

## THE ART LIBRARY: A New Art Landmark at Rutgers Mall

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The Art Library of Rutgers University is located in a new facility on the historic Voorhees Mall. The mall is one of the oldest parts of the University. Some of its buildings date back to the university's early colonial beginnings. The mall is dominated on one end by the administration building, Old Queen's, and on the other end by the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. A historic sculpture of William the Silent presides at one extremity of the mall, while on the other, a modern sculpture in front of the art museum proclaims its contemporary role. The mall serves as the nucleus of an otherwise dispersed university. It is a ceremonial and symbolic place where every year hundreds of new graduates march the traditional path from Old Queen's, past the Art Library to Murray Hall, to receive their diplomas in celebration of the affirmation of their achievement. On this historic mall stands the Art Library: it observes, participates, and educates.

The Art Library was transferred in 1966 from Alexander Library to Voorhees Hall, an already existing building and the former main library for the university in New Brunswick. The move was accomplished with the initiative and active participation of the Art History Department under the chairmanship of James Stubblebine. Roger Tarman, a newly hired art librarian, organized the transfer. James Stubblebine expressed his enthusiasm and approval of the new arrangement in his article "Art Finds Home": "Part of the old bookstack area has been made into an art library, with its attractive reading room, which is one of the triumphs of the building."<sup>1</sup> In the same building and at the same time, the Art Gallery was established. This arrangement provided for a working symbiosis among three related but separate parts—the Art Gallery, the Art History Department, and the Art Library—and defined the center of the art community at Rutgers.

Although the library was now well-located, the space it occupied had not been specifically planned to accommodate the Art Library's needs.

In 1969, three years after the move, Roger Tarman, Jack Spector (Chairman of the Art Department) and Marian Motley (Curator of the Museum) petitioned President Gross and the Board of Governors for additional space for the Art Library.<sup>2</sup>

In 1977, the new Art Department chair, Matthew Baigell, repeated the same request: "The Art Library...needs additional space desperately and quickly."<sup>3</sup> A search for space was initiated and several alternatives were considered: expansion to Ballentine Hall, a return to Alexander Library, or a move to Douglass Library. The ensuing disputes on the location of the Art Library highlighted the importance of the library as a research and study center, and substantiated the claim that a library is, in fact, the heart of the university.

Every successive chair of the Art History Department and every director of the Graduate Art History Program pressed the issue of the need for additional space for the Art Library: "as dedicated professional art historians, we overwhelmingly support your intentions to further develop the art library...[W]e feel we owe this to our students, our discipline, our professional self-respect, and to our college and university."<sup>4</sup>

In 1980, Dennis Cate, Director of the Art Museum, expressed his dependence on the Art Library and the Art History Department: "Both of these departments relate directly to the function of the University Art Gallery in the areas of research, collaboration on art historical exhibitions and a museum training curricula planned with the Gallery expansion in mind. It is practical for the further development of mutually beneficial programs to keep these three units physically adjacent to one another."<sup>5</sup> It was clear that its constituency did not want the Art Library moved from the Voorhees location, though need for more space was obvious.

The graduate student body declared its opposition to the return of the Art Library to Alexander Library in a letter to the Dean of the Graduate School:

We are deeply concerned that such a move would prove disastrous to our program. We do not seek special privilege; rather we seek a solution to problems that are unique to the discipline of Art History. We are utterly dependent on visual resources. These visual resources must be housed together and readily accessible for effective teaching to be at all possible. In the past, the close proximity of the Art Library to our slide library and slide production facilities, as well as to the seminar rooms and art faculty offices, has helped determine the character of our department. It has

fostered the unity, seriousness and effectiveness behind our excellence as a graduate department.<sup>6</sup>

The Art Library is a unique resource in its visual content. In addition to its scholarly value, art material is intriguing, and captivates the imagination: original prints, limited editions of works of art, books autographed and dedicated; facsimile editions (often as expensive as the original, particularly in the case of manuscript facsimiles); catalogues raisonnés (the complete record of an individual artist's work); and publications chronicling the movements and the periods of art; auction catalogs which recite the life story of a piece of art, from its creation to its present condition, and to its future potential.

