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## A Major Renovation and Addition -- The Wolf Law Library, College of William & Mary

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# Designing Law and Other Academic Libraries: Building Upon Change

Third Edition

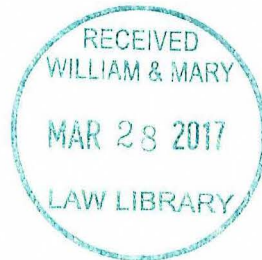
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### **A Major Renovation and Addition—The Wolf Law Library, College of William & Mary**

In today's academic climate, it does not appear likely that many academic institutions will have the funds to build new libraries, but they may consider adding space or, perhaps, renovating existing space to meet the evolving needs of students and faculty. Such projects can be fraught with their own set of problems. The author has been involved in a number of small renovations, which for the funds expended, turned out reasonably well.

In order to include material in this text about what it is like to go through the experience of a major renovation that the reader might find useful if planning to remodel and/or add a substantial addition, I have invited James S. Heller, Law Library Director and Professor of Law at the law school of William & Mary to provide insightful guidance on how to go about the project. Jim has done an admirable job of concisely outlining what was entailed in the major renovation of, and an addition to, The Wolf Law Library.

Much of the basic design and construction process follows the same rubrics as if one were constructing a new facility, that is, one has to develop a needs assessment, create a program statement with the architect, work one's way through design development, and so forth. The library staff will have to become familiar

with construction documents and all that follows, for example, learning about floor loading, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, lighting, furniture, etc.

Where the experience does differ markedly from constructing a new facility, however, is the meticulous planning that must take place to keep an existing library operating during the confusion of moving books, shelving, furniture, equipment, and staff, not to mention library users, to other locations within the library so that work can commence in areas of the building to be remodeled—perhaps not once, but several times during construction. One of the more “unusual” offsite, temporary library locations during a construction project was a leased building, formerly a supermarket, used by the University of Florida Law School to ensure continuing library services.

Of course, there is also the *noise* which can unsettle the most dedicated staff members, students and faculty. And, typically, the noise issues will go on throughout the entire time the library is being upgraded. Usually the architect and construction company can offer tips on how to configure temporary library space near work zones for the best acoustical separation.

Lastly, one has to supervise the return of all books, furniture and equipment to new locations, perhaps, with interim locations in between several moves to keep the project rolling along. To accomplish a series of safe moves, one has to engage a professional moving company.

## **A Conversation with James S. Heller**

*Library Director and Professor of Law at the  
College of William & Mary's Wolf Law Library<sup>17</sup>*

**Author:** Give us some background on renovations at William & Mary's law library.

**Heller:** I came to William & Mary in 1988. The law library's three-office administrative suite was on the top floor of a three-story building, along with other law school faculty. The rest of the law library staff was on the main floor. The reference office—there was only one reference librarian then—was hidden away in a far corner of the main floor. Out-of-sight means out of mind, both for the

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<sup>17</sup> James Heller is Director of the Law Library, Professor of Law, and Professor of Public Policy at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Professor Heller formerly served as Director of the Law Library at the University of Idaho, as Director of the Civil Division Library of the U.S. Department of Justice, and as Head of Reader Services at the George Washington University Law Library. He has a B.A. from the University of Michigan, a J.D. from the University of San Diego, and an M.L.S. from the University of California at Berkeley. Professor Heller has served as president of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) and of the Virginia and Southeastern Chapters of AALL.

administrative suite and the reference office. We soon added another reference librarian who crowded into that same office, and we planned to further expand the small staff.

I offered the dean a trade: the law school could take over the library administrative suite on the top floor of the law school building if the dean would pay to renovate the main library floor (an \$80,000 project, if I recall). We could build new offices for me, our administrative assistant, as well as for the reference librarians; a new Circulation/Closed Reserve area; an Open Reserve area; and a large computer lab. We also would do a major serials cancellation project, and then weed and relocate the entire collection. The deal was made, and the project was completed by the end of 1989.

A few years later we made some more changes by adding more offices for a larger public services staff, and we did away with the Open Reserve area that wasn't working very well. But this wasn't enough—it was a band aid. We needed more space and better space. We needed major surgery. Library space generally comes down to three things: (1) space for physical collections; (2) space for the library staff; and (3) space for users. It's a lot more complicated than this, of course, which is why serious planning takes a couple of years.

