



Law School Dean Jeffrey A. Brauch takes a sledgehammer to the wall

Combine one hard-to-get-to academic law library much in need of a facelift, a long list of student concerns about space issues, new carpet, and 15 very determined librarians and staff, and what do you get? An *awesome* new law library space.

In summer 2008, Regent University Law Library closed its doors for the better part of four months. Strange noises could be heard drifting down into the university library stacks below: the groan and creak of moving shelving units; the “slam! thump!” of books coming on and off of library carts; “slap! thud!” as glue was spread and new carpet was laid; and sighs of relief and sounds of celebration as goals were achieved

along the way. Thus was Phase I of the law library remodel project accomplished.

### Planning

For years, student surveys had expressed increasing levels of dissatisfaction with the law library space. They wanted more space, more quiet space, “better” space, quieter study rooms, more comfortable chairs, bigger carrels, carrels away from high traffic areas that weren’t so “bunched up,” better access to library assistance, and so on. Though the survey was divided into four sections—services, resources, technology and facilities—the overwhelming majority of comments in each part tied back to facilities issues.

Indeed the law library space at Regent is unusually conformed, being

essentially a square donut around a central atrium, with windows to the interior as well as to outside. Originally the stacks were placed down the middle of each side, resulting in main thoroughfares running between the stacks and carrel groups along the walls. The law library occupied the third floor, above but separated from the university library; entrance was gained by elevator or stairwell off one side of the main university library entrance. A wall around the third-floor balustrade blocked access to what students referred to as “the stairway to nowhere.”

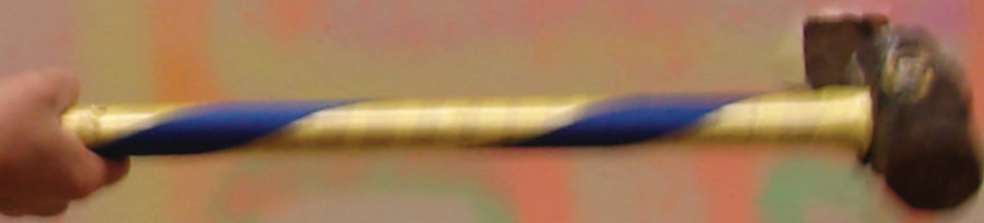
In May 2007, new carpet was approved for the law library for the fiscal year starting July 1. Since this meant everything would have to be moved

# Extreme Makeover

## Law Library Edition

*The Regent University Law Library staff collaborates to create a new space for students*

By Margaret Christiansen



anyway, staff seized on the opportunity to address the rising tide of student concerns. All the librarians and public services staff gathered in a marathon set of meetings designed to get everyone thinking well outside the normal “box.” No part of the floor plan was considered immovable other than exterior walls, elevators, and mechanical spaces.

The associate director taught herself CAD and worked with the other librarians to create a completely new design for the library space, so no architect was needed. The university engineer approved the plans, which were then broken into several phases with fresh drawings and detailed specifications created for each.

### Challenges

One fateful November day the librarians discovered that the facilities staff had actually planned only to lay carpet *around* the existing shelving, not under it, which would effectively prevent any change to the layout for the foreseeable future since the carpet patches would not match. In order to continue with the plans, Phase I (removing walls and moving the service desks) and Phase II (rearranging furniture and running electric) would have to be combined so carpet did not have to be laid before the furnishings were moved. But how would the university be persuaded to carpet underneath?

A marvelous plan was formulated by the assistant director for collection

development. Materials in on-site storage on the fourth floor would be significantly weeded and condensed to allow temporary storage of a large section of the main collection. This would leave quantities of shelving empty and lightweight enough to move for carpeting underneath.

The university agreed to both combining Phases I and II, and moving the furnishings so long as the law library paid for wiring and electric and moved all the books. As quietly as possible, the entire periodical section was moved to the fourth floor during the spring semester. This process was slowed significantly by the fact that staff had already been moving forward with plans to label and place periodicals in call

## Step by Step...

The library's overall move sequence ran something like this:

- Reporters and codes moved into former periodicals shelves
- Empty shelves and furniture slid out of the way
- Carpet (squares) laid in the empty space
- Shelves reassembled in new configuration
- Reporters and codes re-placed on shelves
- Periodicals shelving moved to one side
- Carpet laid
- Shelves reassembled in new configuration
- Classified materials moved into former periodicals shelves
- Empty shelves and furniture slid over
- Carpet laid
- Shelves reassembled in new configuration
- Classified materials re-placed on shelves
- Periodicals returned from storage to new periodicals area in new classification order

A new combined service desk is the central help point for all study areas.



number rather than alphabetical order, making this the ideal time to shift that collection into its new configuration.