The Art Library is not merely a collection of books, but rather a myriad of thoughts. The books do not simply fill the shelves: they talk, they illustrate, they demonstrate. They are the voices of past centuries in communication with present scholars and theorists—the faculty, and the future generation of scholars—the students.

The Art Library has expanded and contracted in response to the needs of the users and of the Art History program. The Art History program has changed considerably, particularly within the past several years. Now it reaches beyond the traditional Western art offerings to include the art of the world: African-American, Native American, South American, African, Oriental, and Eastern European. Architecture and Landscape Architecture found a new emphasis in the Art History curriculum. Studies in women's art have gained momentum within the last twenty years.

As the Art History Department grew in size and stature, so too grew its demand for additional material at the library. In 1966, the Art Library contained 20,000 volumes. In 1992, it holds close to 60,000 volumes and is the largest collection of art material held by a public institution in New Jersey. Its approximate growth rate is 2,000 volumes per year.

The space occupied in Voorhees Hall became too small by 1969 to accommodate the continually growing collection and student population. The effort to expand was continuous.<sup>7</sup> In 1983, Ferris Olin, the former head of the Art Library, achieved temporary relief from crowded conditions by adding a second floor to the existing space from the old Art Gallery storage area donated by the Zimmerli Art Museum. She also formulated at least three concept documents regarding the library's needs in the new facility. Another person who was active in the campaign on behalf of the Art Library is the former chair of the Art

History Department, Tod Marder, who regularly petitioned the administration on behalf of the Art Library. The final concept document was accepted in 1989.

In the spring of 1989, an addition to the Art Library was approved by the Board of Governors and a new era in the life of the Art Library commenced. The architectural firm of Warner, Burns, Toan and Lunde ("WBTL") of New York was selected to design the new facility. WBTL was not new to Rutgers: They had previously completed the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum; the Douglass Library; the Library of Science and Medicine; the Mathematics Building; and the College Avenue Student Center. Joanna Strauss served as the University architect for this project. The user representatives on the Building Committee included Sarah McHam (Chair of the Art History Department), Donald Beetham (Slide Curator), Beryl Smith (Art Librarian) and Halina Rusak (Head of the Art Library and Chair of the Building Committee).

The user representatives were well-prepared to meet the challenge of planning the new facility. They participated in relevant workshops, sat on architectural committees and visited other newly-completed libraries. Each such visit provided useful information in developing a perception of desirable characteristics for the Art Library at Rutgers. For example, the art librarians' feeling was that the information desk at the Benjamin S. Rosenthal Art Library at Queen's College, New York, was wrongly oriented (facing offices rather than the public) and had severely limited space at the counter. By contrast, Princeton University's Firestone Library addition was much admired by the Rutgers representatives because of its openness and accessibility to the public.

The construction of the new building was eagerly anticipated. It gave art librarians another opportunity to examine their relationship and their communication channels with the public, with the administration and with other departments, and to re-evaluate the library's philosophy of service. All of these considerations had to be articulated in a document for the architects to use during the design phase of the planning process for the Art Library Addition. In April of 1989 the Building Committee submitted this *Program Document* to the architects. The *Document* stated the philosophy and mission of the Art Library and very specifically detailed the Library's needs. The *Program Document* focused on two issues: function and aesthetics. A schematic drawing of the work-flow patterns and relationships was included in the *Program*. In regard to the

exterior of the library, the *Program* stipulated that: "The Art Library Addition should harmonize with the present architecture, and be considerate of the existing landscape of the Mall. It should have an identity of its own, reflect the aesthetic concern and awareness of the art community, and project this character to the public."