**Author:** Give us some idea of what goes into thinking about planning for a major library renovation.

**Heller:** "Thinking about planning" for a major addition is something that begins years before you actually do something. It probably begins unconsciously, without a goal, let alone a plan: you walk through your facility thinking "I wonder why they built it this way" or "If I were to do this again I would change this and this and . . ." or "If I ever get a chance to renovate this place, I will do . . ."

Serious planning begins when you hire an architect (nowadays, usually an Architectural/Engineering firm) to work with you on Feasibility Study/Preliminary Planning. Here you determine how much space you need (which is based on a detailed "Program", the layout, and a project cost estimate.

Today, major building renovations, at least at William & Mary, cost \$150-200/square foot. New construction costs around \$300/square foot. But it doesn't end there. To these numbers you need to add another 40% for "soft costs", which include such things as testing and inspection, construction management, architect fees, furnishings, and equipment. The costs add up. A major renovation will cost \$200 to \$275/square foot, and new construction around \$450/square foot. These figures are for 'gross' square feet. Net square footage—the amount of usable space—is about 75% of this figure.

Space for physical collections may be a secondary consideration today, a huge change from even a decade ago. To get people into the library—and have them want to stay there—you need well-designed and attractive areas for individual study, work groups, and casual reading. Locate most tables and carrels near windows for natural lighting, and don't obstruct the windows with tall shelves or carrels. While some students like the privacy of a carrel, others like the group atmosphere and prefer tables.

William & Mary has several lounge areas in our three-floor library; 114 of our 568 seats are what you call 'soft seating'. Three quarters of these overlook a wooded ravine; the others are adjacent to student library lockers, in a kitchenette adjacent to the law review offices (which are within the library), at chess tables, in our Rare Book Room, at benches in the library lobby, and in our Ping pong/Billiard room (that attracts students like a dog attracts fleas).<sup>18</sup>

If you are state-supported, you have another hurdle. In August 2001 we submitted a Project Request Justification to the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget. In this multi-page document we made the strongest possible arguments about why the Law Library renovation/expansion was necessary. We harkened back to the roots of the William & Mary Law School, explained how changes in legal education required a larger and technologically advanced library, referenced the ABA and ADA (American Bar Association's accreditation standards and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements), and pointed to competition for the best law students.

**Author: How much physical space did you have to work with, how much did you renovate?**

**Heller:** The original library, which opened in 1980, had 36,500 net square feet. It had about 40,000 linear feet of shelving, and 433 seats for about 525 students. The 2007 renovation/expansion project added about 20,000 net sq. ft. The original space was completely gutted, and the entire 57,100 square foot facility looks like an integrated whole. In other words, you can't tell what was original and what is new. We now have just under 59,000 linear feet of shelving, and 568 seats for a student body of about 650. We also have 402 student lockers in the library.

**Author: What are the best locations for parts of the collection that must be moved to make way for a major addition or renovation?**

**Heller:** William & Mary had *HeinOnline* (online collection of all current and retrospective law journals) and other databases, which made this an easy decision; we moved all of the bound law journals offsite during construction. [Other journals

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18. Note: Appendix IIIA includes the William & Mary, Wolf Law Library Needs Assessment.

were relocated] to the ground floor of the addition—onto compact shelving—when it was completed after a year.

As we discussed, we were looking at the possibility of keeping in place the basement compact shelving that now holds the law reviews during the basement renovation. We need confirmation from the architects that this area can be upgraded (sprinklers/hvac ....) with the shelving in place without incurring and significant added cost.

As for reusing the shelving once the construction is complete, there may be two options. One would be to use it in our locked storage area (to be located in the renovated current building's basement). The other would be to use it in the new addition).

If the shelving is used for locked storage, we may need to change the size of the stacks. I have asked our *Spacesaver* representative about the feasibility and cost of retrofitting the compact shelving to a different size. (Right now we have 28 stacks. Each stack is 21 feet long, with 7 shelving units.)

We may want to look into relocating the shelving to the new addition. The architect's diagram for the basement in the addition includes a range of 25 new compact shelves that have the same number of shelving units (7 units / 21 feet) as those that now hold the law reviews. I also will ask the *Spacesaver* representative about the feasibility and cost of re-using the existing compact shelving in the new addition.