The law library closed to patrons immediately after exams in early May and reopened again in August for 1L orientation. Arrangements were made to provide materials to patrons on request through the university library, and regular courier service continued to deliver materials to and from law school offices.



The reading area adjacent to state, regional, and federal materials is ideal for individual or group study.

### The Wall Must Fall!

Summer opened with a “Jericho Celebration.” Students and librarians graffitied the soon-to-be removed walls with spray chalk to help build excitement, interest, and ownership in the renovation process in the last weeks of the semester. Staff cordoned off empty shelves with caution tape, and hardhats and sledgehammers were provided to anyone who wanted to take a whack at the wall surrounding the “stairway to nowhere.” (You can view a video of the event at [www.regent.edu/acad/schlaw/library/Jericho.mov](http://www.regent.edu/acad/schlaw/library/Jericho.mov).)

Then the real work began. Librarians and staff joined together as a team to physically move 136,000 volumes at

least four times each in coordination with the timing of carpet installers, electricians, and the facilities department, who moved and reassembled all the shelving and furniture, demolished walls, repaired drywall, and painted.

“The most memorable thing about last summer was the unity we showed as a team,” says Nikitia Powell, supervisor of access services. “We all pulled together, all ages, all departments. Everyone worked really hard to bring about the vision we’d been focusing on for more than a year.”

### Cost

The university paid for carpet and installation, and the man-hours needed to demolish walls, move shelving units and furniture, and paint. The only costs accrued by the law library were for electrical work, Local Area Network (LAN) drops, and signage. According to the acting supervisor of facility services, “We invested 52 40-hour weeks of man-hours in the law library project this summer. That’s more than any other university project I’ve been involved in.”

Because the existing law library team worked to make it all happen with no increase in normal hours, no additional payroll costs were incurred. Of course, during crunch times, the librarians worked the hours needed to reach the goal. The project would not have been physically, logistically, or fiscally possible had the library remained open to the public.

### Unique Features

The new design features a stunning new entrance (by elevator or staircase) through the university library. The opening of the stairwell in turn facilitated the advent of two significant new features: open accessibility to the balcony from either end and the creation of a unified service desk as a one-stop point of access for all services central to all study areas.

Though the two libraries remain administratively separate and report to different deans, patrons may now travel freely between and check out books at either desk. Half of the law library is now designated as a quiet, individual study side, with carrels in small cloisters separated by stacks rearranged to provide sight and sound buffers to enhance the study environment. This unique and innovative design that places stacks at right angles to each other has proved highly successful in sustaining a truly conducive study environment. The quiet side is home to the law periodicals, the general law collection, and comfortable seating, while the conversational side houses the primary federal and state legal



Regent law students Drew Paige and Liz Anderson enjoy the comfortable seating and panoramic view of the new entrance.

source materials and is dotted with tables ideal for individual or group study. The nature of the study environment on each side is complemented and reinforced by the design of the floor plan.

Students are clearly happy with the changes. “It’s much more professional, more of a place to study, not so cloistered or stuffy,” says Jennifer Park, a third-year law student. “When I come here, I’m coming to a real library and it’s so much more conducive to my needs. I really like that it’s connected with the university library.”

Dean Jeffery Brauch notes, “A student just came up to me and said,

‘The law library is, like, ten times better than it ever was before. Why didn’t you do this when I was a 1L?’ I wasn’t asking for his opinion on the law library—it was completely unsolicited.”

### More to Come: PHASE II

So what is left to look forward to? Phase II, that’s what. As funding becomes available, plans are in place to further enhance the law library study environment by:

- Upgrading library seating with fully ergonomic models;
- Widening carrels to better

- accommodate both books and laptops;
- Creating a number of individual study rooms in addition to the present group study rooms; and
- Building an environmentally controlled special collections room to better protect and feature law library special collections, with a grand reading room containing additional carrels and tables for study space. ■

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