The interior of the library should project a "feeling of warmth, accessibility and comfort. It should be functional but not at the expense of other qualities. An illusion of space should be projected within the limited footage. Daylight should be provided wherever possible with care being taken in all areas to screen the collection from harmful ultra-violet rays. A sensitivity to the need for glare-free lighting should be a consideration in the placement of windows and the building orientation. There should be easy access to areas within the library and a logical work-flow pattern should be established. Signage should clearly define the location of specific areas within the whole."<sup>8</sup>

The architectural firm of WBTL had a multiple challenge: to design a functional building for the specialized clientele of an art research library; to establish an appropriate architectural rapport between two separate departments, the Art Library and the Slide Library; to provide an aesthetically elegant exterior taking into consideration the total environment—the landscape architecture of the quad, and the historical reference of the Mall's configuration.

On April 27, 1989, the WBTL issued its first Memorandum, including the following statement:

We believe we understand basic goals of the Program and have proceeded to make some diagrams to record various options for consideration...[T]he primary design goal for the Art Library is to achieve a cohesive functional plan and at the same time a composed, elegant exterior which would greatly reinforce the line of the quadrangle. The new Art Library should be clearly identified as a special place with its exterior entrance but with the appropriate linkages to Voorhees Hall and the Department of Art History and to the related Art Galleries. The architecture does not have to exactly match the existing styles but should make reference to them in a fresh (non-copybook) manner. Great respect should be given to the existing handsome trees although it may not be possible to preserve them all.<sup>8</sup>

A dialogue of three years' duration began between the users and the architects. For all parties, it was fascinating to observe a concept become a physical reality. The architects provided several schematic style

versions for the new building. The users gave each proposed design a name reflecting their perception of each design: "Historic Williamsburg" was very colonial; "Bridgewater Mall" was very Art Deco with a lot of glass; "Sea Captain's Berth" reflected a 'seashore style', with its big round window. The final design incorporated some features of all three: a traditional brick facade perfectly matching its stately neighbors, Voorhees and Murray Halls, a magnificent large modern front window commanding a view of the whole quadrangle, and a good-size round window facing Murray Hall—a distinctive, yet appropriate and elegant total design.

The new Art Library consists of two floors and a mezzanine. The curve of the entryway orients the user to the basic layout of the Library: the main level ahead, the floor below and the mezzanine above. The curve of the entryway is continued in the semi-circular shape of the Information Desk.

The former Art Library facility had no elbow room for staff or users. It gave people a boxed-in feeling. A few prospective employees declined a job offer on the grounds of claustrophobia. The architects of the new facility were asked to project a feeling of space within the modest 16,000 available square feet of the new building. The architects admirably met this requirement. They achieved the desired effect by opening the walls to outside lighting, using a large expanse of glass on the main level, plus a clerestory running across the entire length of the building. The illusion of space was reinforced by two additional measures: a large square opening in the mezzanine floor ascending to the clerestory of the central cupola established significant height over the central portion of the main floor; a half-wall on the side of the old building opened the space to the level below. This concept of openness was applied within each floor as well, thus basically establishing flexible space without walls for easy future adaptation to a variety of functions.

The Information Desk is another outstanding feature in the design of the new facility. It cannot be missed, and it was planned that way. The information desk is meant to have multiple uses. It is large and semi-circular in shape, welcoming to users. It is a place for cooperation in research. The desk has pull-out leaves to provide conferencing space for librarians and students, faculty, or any patron in need. The design of the desk is meant to facilitate the discussion of research projects, setting parameters for on-line searches, or establishing a focus for bibliographic instruction requests. The information desk provides room to peruse rare

book material, and for faculty to review books sent to the Library on approval. In addition, this generous space allows the very limited staff to perform various daily tasks while monitoring the needs of users.

With today's library increasingly reliant on electronic technology to provide access to materials, the Art Library appears to have less in common with traditional concepts of research libraries than with the cockpit of the starship "Enterprise": Computerized equipment is everywhere, permitting "shared access" to resources held by different institutions throughout the country and abroad. The Library can reach out and locate material by means of specialized on-line data bases, such as RLIN, OCLC, DIALOG, WILSONLINE, CARL UNCOVER. And it can deliver a desired text by FAX or ARIEL in a matter of minutes. A visual image can be stored and retrieved in compact form on microfiche, and, soon, on videodisc. Yet the printed work and good quality printed image still retain the magic that on-line information is, as of yet, unable to capture.

