Library Renovations Working Group Charge

Roark Atkinson, FAEC working group coordinator.

Background

Faculty, Staff, Students, and many administrators have been aware of the severe design and maintenance deficiencies in The George T. Potter Library for many years. The existing structure, which was built in 1977, and renovated in the 1990s, has a long record of water damage, mycological infestations, and microbial contamination. These have been well documented (see Appendix A), and have resulted in the loss of holdings (books, artwork, sheet music, etc.), as well as a reduction in the ability of library patrons to use the library as a location for studying individually or in groups. Surveys of prospective students who selected other colleges show that the library is one of the reasons they do not choose to come to Ramapo. Potter Library houses many significant and unique items, including works of art, but we have inadequate space to safely house the items. The administration is aware of the library’s deficiencies. The Dean of the Library, Liz Siecke, applied for grants and a bond issue in 2013 that might have been used to renovate the library. Regrettably, despite the details of the library’s problems, and the strong case made for modernizing the facility in the application, the funds were denied.

The 2013 Campus Facilities Master Plan,1 detailed several disturbing issues facing the present condition of the Potter Library. These are some highlights:

“Improvements to the Phase 1 Academic Building and **Library** have been slow, and they remain out of step with contemporary pedagogy and Ramapo’s unique strengths and reputation.”2

“Located at the southern end of the Phase 1 Academic Building, the existing **Library is in need of significant renewal**. A Library Master Plan is currently underway to address building condition and space programming issues.”3

“The Library is in need of significant renewal to meet contemporary learning **needs**. New study areas would support group learning, new furniture and improved technology would improve comfort and usability, and acoustical improvements will reduce user conflict. Building envelope and systems should be repaired and/or replaced to improve efficiency and protect library holdings.”4

The Master Plan proposed an extensive renovation project that would place the library at the center of a new “learning Commons” and serve essentially as the ‘public face’ of the college (see Appendix B):


2 Ibid., 9.

3 Ibid. 30.

4 Ibid. 59.
“The Heart of Campus provides an opportunity to reinforce and expand campus life functions. An addition to the Phase 1 Academic Building and Student Center will create a new Campus Center, providing new space for student services, social and study space. A proposed Administrative Hub and Welcome Center will create a new front door for the campus. The new facility will accommodate a range of public, administrative and academic uses and support placemaking [i.e. multi-faceted approaches to the planning, design and management of public spaces] investments to create a ceremonial campus arrival point. The library will be renewed and expanded as a Learning Commons, and serve as a new and high profile main entrance to the Phase 1 Academic Building.”

“Through reprogramming, renewal and physical expansion, the Library will grow into a larger role as a Learning Commons for the entire campus. In addition to supporting library and learning functions, the Learning Commons can be home to a consolidated campus Art Gallery.”

The Charge

The Faculty Assembly Library Renovations Task Force (FA LRTF) will prepare a white paper with detailed quantitative and qualitative data on the current condition of the library, draw comparisons with libraries at competitor institutions, and present its recommendations to the Faculty Assembly for approval. Upon approval by the FA, the proposal will be presented to the President’s Cabinet.

Data sources:
Data sources will include:

- Institutional data regarding maintenance / repairs in the Library over the last 15 years.

- Surveys will be conducted of students and faculty, investigating the ways they currently use the library, any problems they face with the library in its present physical condition, and the ways they would like to be able to use the library but cannot currently.

- Obtain information from other campus’ libraries and the ways they are used by students and faculty. [COPLAC schools in the region, NJ public colleges and universities, and the University of Delaware, which consistently draws away prospective RCNJ students.

- Best practices documents including the Association of College and Research Libraries’ ACRL/LLAMA Interdivisional Committee on Building Resources,7 and the 2015 Library


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5 Ibid., 21.

6 Ibid., 30.

7 http://www.ala.org/acrl/academic-library-building-design-resources-planning#Space_Planning [accessed 31 October 2015]
Design Showcase published by the American Library Association, as well as the 2013 Campus Facilities Master Plan.

- Consultation with various campus constituencies including the library convening group, Student Affairs (including Enrollment Management), Institutional Advancement, and Administration & Finance.

Composition

The task force’s working group will be composed of representatives selected by faculty within each School (including the Library). One member of the task force will be elected among the faculty of each school/unit, along with an alternate faculty member task force representative from each school. Only the task force members will have voting power, and when both the primary and alternate are present for the meeting, only the primary will vote.

Two student members (one primary and one alternate) will be recruited from SGA. Administrators will be consulted on an as-needed basis. Only members of the Faculty Assembly will have voting authority within the Task Force.

Administrators who will be consulted include Liz Siecke, Steve Rice, Steve Perry, Chris Romano, Cathy Davey, Beth Barnett, Dick Roberts, Brittany Goldstein / Peter Mercer. Sydney Jenkins and Robert Modafferi will also serve as consultants.

A Town Meeting (or meetings) will be held once the LRTF is composed. These will take place during the Open Forums after Faculty Assembly.

Timeline

The timeline laid out here assumes that each item is completed / approved.

Faculty Assembly will vote on the proposed task force 2 December 2015. Units will elect representatives at the 12/16 Unit Council.

Task force immediately commences.

Bring final report back to FA no later than April 20, 2016

By end of semester: Present proposal to Cabinet

By June: Present to BOT

Timeline will change as needed.

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Appendix B

The existing library faces significant building condition and space utilization issues. Localized improvements have recently been implemented, including the Center for Reading and Writing and the Holocaust Center for Teaching and Placement. The Learning Commons initiative will see the renewal and expansion of the Library as a contemporary Learning Commons for the entire campus community.

Table 1: Potential space uses in the Library (in ASF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Uses</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Scenario 1: Current Enrollment</th>
<th>Scenario 2: Moderate Growth</th>
<th>Scenario 3: High Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Study</td>
<td>45,574</td>
<td>60,500</td>
<td>64,000</td>
<td>67,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Uses</td>
<td>3,266</td>
<td>5,592</td>
<td>6,445</td>
<td>7,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48,840</td>
<td>66,592</td>
<td>70,445</td>
<td>85,617</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enabling Projects:

- Pedestrian enhancements (north side)
- South Quad landscape initiative
- Library Walk
- The Grove
- Arboretum Quad

As Table 1 indicates, the total space need for Scenario 1 (Current Enrollment) is 66,592 ASF. Under the most intensive growth scenario, Scenario 3 (High Growth), the total space need is 85,617 ASF, which is 24,910 ASF in development capacity under all three scenarios. This difference could be accommodated by increasing the intensity of development in these areas.