

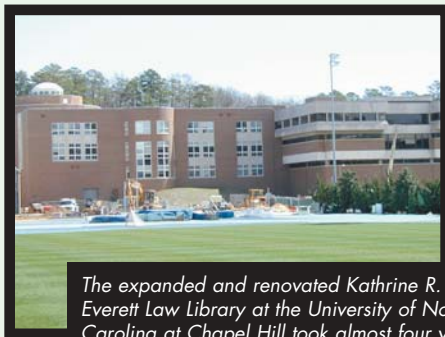
"We Ran into Some Holidays"

by Thomas French

October 22, 1999, is a date that will be etched into my mind forever as the day that the Kathrine R. Everett Law Library at the University of North Carolina School of Law was dedicated — dedicated after years of planning and construction, but well before the facility was finally completed. Why have a dedication well before completion? Read on.

UNC's law library project was a part of an expansion and renovation of a facility constructed in 1968. The project consisted of a 50,000-plus square-foot expansion and renovation of the original law school building. The original building and library served their purposes well, but 30 years is a long time for a law library and law school building to function without major change. These changes included revised service expectations, the number of staff, work space requirements, collection growth and new technologies. During the last 30 years, legal pedagogy has evolved from large class instruction to more seminars along with tremendous growth in co-curricular activities, such as moot court, law reviews and student organizations.

When the Everett library was finally completed about one year after its dedication, the University of North Carolina School of Law had a magnificent library facility. It is wired for the age of technology: complete with a high-tech classroom; expanded computer-assisted research facilities; inviting, well-lighted and networked study areas; adequate office space for a staff that had grown from seven in 1968 to 20 in 1999; conference rooms; wheelchair-accessible circulation desk; an exhibition gallery; spacious reference work quarters; storage areas for the systems librarian; and a kitchen. The rest of the law school had wonderful new spaces as well. Spaces were created for the various student groups and departments, such as career planning, development and international programs that did not even exist in 1968.



The expanded and renovated Kathrine R. Everett Law Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill took almost four years to complete.

This did not happen overnight. In fact, what started out as a one-year construction project dragged on for almost four years. The dedication was scheduled for a date that looked reasonable — long after the anticipated completion date. But, as the construction foreman for the original construction company once said in explaining why progress on the building was scandalously behind schedule, "We ran into some holidays at the end of December." Holidays, hurricanes, delays in material deliveries, work order changes, an exacting and talented architect who refused to accept substandard work, and an original contractor who may have been

out of his league in even attempting to undertake the project contributed to the extended construction period. The months it took the surety company following the initial contractor's default to hire a new contractor — during which construction was stopped — prolonged the project too.

During construction, staff maintained services and administrators worked to keep everyone sane — sane through numerous office relocations. (The director even spent one summer hiding in a windowless basement carrel.) Technical services worked in a dungeon-like reading room. Circulation and reference worked out of a classroom upstairs and down the hall from the rest of the library and its collections. And that was only the first summer of disruption while major renovations took place in the "old library." These renovations included transforming the original administrative suite into a classroom; converting one large open technical services space into two open areas, plus a row of four offices; and altering the original reference and circulation spaces into technical services, a hallway, conference room and storage areas. At the end of the summer, as construction continued around us, everyone moved again. This time the director came up out of the basement and into what

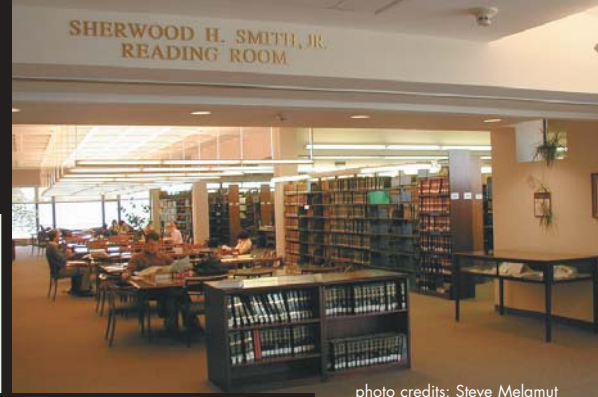


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University of North Carolina students study in the renovated reading room of the Everett Law Library.

eventually became the cataloging

office. The associate director moved from a carrel to the eventual technical service lounge. The reference department worked from a standard desk in the corner of the reading room. The systems librarian found herself in a space that eventually became the acquisitions department. And the rest of the staff was scattered throughout the library, surrounded by construction workers, walls coming down and going up, and who knows what else. Of course, in addition to carrying out regular duties, the whole staff had to plan and execute the moves required for everyone to be part of this not-very-amusing game of musical chairs.

What did we learn from this? The easy lessons involved the need to be flexible and, of course, when all else fails, maintain a sense of humor. We also learned the value of getting to know the major players in the construction process, to be cognizant of their needs and problems, and to do whatever we can to be sympathetic to their concerns and issues. Communicating with them several times a day probably did more than anything to keep things moving on the ever-changing schedule. Director Lolly Gasaway's insistence that the library participate in all phases of the planning and construction process is one lesson everyone contemplating new construction should remember. What kept the staff together? The same things: being aware and sympathetic to their concerns and issues; keeping them informed and engaged in the process; and finally "keeping hope alive" that eventually the project would end, a good dedication celebration would take place, and life would go on.

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