Function is a primary consideration in the design of any building. To establish an effective functional facility we had to consider the fact that the Art Library is a non-circulating research collection, which means that users must anticipate spending extended periods of time in the Library. The Library must, therefore, provide a whole range of comfortable accommodations for study and research.

The graduate art history student population (M. A. and Ph.D. candidates) is a major segment of the university served by the Art Library. For these students the Art Library is a second home, often for several years. Therefore, an essential component of the Art Library is the graduate students' carrels. A carrel is the private sanctuary for each graduate student over the span of his or her graduate studies and research. In the new building, the mezzanine was set aside as exclusive space for graduate study containing 24 graduate carrels. An additional 10 carrels are located between the bookstacks and the northern wall of the lower floor. The graduate art history student body grew from 14 in 1970, to 98 in 1992, and thus the need for providing private study areas to the graduate students increased. Seating capacity at individual graduate carrels was expanded from 17 to 34 seats. All are "wet carrels," wired for computer use, individual lamp light, shelf space and lockable storage compartment. All graduate carrels are 48" x 30" in size.

The main level includes an impressive room, set aside for the use of faculty, graduate students, and visiting scholars, with a provision for

assigned individual shelving for a short term use of research material. The Art Library welcomes the visual arts students and faculty from Mason Gross School of Arts, and from other related disciplines, such as landscape architecture, archaeology, and urban planning. Hebrew and Russian area students in art use this Library on a regular basis.

Undergraduate students, art majors and non-majors, do not need reserved seating for prolonged study; however, their needs must also be anticipated, and a comfortable seating for study should be made available. Undergraduate students, as well as other non-graduate users, are accommodated mainly on the lower level in several locations including a magnificent two-storied clerestory reading area. The new facility is planned to increase general seating from 48 seats which were available in the old building, to 100 seats when funds become available for tables and chairs. At present the new library can provide only 68 seats out of the possible 100. Individual carrels, 36" x 24", are also projected for the future use by the undergraduates, when funds become available.

A seminar room has been incorporated into the new Art Library to facilitate lectures, presentations and meetings. It has projection capability. The lack of such accommodation was sorely felt in the old facility. The Art Library is an active participant of the professional organization—Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA). This organization provides a forum for exchange of ideas on vital current issues of concern to the library profession. Art librarianship programs are often held by the New Jersey Chapter of ARLIS on other campuses and museums throughout the State. The Rutgers Art Library will now be able to host professional organization meetings and programs in the new facility. In addition, the Art Library hopes to host professional activities that will be of interest to Rutgers art students and faculty. The seminar room will also be shared occasionally with the Art History Department for teaching purposes.

Besides providing for the comfort of the users, the library's planners had to address the physical preservation of the collections. The issue of paramount importance here is a proper temperature and humidity control system. This has been a matter of long debate. The art librarians opted for the constant flow system, based on the recommendation of the best authorities in the field of environment control in the libraries. The University, however, chose an adjusted variable flow system. The librarians were persuaded to accept this system by the argument that such a system was more energy efficient. It is premature to judge this



system's ultimate performance, but an initial indication of energy efficiency is not encouraging. It seems that radiator heaters have to be activated to overcome the cold air excess.

Since the Art Library is open to daylight, a valid concern was protection of the material against ultra-violet rays, generally known as the UV factor. Several protective measures resolved this problem. The largest expanse of glass on the main level facing the Mall is shaded by the natural canopy of the row of mature elm trees. In addition, the windows have been treated with a protective filter, including the clerestory windows. Furthermore, book shelves are arranged away from direct daylight, with the end stack panels exposed to light.

Another consideration in the spatial planning of the Art Library is the fact that the books are generally over-sized. Approximately one-third of the collection is folio (more than 12") in size, and close to 1,000 volumes are elephant folios (more than 30") in size. Each book requires proper shelving and adequate table space to be viewed properly. Thus, tables must be extra-wide, and seat fewer people than generally accepted. In the future, most of the seating will accommodate four students to a table, 70" long and 48" in width.