**Author: How do you prepare the staff for undertaking such a large project?**

**Heller:** You get them engaged in the project by telling them that during the two year construction period both the students and the library staff will feel some pain, but that it will be worth it when the project is finished. And you engage staff in the planning process, seeking their input on everything from the location of the collections and equipment to staff offices. This isn't to say that you take a vote and the majority wins. If you want to guarantee that the project will fail, do it by committee. This isn't to say that we didn't have a building committee, because we did. The committee acts as a sounding board for ideas. Because the committee will have representatives from the law school's primary constituencies—faculty, administrators, staff, and students—it also provides political cover.

Renovation/Expansion projects are disruptive: they are noisy, they are messy, and they are inconvenient. Keeping everyone informed by regular meetings with the building committee and occasional messages to everyone in the law school will make everyone happier—not happy, but happier. More on this below.

**Author: Can you ever adequately prepare for operating in the mists of library upheaval during construction?**

**Heller:** It's not easy. Our project was done in three phases; they were as follows:

**Phase 1:** It took one year to build the addition. Staff stayed where we were, but we did have to move a small part of the collection and some student seating away from the south wall, where the addition would meet the existing facility. The main disruption during Phase 1 was noise from construction, and there was occasional rumbling, as well as the smell of oil and who knows what from the Mechanical Room located on the ground floor below the reference offices. Using another music analogy, you might call this the “Rollin’ and Tumblin’ Part I” period.

**Phase 2:** It took one year to renovate the 1980 library. It was gutted up to the ceiling and down to the concrete floors. As noted above, the bound journals moved offsite. Everything else—and everyone—moved into the addition. This was no small feat, for the addition was less than half the size of the 1980 facility.

The collection (except for the bound journals) was moved into new shelving in the addition. (More on this below). It was pretty much tightly packed; we only needed enough expansion space for one year, because during **Phase 3** (below) everything would be moved again.

Technical services staff moved into the ground floor group study rooms we built for the students. The students would have to wait another year before they could use them. We build a temporary circulation/reserve area on the west side of the new addition, right next to the temporary entrance that was the only way to get into the law library during this phase of the project. The rest of the public services staff, as well as our administrative assistant and me, were housed in a bull-pen like area. No one had a private office during this time; high and low bookcases separated us, if we were separated at all. Surprisingly, this temporary space resulted in great camaraderie among the reference librarians; sharing information was very easy since every conversation could be heard by the entire crew.

Although student seating during Phase 2 was reduced from 433 to 333 seats for this one year, we still had seats for more than half of the student body. And the disruption continued, which made this “Rollin’ and Tumblin’ Part II”.

**Phase 3:** Following on the theme of the late, great blues guitarist Jeff Healey, this was when we could “See the Light.” We moved back into the completely renovated original library so that the finishing touches could be made to the new addition. During Phase 3, which took about ten weeks, the temporary walls and offices in the addition were removed, shelving was added and arranged according to our final plan, new student carrels and tables were installed, wood was added to the columns, and new carpeting was installed. The entire project was complete by mid-August 2007 when the students returned.



**Author: During the renovations did you frequently publicize what was taking place?**

**Heller:** Good PR is important during a construction project. Our dean asked me how he should reply to students who asked how the construction project would impact students. Here is how I suggested the dean reply:

1. Dozens of law schools have done projects like ours, so we are not alone in going through a major construction project.

2. The addition will be built in 2005-06. While this is taking place we should be able to keep the existing library facility operating just as it does now.

3. Some of the old library floors will be closed temporarily, but the new addition will be open and in use. We hope to do a phased renovation: complete the renovation of the current library's basement floor prior to renovating the top two floors. If we can do this, we may be able to keep almost all of the existing collection on-site during the *entire* construction process.

4. There will certainly be some disruption, but the library staff, law school administration, architects, and builders will work together to minimize the disruptive effects of this project on those who use the library.

5. When all is said and done, we will have a facility second to none among U.S. law school libraries.

**Author: What would be five major design decisions that must be examined when adding an addition to the library?**

**Heller:**

1. **Integration:** you want the final product to look like an integrated whole. We renovated a 1980 building and built a major addition onto it. It all looks like it was built at one time.

