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## College Library Buildings in Transition: A Study of 36 Libraries Built in 1967-68

The *Library Journal* architectural issue of 1967 contained the first of Jerrold Orne's annual statistical surveys of college and university library architecture.<sup>1</sup> Designed to provide a continuing record of academic library construction, it also introduced standardization in the reporting of new buildings. Data offered in the surveys can serve as a starting point for charting the ways in which individual libraries have changed physically over the years.

It may be an overstatement to say that libraries listed in the first years of the survey are now approaching middle age. Some libraries, barely a decade and a half old, face problems now which were not encountered in twice that time by the buildings they replaced. The present study seeks to examine certain library buildings constructed in 1967 and 1968, specifically those that serve colleges. How have these structures adapted to the growth of their collections? How serious are storage and seating problems? What specific physical modifications have been made since they opened?

### TARGET GROUP

The study is limited to institutions that enrolled 3,000 or fewer students when their libraries were new. Libraries that met the requirements in 1967 or 1968, but have greater enrollments today, are still included. These institutions would now be classified as *comprehensive universities and colleges* or *liberal arts colleges*, according to the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education.<sup>2</sup> However, since the Carnegie topology did not exist in 1967 or 1968, the decision was made to choose the target group according to the student clientele served. Seventy-two libraries became part of the study (seventy-five were

included in the target group; three had closed in the intervening years); thirty-six (or 50 percent) of the libraries returned the survey instrument (eighteen each from Orne's 1967 and 1968 list). The median enrollment was 1,284 (1979-80 figures). Most of the target group has a collection size today of between 100,000 and 200,000 volumes; 28 percent had fewer than 100,000 volumes; and 11 percent more than 200,000.

### RESULTS

#### Storage Space

Five libraries in the survey indicated that they had already reached capacity. A comparison of current collection size with the data in the Orne survey shows that these buildings are between 100-160 percent of planned capacity. An additional five libraries also exceeded theoretical storage limits, and each of these reported less than five years growth available. In all, fifteen of the thirty-six libraries indicated five or fewer years of space for printed material. Some of these will probably encounter serious difficulties in the near future. Only five had any concrete plans for increasing book storage.

Some of the thirty-six responding libraries have avoided or mitigated their storage problems by a variety of means. Three have built additions to their original structures, two have acquired remote storage facilities, and one opened a separate branch library. However, one library in three increased storage capacity through more conventional ways, most notably by placing additional shelving in areas originally designed for non-storage uses, or by eliminating open space. Two libraries noted a major gain in shelf space by moving book stacks closer together.

#### Seating Space

When the libraries were constructed, the seating percentage (the median ratio of seating space to full-time enrollment) was .38.

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TABLE 1  
REASONS FOR BUILDING MODIFICATION

	Major Modifications		Minor Modifications	
	Completed	Needed	Completed	Needed
Reduce future energy costs	2	6	13	13
Increase access for handicapped	2	7	12	12
Reduce noise	2	2	5	10
Prevent loss of library resources	6	4	14	14
Increase comfort of users	0	3	7	6
Enhance attractiveness of building (interior or exterior)	0	2	11	11

By 1981, that figure had dropped to .26. Four libraries actually increased seating/enrollment ratios since they opened, and six others declined by less than 10 percent. In several individual cases, the drop in seating percentage was due to enrollment increases. In others, seating areas were converted to book storage. However, the degree of erosion in the seating percentage is nearly the same for the thirteen most crowded libraries as compared to the total group. The sample here is quite small, so judgments must be qualified, but there is no evidence of large conversions of study space to book storage even in libraries that are rapidly approaching capacity.

The 1981 seating percentage is well within the range suggested for typical residential college libraries by the 1975 "Standards for College Libraries."<sup>3</sup> Formula C of the "Standards" recommends that seating "shall be one for each four FTE students." The adequacy of seating space in the libraries surveyed is reflected by the fact that only one library in five rated patron study spaces inadequate during peak-usage times, and only one library from the responding thirty-five felt that the number of spaces was inadequate during a typical term period.

