

The New East Texas State College Library

BY JOHN E. BURKE

ON AUGUST 20, 1960 the Texas Society of Architects announced that the new library at East Texas State College, at Commerce, had been chosen as one of the best planned and best constructed buildings erected in the state of Texas in the 1950's. This library, completed in September 1959, at a cost of almost a million dollars, houses more than two hundred thousand volumes and seats almost a thousand students. A building of simplicity and beauty, the 60,000-square-foot structure cost \$13.55 per square foot (U. S. median for educational buildings: \$15.99).

SPECIAL FEATURES

The design of the building incorporated these features:

1. Flexibility, with free-standing bookstacks.
2. Decorative aluminum solar screen to add beauty and protect the library building against sun heat and glare.
3. Completely air-conditioned.
4. Warm colors on walls, and all interior columns covered with colorful plastic material.
5. Conveniently located reading and study tables, including carrels, close to bookstacks.
6. An inviting student lounge, a colorful room which includes a fully equipped kitchen and a high-fidelity record player.
7. A ceiling of light giving true daylight reading illumination to all areas at all times without glare.
8. An outside book-return chute at the main entrance for the return of books even when the library is not open.
9. Sound-proof facilities for the individual use of documentary films, and for music and typing.
10. An automatic charging machine to facilitate the checking out and return of books.
11. Microfilm readers and a microcard

Dr. Burke is Director of Library Service, East Texas State College, Commerce.

reader provided for using the back files of newspapers and specialized reference books not otherwise available.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The architect, George L. Dahl, Inc., of Dallas, worked on the premise that "a library is four walls around a function," and he was meticulous in understanding every library procedure before the blueprints were drawn. The result is a library that is a modern, functional building designed to meet the varied needs of the college today and flexible enough to serve those of the future. It is a large, slightly rectangular, two-story structure topped by a penthouse. It contains approximately sixty thousand square feet of floor space; has a capacity of more than two hundred thousand volumes; is constructed almost wholly of fireproof materials.

The present book and periodical collection of the East Texas State College Library totals 150,000 volumes. A continual process of weeding takes place. With an average yearly increase of about 5,500 volumes, growth for several decades can easily be taken care of. The new college library was planned with expansion in mind. Even though present facilities are adequate for the growth anticipated for East Texas State College in the next twenty years, the building may be enlarged in the future.

One of the main criteria for the library was flexibility. Shelving areas may be converted into reading or office space, and vice versa. Lounge or informal read-

ing areas can be utilized for shelving and study space should the need arise. If and when the educational pattern of East Texas State College requires revision, the new college library, it is hoped, will be adaptable with a minimum of alteration. By keeping partitions at a minimum, the planning committee felt that supervision could be maintained with the fewest possible attendants—an important factor in economical college library administration.

MORE DETAILS

It should be pointed out that all space within the building is devoted to library purposes. Three classrooms are set aside for the use of the department of library science, since East Texas State College is outstanding in preparing school librarians for Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. These classrooms are located on the second floor of the library and are accessible from the library proper and may be used by all departments of the college for lectures, movies, or other cultural purposes.

Of special interest, perhaps, is the informal reading room at the head of the main stairway. This area, though easily supervised, allows for general ease and comfort and permits regular exhibits of professional and student art work. Comfortable lounge chairs and divans make the area a lounge for smoking, study, browsing, and reading. It is proposed to add to the books and encyclopedias in this browsing area some of the more popular periodicals and some paperback editions displayed in bookstore fashion.

Lighting was a major element in the design of the library and dictated exhaustive pre-design studies to determine exact library activities and lighting requirements. The ceiling light on both the first and second floors permits maximum flexibility of furniture and book-stack arrangements by providing lighting intensities above recommended norms coupled with low brightness throughout.

Fifteen hundred forty-watt fluorescent tubes on each of the two floors concealed by a covering of plastic provide fifty- to fifty-five-foot candles of average maintained light to read titles on the spines of books in the most remote corners of the library whether the sun is shining or the skies are cloudy. In other words, sufficient overhead illumination maintains light without glare at table top surface or at the lowest shelf of books. The light colored vinyl tile floor also helps in making the library bright and cheerful.

The lighting fixtures fit eighteen inches above the luminous ceiling of solid light. Thin, brightly colored baffles suspended from the ceiling help to counteract visual boredom that might result from long, tedious hours of reading and study. In addition, they break the brightness of the ceiling, add beauty to the library, and absorb noises. Acoustic plastic baffles, louvered ceiling, and fluorescent lights in this arrangement are all relatively new features in ceiling arrangement.

At night this luminous ceiling is an outstandingly attractive sight identifying the library from afar. According to library personnel, the ceilings of light have provided good visual comfort to minimize eye strain and fatigue, and students now spend four to five hours reading and studying in the library without experiencing physical fatigue or eye strain. The plastic of the luminous ceiling seems weightless and is easily removed and replaced for any necessary repair or for the insertion of new fluorescent tubes.

The million dollar library, winner of the Architecture of Merit Award of the Texas Society of Architects, stands as visible proof of what careful planning, hard work, and cooperative effort can accomplish. The library has lived up to its goal of being attractive and inviting,

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easy of access, friendly and comfortable in arrangement, and above all, functional in meeting the needs of college students, and faculty members, and administrative officials.

Probably the key to what seems to be, after one year of operation, a really successful building is that there was from the beginning the assumption that the architect and each library staff member knew his business. The planning committee did not set out to draw up a pretty library, but, rather, a useful one. Because of this singleness of purpose, it seems that East Texas State College has a library which is acclaimed by both users and visitors as truly beautiful and utilitarian.

BUILDING DATA

Architect and engineers: George L. Dahl and Associates, Dallas, Texas.

Contractor: Carpenter Brothers, Dallas, Texas.

Date bid was accepted for new library: July 1, 1958.

Date new library building was turned over to the college: September 1, 1959.

Cost of building: \$761,475.10 or \$13.55 per square foot, excluding the cost of equipment, \$86,988, and re-finishing the furniture of the old library, \$10,000.

Size of building: 56,200 square feet including the walls. 55,644 square feet within the walls of the library.

Site: On west side of rolling campus adjacent to the Administration Building. Ample allowance for parking. Enough land to permit expansion of structure in the future including sufficient area for additional parking facilities.

Book capacity: At present stacks and shelving for 200,000 volumes. Potential capacity, more than 400,000 volumes.

Seating capacity: 865. May be expanded to seat 2,600. College enrollment, 1959-1960: 3,100.

Steel bookstacks and shelving: Furnished by Estey Corporation of Red Bank, N. J. and Dallas, Texas.

Library Furniture: Furnished by John E. Sjostrom Company of Philadelphia, Penn. and Houston, Texas.

Library building committee: Charles Van Baucom, Sally Bethea, O. B. Bradford, John Emmett Burke, Ruth C. Burnett, Mary Elizabeth Cook, George Kibler (superintendent of construction), Edmon Low (consultant), Edna Earl Ryan, Lora E. Smith, Mary Ragland Thompson, H. S. Tollefson, Orland Jack Wages, and Opal Williams (head librarian).