2. **Flexible Planning:** Pre-planning for this project took place in 1999-2000. Then we had a three year hiatus to get university and state approval and funding. Planning the final product took place from 2003-05, and construction from 2005-07. We made major changes from the beginning of the pre-planning in 1999 to the end of the actual planning in 2005. Once construction began we could tweak the project—for example, we made changes to where collections would be shelved, reduced the amount of shelving in order to add more seats and a chess alcove, made the library's "locked storage" room smaller and created a ping pong and billiards room in the free space, and made small changes to the size of some offices. It's important to know, however that it's harder—and often costly—to make major changes once the construction documents are 'final'.

**3. Always in Style:** As noted above, we opted for a transitional design for our fixtures and furnishings so that would not go out of style.

**4. You are the Owner:** Listen to the architects, but remember that you are the owner. Law school faculty, students and staff have to live with the project long after the architects leave the scene. The architects should bring a lot of good, sound, and creative ideas to the table. Listen to them, but don't let them force anything down your throat.

**5. Form and Function:** Form does not follow function; they work together. A library that doesn't function well is just about useless, but a building without good form—what I'll call design—isn't functional.

**Author: Are there any differences in selecting architects for a renovation or addition that are different from choosing architects for a new facility?**

**Heller:** For a large project like ours, I don't think so. If I recall, 20 or so companies were interested in our project. All but a handful were major players in providing architectural/engineering (A/E) services for significant academic buildings. Nearly all had worked on significant library projects, and several had done A/E work for law school libraries. Local architectural firms are likely to be interested in both large and small projects (by small, I'll say \$2M or less). They may not be qualified to do the complex work of a project like ours, which was as much "E" (engineering) as it was "A" (architectural). They may not know this, but you must.

**Author: What qualities did you look for in selecting a moving company?**

**Heller:** Experience and a good reputation. If the mover has a Bad Reputation—or even a middling one—stay away. Contact references the moving companies give you, check out Yelp, and connect with librarian colleagues who have moved collections in the last few years. We ultimately chose Office Movers, Incorporated (OMI)

Here are the questions we asked five library references about their experience with OMI:

1) Exactly what did the company move? Describe the pre-planning process and the move itself. Was it complicated? How well did it go? Does the company "know libraries?"

2) Describe the equipment the company used to move your collection? Did they use any devices that raise shelving, such as a "range mover"? If so, how well did it work. Did it harm the shelving units? If they didn't use such an item, why not?

3) Describe the staffing: supervisors, movers . . . . Were the movers all full or part-time company employees? Do they know and understand libraries?

4) How did the company communicate with you before, during, and after the move, and were you satisfied with their communication? Describe how you were involved in the process

5) Were there any surprises, such as not enough space to shelve certain materials? If so, how did the company deal with those surprises.

6) Describe how well the company cared for the materials that were moved. If there were problems, how did the company deal with them?

7) If the company stored any materials, were you satisfied with the condition of the materials upon their return?

8) Did the entire move come in within budget?

9) Would you use the company again?

**Author: What should you expect during the first months after completion of the project?**

**Heller:** You hope for peace, quiet, and happiness.

## Summary

It always is a challenge to envision how many years will pass before a new library must be enlarged. Requirements for future expansion should be studied carefully during the programming phase. Despite the advent of electronic resources, law library directors recognize full well what new courses, LL.M. programs, new foreign jurisdictions, more study rooms, and larger incoming classes can mean in terms of the need for space.

Expansion options will be less costly and less disruptive if some thought is given to this possibility as the new facility is planned. Options can include compact shelving (shelving in dense space) in which case proper floor loading is crucial. The use of flexible modular design (referred to as designing universal space) permits change to interiors as the library grows with the least cost and disruption. Raw space or unfinished space can be constructed for far less than finished library space, and it may be useful to include unfinished or reclaimed space for expansion in the library's program.

Constructing a completely new addition to the library in the future will be less disruptive and more architecturally palatable if reasonable options for adding space to the new building are discussed early in the programming stage. Lastly, a copy of the library expansion plan should be kept on file.

Living through a library renovation is fraught with difficulties, including temporary relocation of services and seating, accompanied by unwelcome construction noise, but these issues are not insurmountable. Whether utilizing raw space or adding an entire addition (and renovation of existing space), strategic planning is paramount.