



ART LIBRARIES SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

35th Annual Conference
Sheraton Colony Square, Atlanta, Georgia, April 26-May 1

Session 4: Art Libraries: New and Improved
Friday, April 27, 2007 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Moderator: Natalia Lonchyna, Librarian, North Carolina Museum of Art

Speakers:

Linda R. McKee, Head Librarian, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Library
Artis Wick, Assistant Librarian, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Library
Laura M. Schwartz, Head Librarian, Fine Arts Library, University of Texas at Austin
Carol Terry, Director of Library Services, Rhode Island School of Design

Recorder: Kristina Keogh, Virginia Commonwealth University

Summary:

The speakers at this session have had the opportunity to either successfully plan a library space from the ground up or renovate an existing space.

1. Linda R. McKee and Artis Wick, "The New Ringling Museum Library: A Vision Fulfilled"

The move to the new Ringling Library was also a move of over 70,000 volumes. The planning of the new library was first talked about in 1996. However, the new library didn't open until 2007. (Note: Linda was the only staff member in the library until 2002). There have been four buildings under construction on the Ringling campus: a new visitors center, circus museum, galleries, and Education building.

When the project began, Linda first relied on personal connections. She looked to ARLIS/NA publications such as Facility Standards for Art Museum Libraries. It is important to remember that you know more than they do. All of the architects, furniture vendors, etc. don't know as much about your library and its needs as you do. She never had direct contact with the architects. Use numbers to back yourself up (these are also available through ARLIS/NA).

One thing that proved extremely helpful in terms of planning spatial relations was a page made up of different sized circles: the bigger the circle, the bigger the area. Ask yourself: what is the perfect library?

There is a Building Plan and a Moving Plan – remember that these are two different things. At Ringling a Moving Committee was formed (with 3 full time and 2 part time staff members). They contacted moving companies who gave them prices ranging from \$10,000 to \$40,000. Needless to say, they went with the lowest price option. They also interviewed library shelving and furniture vendors. Linda’s advice is to hire nice people.

History of the Ringling Library: John Ringling left his art collection and his personal library (7,000 volumes) to the State of Florida. He had planned for a library within the museum. The library was founded in 1946 in the Astor Room in the museum. A new wing was built in the museum in 1966. A retrospective conversion of all the books began after this time. In the last year they were in this space, books could no longer be shelved.

The new Education Wing consists of the library, the conservation lab, and the vault. There are 17 aisles of regular book shelves and a separate Periodical Room and Rare Book room. Offices are all glass with no blinds. Doors will not stay open on their own (the architect didn’t think of this).

Artis next spoke about the moving process. It is important to plan far ahead. They started boxing books nine months before the move. She measured 28 inches on each shelf and then put a stop sheet (they were going down from 36 inches). To save space before the move and to find a place to store new books, they went down to two sections of periodicals. They talked to the mover a week before the move. The movers used a system of numbers starting with the first book on the first shelf. All 70,000 books were moved in twelve hours.

2. Laura M. Schwartz, “The Fine Arts Library Renovation Project: Secrets of Success”

Some of the secrets of success of a renovation project include collaboration, planning, flexibility, and assessment. Laura learned everything on the job. During her interview for her position, the Dean approached her about the renovation project. The Dean wanted the renovation and the College of Fine Arts was willing to split the cost. The library is located in the Fine Arts building. There are over 42,000 square feet in the library, which serves students in Art, Music, Theatre, and Dance.

The desire was to create a student center within the building and to upgrade the library. The College of Fine Arts was also having space issues at this time. The library and the College were both committed to transforming the space into a learning center.

The final renovation plans included:

- Establishing a media and technology center by upgrading the furniture and equipment to encourage listening, viewing, and media manipulation.
Removing the large carrels with out of date and always out of order

equipment and creating new, open spaces where users can view things together.

- Upgrading the seminar rooms and listening and viewing facilities by outfitting them with new furniture and technology for diverse teaching and learning styles. Also, creating a new group study room.
- Redoing the interior, including furniture and carpeting to realize an inviting space. Also, included were new window treatments, paint, furniture, larger work areas, and a place to display artwork.

As a result, there are more sight lines, greater flexibility in the space, and more collaborative study spaces. People are moving furniture around to fit their needs. This shows they are using the space.

Marks of Success:

- Recognition: The new library was featured in *American Libraries* in 2006. The Fine Arts Library was featured on the University of Texas home page. One million dollars was raised for UT Libraries based on the renovation.
- Increased Usage: The gate count went up 11%. Circulation went up less than 1% but this reversed the trend.
- Collaboration: This project would not have happened without the pooling of resources. The library funded the interior and the college took care of the technology.
- Planning: A formal planning document was created which became part of the strategic plan.
- Flexibility: Remember that nothing goes as planned and some things are out of your control.
- Assessment: The renovated space needed to be as useful to teaching and learning as possible. Data was collected for the old and the new library (focus groups and surveys).

3. Carol Terry, "From Grand Banking Hall to the Art & Design Library of the 21st Century"

The library at the Rhode Island School of Design opened in 1936. At the time it served 700 students. By 1987, it had long outgrown the space. The need was for a non-site specific building program with three times the amount of space. There was no obvious place on campus to put the new facility so planners started to think about a bank across the river. The President took a CAD image to the bank officials, who then donated part of the space and sold the rest of the building. One side (Condo B) is now student housing where almost 25% of the student body now reside. The building of the housing took precedence over the library.

For the library construction/renovation, a committee was formed on campus. The firm, Office dA was chosen. The first floor was a problem. They were 780 square feet short. The architects decided to build up into the space. A Hubert Robert painting was used to justify this. It was thought that the center space would be a living room for the students living above. A construction with stadium seating was

built to elevate students higher up into the space (it is also a good vantage from which to draw the space). The move took place in a three-week window. In 17 days, 130,000 volumes were moved from two locations.

Accomplishments:

- Now able to display the periodicals
- Room to grow – over 2,000 square feet were taken over in the basement. There is film storage in the vault.
- Archives/Special Collections are in a temperature controlled space
- There is a space for the over 460,000 slides as well as special light fixtures for viewing.
- Better exhibit cases for showing art and collections objects
- From 55 to 200 seats
- From 0 to 6 group study rooms
- Three times the number of workstations
- There is wireless in the building and scanning stations.
- There is a higher staff count and better working conditions.
- The heritage of the old library remains – cork floors, walnut table and chairs, portrait busts in various places
- The library is a social hub. It is the center of events, music, dances, and receptions.

The library staff collaborated with the architectural team throughout. The architects were originally selected because of their design sensibility and pedagogical aspects (they were both teaching faculty). However, they did not have any library experience. They therefore spent a great deal of time with library staff to try to understand needs. Carol was part of everything from the beginning.