A section of specially designed shelving is installed on the main floor to provide for flat shelving of the elephant folios. Shelving is 40" high to allow horizontal space for examination of these folios.

An invaluable segment of the art collection consists of small-size exhibition catalogues, unique to the art field, but often elusive. These publications represent the work of many established living artists, as well as emerging artists, and are extremely important documents for the students of modern art. The new facility established a spacious location for this material on the main floor, providing for direct access and the seating accommodation for examination of this material. The same area accommodates 17,000 files of microfiche, and a microfiche reader-printer.

The Art Library has a valuable rare book collection. The backbone of this collection was established by several important and sizable donations of books by prominent and colorful New Jerseyans, Louis Stern and Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, in particular. Louis Stern was a prominent New Jersey lawyer as well as an art collector. He donated 3,000 volumes in the area of Modern Art, predominantly in French modern art, many of them autographed, limited editions, or books containing original art work. Stern also donated a collection of books on the art work of one of his personal friends, the renowned artist, Marc Chagall. As a symbol of

their friendship, Chagall had designed a special plate for the Stern collection of books. The plate bore an illustration by the artist, as well as the inscription of both friends' names. The books continue to display that distinctive mark of friendship to this day. Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, Douglass alumna, scholar, writer, and critic, donated her valuable collection in American art to the Art Library. The rare books collection languished in the old facility under the most deplorable conditions, in a space where humidity fluctuated between 27 and 97 percent. Now a separate room on the lower level has been designed for this material, with separate controls to insure constant humidity and temperature.

The new Art Library is four times the size of the former. The space is not excessive, by any means, as the former location was filled to the brim, and consolidation of art material from storage and the Alexander Library is anticipated in the near future. To extend the life of this new Art Library compact shelving has been installed throughout the lower floor for future use with a floor-loading capacity of 300/lb. sq. ft. The new Library is functionally sound, aesthetically attractive, well-lighted, and comfortable. The planning process was generally a rewarding experience. The architects, the design and construction facilities administration, the interior design personnel, as well as the construction firm, proved to be consistently responsive to the users' needs and were a congenial group with whom to work. Although not always in agreement, all of the participants were considerate of each other's opinion. The issue was complicated by the fact that the Art Library Addition project was set in motion at a time when severe budgetary constraints were being experienced by the University.<sup>10</sup> The proposed project originally included the Art Library Addition as well as renovations for the Art History Department. Unfortunately, the available funds did not carry the project as far as it was anticipated. The Art History Department renovation will be greatly scaled down. The term "value engineering" became a dreaded expression for the Building Committee's user group during design deliberations: it meant that something else had to be eliminated from the initial plans because it cost too much. For example, "Value engineering" dictated the use of an inexpensive tile for the flooring—no carpets—and exposed cinder-blocks for the walls.

When it became apparent that the project would be short of funds, fundraising efforts were undertaken with the assistance of Nancy Wiencek from the development office of the Rutgers University Libraries. Appeals were made to selected corporations, established artists and art-loving citizens of New Brunswick. Dr. Ute Tellini, a recent graduate

of the Art History Department and a regular library user, came to our assistance. Through her fundraising efforts the library was able to acquire several graduate carrels for the new building.

The Art Library opened its doors to the new facility in September 1992. The user committee believes that both functionally and architecturally, the new Art Library is an award-winning building. It is straightforward, with an easy orientation from the Information Desk to the facility as a whole, yet it is never dull. Through curve and angle, the eye is lead to constantly discover new and interesting elements of architectural design. A sustained and elegant color scheme (almost the Rutgers colors) of black, burgundy, grey and white complements the total image. At the architectural heart of the University, the new Library will, with the new Zimmerli Art Museum, increase the visibility of art on the Rutgers campus. It remains to be seen how the new visibility will affect art scholarship and appreciation in the university community.

