

California Western School of Law Library Creates

"the First Law Library of the New Millennium"

by Phyllis C. Marion

California Western School Of Law Library opened "the first law library of the new millennium" on Jan. 2, 2000. The four-story, 50,000-square-foot building serves approximately 725 students, 40 faculty, and the bench and bar. It is one of three buildings on the C.W.S.L. campus in downtown San Diego.

By 1993, the library's facilities were inadequate to meet its needs. Stacks were filled, study space was primitive, and the ability to support emerging technologies was lacking. In 1997, the school's Board of Trustees approved the construction of a new library building. The M.W. Steele Group, in consultation with Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, was chosen as architect. Campbell-Anderson & Associates served as an independent project manager. Construction began in September 1999 and was completed, under budget and on schedule, 18 months later.

The design phase of the project concentrated on melding the programmatic needs of the library with the aesthetic vision of the architect and law school community. Several constraints influenced both areas. First, the Board of Trustees made it clear that the \$9,000,000 appropriation for the building was firm. Second, the 12,500-square-foot lot put severe limitations on the footprint of the building.

The main goal for the exterior was for the new building to serve as a visual link between the two existing campus buildings, one of which is a late 1920s Italian Renaissance style building, the other an early 1990s Post-Modern building. These buildings sit on diagonal corners of a intersection; the new library is on a third corner. The building, with its finishes, details and colors emulating the Italianate style but in a modern vernacular, is very successful in meeting this goal.

The old library's interior was dark, crowded and unappealing, so an important aesthetic goal was to design a

building with a feeling of light, space and professionalism. The new building has reading spaces offering panoramic views of the downtown and the bay. Stack and reading areas have both direct and indirect lighting. Wide aisles are scattered throughout the building. Cherry wood is

used on some interior walls and on the specially designed tables and carrels, imbuing a warm, professional look. Stack end panels are a combination of cherry and laminate, bringing a very finished look to the stack areas. Green, burgundy and gray-toned fabric, laminates and woods are used

throughout the library and in the staff offices and work areas.

Programmatic needs were initially defined prior to building approval and further defined following the selection of the architect. Because the school has a multi-building campus, it was decided that some library functions should be maintained in the other buildings. Thus, two reading rooms, 18 study rooms, an auxiliary computer lab and a book storage area are in the classroom-student building and a small faculty library has been retained in the faculty-administration building.

The program easily meets the collection and seating needs of the library for the next 20 years. To accommodate a projected 190,000 hardbound volumes, the new building has 28,692 linear feet of shelving and an additional 9,800 linear feet remains for storage in the old building.

Since C.W.S.L. has a large, growing microforms collection, the microforms room can house more than 200,000 volume equivalents.

The study areas boast a variety of settings and seating. The new library has 425 seats, with a mix of ergonomic, traditional wood and fabric chairs, and lounge seating. There are 120 carrels. Tables accommodate two, four or six persons. Most seating is around the perimeter of the stack areas. Eight study rooms, each seating six students, address an important student concern that the library provide ample space for group study. Each of these rooms has network access and a whiteboard and accommodate video playback equipment. The classroom building contains an additional 191 seats and 18 group study rooms.

Another programmatic goal was to provide a sophisticated, flexible technology backbone and access to the network throughout the building. A fiber optic backbone with multistrand twisted pair is available to all network stations. In addition to the numerous staff network stations and the computer labs, there are

more than 250 data ports and electrical outlets for laptop use throughout the building at carrels and tables. A cable television for the building is waiting to be drawn when needed.

During the 1 1/2 years the building has been open, no significant problems have arisen. There is not much that we would

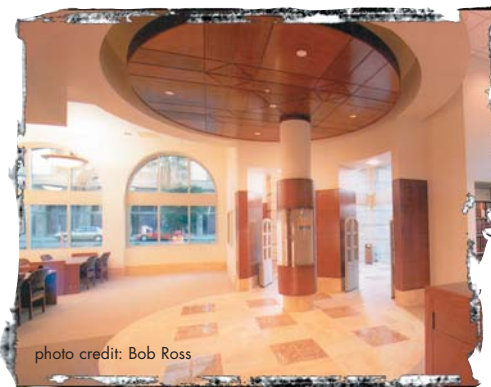
do differently — perhaps doors that closed more quietly, some quieter study areas in the interior of the library, a bit more storage space for supplies and equipment. All in all, the building is a great success.

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The California Western School of Law Library offers panoramic views of downtown and the bay.

photo credits: Bob Ross and Jan Sebold



The first floor (east) reading area and main lobby with kiosk at California Western School of Law Library features light, space and professionalism.

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