



The main entrance to the law school and library is located in the round building. The white facade of the building is a welcome change from the previous red and gray color scheme.

In August's triple-digit heat, the William S. Boyd Law School and law library began its exodus from its temporary location at Paradise Elementary School to its permanent location on the main campus at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas in 2002. The law library's amazingly seamless move of 230,000 volumes and volume equivalents in two weeks was the result of careful planning.

The new law school building is a \$16-million renovation of UNLV's old main library, The Dickinson Library. The 124,030-square-foot complex includes a four-story rectangular building and a three-story round building.

A pedestrian bridge on the second and third floors connects the two buildings.

### Paradise Lost

Nevada's first and only law school opened in 1998. The old Paradise Elementary School provided a temporary home to the fledgling law school and library. The kindergarten room served as the home of technical services. The cafeteria housed the library's core collection. The microfiche collection was placed in the kitchen. "The whole place smelled of Tater Tots and fear," says Blake Gross, a second-year law student at UNLV.

### Paradise Regained

In stark contrast to its humble beginnings, the permanent home of the law school is modern and spacious. The main entrance to the law school is on the first floor of the round building. This floor contains the Thomas and Mack Legal Clinic and classrooms equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including Internet access for students. Professors also have the equipment necessary for presentations, including video and document cameras.

A sweeping staircase draws visitors up to the second floor. Administration offices, career services, student organization offices and student lounges are located on this level. One of the student lounges opens on to a large balcony.

The staircase continues to the third floor: the main entrance to the Wiener-Rogers Law Library. The entrance to the library is in almost the exact center of the round building. This large, open, circular area contains the

circulation desk, the reference desk, public computers and the reference desk collection — all arranged with a circular theme. A dramatic rotunda caps off this area. Although there are no windows in this section, the architects created the appearance of natural light with white walls that enhanced the illumination of the building's overhead lighting and smaller concentric lights.

The law library is housed on the third floor of the round building and the third floor and half of the fourth floor of the rectangular building. Along with 13 study rooms, the library has an ample number of carrels and tables, many strategically placed to maximize views. In fact, the eastern, northern and part of the western walls of the rectangular building are floor-to-ceiling windows. Students can pause from their studies and look out upon the valley's surrounding mountains or the Las Vegas Strip.

### Pilgrim's Progress



The study areas are equipped with outlets and Internet ports. Even the arrangement of the furniture emphasizes the circular theme of the building.

The unusual layout and design of the law school required a great deal of consultation between the architect and the law school building committee, which was chaired by Rick Brown, professor of law and former law library director. Brown says that the biggest design challenge was figuring out how to fit an integrated law school into two buildings. In addition, because the law library is a separate entity within the law school, the design had to accommodate the library's unique space, weight and security requirements, he says. To add to the problems, one of the buildings was round, "the worst possible shape for a library," Brown says.

The committee planned for the library's design before the architects were even hired. The committee thoroughly analyzed the needs of the library, function by function. Once it achieved a clear understanding of how the library would function, the

## Paradise Lost — and Found

### Nevada's Only Law School Library Exchanges Schoolhouse Locale for State-of-the-Art Home

by Kelly Christianson

committee educated the architects on the library's purpose and various roles within the law school. The committee continued to work with the architects throughout the year during the construction to make sure the design would be functional and aesthetically pleasing. For example, with the committee's input, the architects angled the shelving appropriately to accommodate the round building structure. The architects also collaborated with the committee to build one exit and one entrance for a law library housed in two separate buildings. As a public facility, the committee explained that the library could not be hidden on the third floor. As a result, the sweeping staircase was designed with the intention of inviting the visitor up to the third floor.

Luckily, the building had previously functioned as a library, so the law library could be placed on the upper floors without load-bearing disasters.

### The Exodus

The only thing more impressive than the building and its construction was the move itself in August 2002 before the fall semester began. Amid a library leadership change, oppressive heat and an array of vendors, the library move lasted only two weeks and encountered very few problems.

The move went well because the library began planning a year in advance, beginning with a staff retreat. At the retreat, the library's 13 employees created three committees: The Logistics Committee would hire the movers. The



*The law school is located in the heart of UNLV's campus, two miles from the Las Vegas Strip.*

Layout Committee would determine the new locations for the books. The Operations Committee would organize the address changes with vendors.

A major issue in planning the move was the integration of books in storage with the collection. The law library had quickly outgrown its temporary home at the elementary school and had to place almost 7,000 volumes in storage. The Layout Committee was responsible for ensuring that enough space was available in the new library for the stored books and the books housed in the old facility.

The library hired three moving

companies. One company moved the books. Another moved and installed the existing and new shelving. The third company moved the office furniture.

While the mix of movers had the potential for pure chaos, the library's administrative assistant, Joy Nishie, supervised and monitored the progress of the three companies closely.

Existing shelving was also a concern for the law library. Nearly all of the shelving in the temporary library fit on the fourth floor of the rectangular building. As the book movers removed volumes from the existing shelves, shelving movers had to take down the shelves and reinstall them in the new location. This process led to the only glitch in the entire move: the book movers moved faster than the shelf installers. In the end, however, the shelf installers postponed their other projects and worked overtime to install the library's shelves.

The law library's new director, Bobbie Studwell, assumed her duties just in time to witness the seamless move. Thanks to thoughtful design and careful planning, she did not witness any nervous breakdowns.

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*The dramatic main entrance to the library is located in the center of the round building. If a patron stands in the exact center of the room, an interesting acoustical effect occurs.*