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Stubblebine, James, "Art Finds Home: Voorhees Hall Again Proves its Versatility." Rutgers Alumni Monthly, March 1967, 4. Also Eidelberg, Martin, Interview, May 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Jack J. Spector, Marian Burleigh Motley, and Roger Tarman to Dr. Mason W. Gross [for the attention of the Board of Governors], December 12, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Matthew Baigell to Frank Trama, Associate Dean of Rutgers College, July 19, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Matthew Baigell to Hendrik Edelman, University Librarian, May 31, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Dennis Cate to Kenneth Wheeler, Provost, July 14, 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Marcia Anzsperger, President of the Art History Graduate Student Organization, et al [for the Graduate students in Art History], May 11, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> *Art Library Addition Program Document*, April 1989.

<sup>8</sup> WBTU. *Memorandum Phase I: University Art Library Addition, Rutgers, The State University*, April 27, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> The project was funded by the 1988 New Jersey Jobs, Education and Competitiveness Bond Issue.



Fig. 3.1 Rutgers University Art Library (WBTL Architects)

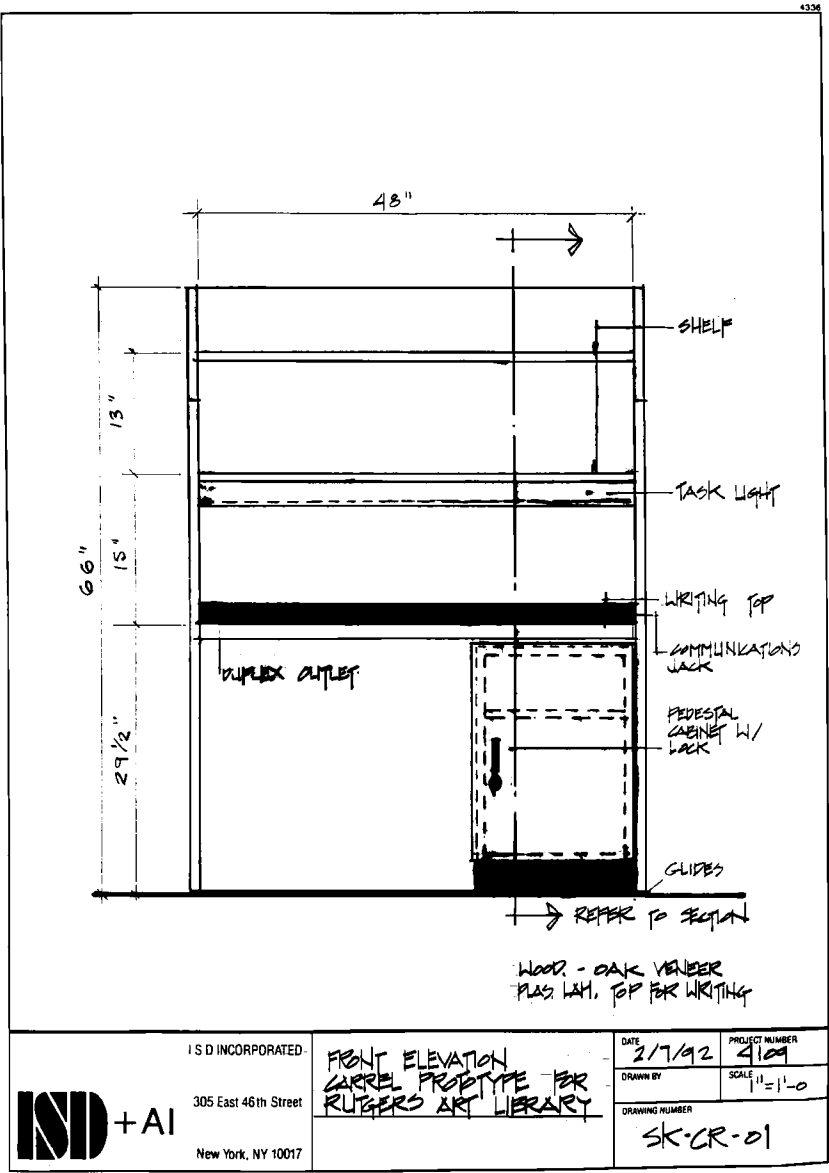


Fig. 3.2 Front Elevation of Carrel Prototype for Rutgers Art Library (Designed by Charles Crawford, isd + ai)