#### *Building Modifications 1967/68-1981*

Table 1 lists six current needs of many libraries. Libraries in the survey were asked to indicate which of these needs resulted in building modifications between 1967/68 and 1981, and which would need to be accomplished in the next five years.

Security-motivated changes (especially book-detection systems) were accomplished by a majority of the libraries surveyed. Clearly, fewer changes were done for aesthetic reasons or for user comfort.

A large number of the libraries surveyed

believed that substantial investments would be necessary in order to reduce energy consumption and to ensure accessibility to handicapped patrons.

#### *Other Interior Adjustments*

To gauge the extent of interior changes, the survey presented the libraries with a list of twenty functional areas, and the respondents were asked to indicate which had changed building locations since opening day. The tabulation is presented in table 2.

Interior adjustments were made by 63 percent of the libraries, and over one-third had made three or more such changes over the years. Some relocations in these libraries were due to altered program objectives, the varied formats of library materials, and the need to provide services or house collections not foreseen by the building planners of the 1960s.

Four of the eight libraries that changed the location of their government document operations became federal documents depositories after 1968. While the survey did not specifically measure this, it is likely that the

TABLE 2  
CHANGES IN BUILDING LOCATIONS

Functional Area	Number of Libraries
Media or A-V center	14
Microforms	11
Government documents	8
Maps	6
Reference department	5
Special collections	5
Current periodicals	5
Bound periodicals	5
Acquisitions	5
Staff lounge	5
Public card catalog	4
Interlibrary loan	4
Serials processing	4
All other areas	3 or less

large number of changes in audiovisual or media centers was due to service expansion and/or moves to consolidate such services within the library. When asked to indicate other modifications in public service or processing areas that have taken place, few libraries listed anything more other than furniture relocation, new carpeting, or similar minor changes.

#### CONCLUSION

The survey reveals that a major concern for college-sized libraries in the 1980s will be space for library materials. Whether or not the problem reaches crisis proportions will depend on the ingenuity of librarians and the availability of resources. Unfortunately, the next ten years look particularly grim for higher education, and certain solutions to storage problems (new buildings, additions, remote storage, compact storage) are fairly expensive. Libraries can take other actions to address the problem (e.g., greater use of microforms, more intensive weeding), but their constituencies may find these solutions unacceptable. In some cases, areas within the library used in pursuit of nonlibrary functions can be regained. Three-fourths of the libraries surveyed have portions of their buildings devoted to other uses. Most are classrooms, but academic and administrative offices, computer centers, reading and study-skill centers, art galleries, and radio stations are also found in libraries.

In the short term, some libraries may convert seating areas (still at levels recom-

mended in the ALA "Standards for College Libraries") into storage space. While seating percentages have dropped over the years, it is impossible to state that this is due to crowded book shelves. If conversion does occur in open-stack libraries, patrons and books will compete for the same limited space. Ironically, the decline in full-time enrollment, predicted for many colleges until the 1990s, may ameliorate this problem. However, if during the 1980s, overcrowded libraries seek to gain book-storage space by eliminating study areas, they will surely face the next decade with adequate room for neither users nor materials.

Assuredly, future planning will need to be farsighted. Many libraries will require substantial investments if their physical plants are to serve their public adequately. Herein lies a major challenge: While requesting funds, librarians will have to convince faculty and alumni that despite the optimism of opening day, their college has an aging library.

#### REFERENCES

1. Jerrold Orne, "Academic Library Building in 1967," *Library Journal* 92:4345-50 (Dec. 1, 1967).
2. Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, *A Classification of Institutions of Higher Education: A Technical Report* (Berkeley, Calif.: The Commission, 1973).
3. Association of College and Research Libraries, "Standards for College Libraries," *College & Research Libraries News* 36:277-301 (Oct. 1975).

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