, detailed statistics and measurements and keep them up-to-date.
6. Hire a firm that specializes in library moves.

The UF Science Library staff would be happy to discuss the details of the move experience further with you. ■ ■





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