



Report from the Joint Hunter College Senate Master Plan Committee & Library Committee 2018

Introduction:

The Hunter College Senate Master Plan Committee recommended that the principles of participation, transparency, and equity should guide space planning at Hunter College. The renovation of the Library is an opportunity to apply these principles while also enhancing the capability and quality of our space. This Library renovation is of exceptional importance to the core mission of the College (Teaching, Learning, and Research) and it is also a space that is used by nearly all constituencies of the College Community.

Background and Context:

In 2006 & 2007, a Presidential Task Force was convened to study library usage at Hunter, to identify student needs, and make recommendations concerning the physical facility and administration of the library. Guided in part by this document, the Cooperman Library (formerly Wexler) is currently undergoing a comprehensive redesign and renovation. The College contracted with architectural firms to produce a pre-design plan for the library in 2008, following the Task Force recommendations. However, funding for this renovation project has arrived in stepwise fashion, resulting in an iterative process in which floors have been designed and renovated independently of this or any other general project plan. At the time this document was drafted, floors 3, 7, and 6 had been fully renovated. Floor 5 had been designed, and construction was underway.

A centerpiece of the Task Force recommendations was the construction of an Information Commons, which is now a part of Floor 3. The Task Force also recommended the consolidation and relocation of academic support services in proximity to the library, and a substantial increase in the amount of library space designated and separated off for group study. Both of these recommendations have been incorporated on Floors 6 and 7. Finally, the Task Force report acknowledged the need for the library to continue to serve as a welcoming, central hub for student intellectual and social life on campus, a role that is especially vital for libraries on commuter campuses. The popularity of the newly rebuilt sections of the library suggests that the Library is well on its way to fulfilling this role.

While the renovations completed or underway in the library have addressed a number of issues raised by the 2007 Task Force report, which identified significant problems with both the design and maintenance of the physical facility and the shortcomings in the Library's programmatic offerings, one larger issue relates to a general need for planning as part of an ongoing process.

This Report

While the library renovations undertaken thus far have provided many enhancements to College life, future renovations should address changing needs as part of an ongoing process. These should be driven by use patterns gathered by the Library Department and in accordance with standards for libraries in higher education nationwide drawn up by organizations like ACRL. Ideally, regular user surveys will drive both the design and development process. The College should seize this opportunity to further enhance the Library's service to its primary constituencies. The remaining space in the Library will need to be allocated with care in order to avoid painful tradeoffs between vital library programs and features: browsable, intuitive, and efficient book storage; space for the display of current or future special collections; and perhaps most importantly, ample quiet space for individual study, a core library function that remains crucially important, particularly for commuting students.

Thus far, design and planning decisions related to the renovation have been undertaken by a small, informal group of administrators, which includes the VP for Finance, the VP for Facilities Management & Planning, a designate of the Provost's office, the Chief Librarian, and the project architect. We recognize the continuing need for expediency: a streamlined decision-making process has been necessitated by the iterative renovation timeline, which in turn has reflected the availability of funding for the renovation. Nevertheless, we find that the remaining decisions on the renovation of the library would benefit from clearer integration with our mission and the specific needs of the College, as well as adherence to the MPC's key principles of planning, participation, and equity. With these factors in mind, our Committee is issuing 2 recommendations and 6 priorities to guide the remaining renovation.

Recommendations:

- 1) We recommend that at least one member of the Library faculty and at least one member of the faculty at large be included in the team guiding the renovation (with the understanding that this group already includes the Chief Librarian). Both liaisons should be members of the Senate Library Committee and should report back to that body, increasing transparency and information flow in the design process. The liaison from the library should be elected by the library faculty from among the librarians on the Senate Library Committee.
- 2) We recommend that in the near term, the Senate Library Committee takes responsibility for providing consultation, recommendations, and data and analysis on current library usage and future needs to support the redesign of the Library (via two liaisons, as specified in 1). In the long term, the Library Committee will develop a Library Master Plan that takes into consideration the Library strategic plan, plans derived from the wider Hunter community, and our institutional mission.

Priorities for the Future Renovation of the Hunter College Libraries

Our joint committee has also outlined 6 specific priorities to guide both the design and the future planning of the Cooperman Library. These priorities should be considered by the administration and the Library Committee in their future deliberations and continued stewardship of the Cooperman Library.

1. Remaining renovations should prioritize the library functions that support our mission

- a. Projects to consider: Development and maintenance of librarian-directed office, meeting, instructional, and "operational" spaces that are aligned with our core mission and needs as an institution. Support for instruction by the librarians that supports disciplinary faculty, information literacy programming, student study needs, as well as collections development & management. Optimize support for faculty and student research.
- b. Challenges: Balancing the needs within the library, while also balancing the needs of the library within the College as a whole. Determining the most efficient use of the library's space to achieve many different goals given space and budgetary constraints.
- c. Needs: **A plan is needed to determine which core library functions will be emphasized in the future renovations of the Library and this should originate from the Library Department.** Thoughtful, deliberative, and nimble decisions need to be made by the administration in collaboration with the Senate Library Committee and in conjunction with any strategic plans of the Library Department. In addition, the development of a longer-term Library Master Plan by the Library Committee is needed. To determine space needs: an up-to-date assessment of librarian, faculty, and student use of the library, especially as it supports research, teaching, and learning is immediately required. In addition, a collections development and management plan is needed.
- d. MPC: Capability—Availability & Utility & Comfort

2. The Library should be accessible, safe, and comfortable for all.

- a. Projects to consider: Providing adequate seating and study space (limited seating should not be an obstacle to library use by the student body). Enhancing HVAC, safety, lighting, and access. Access

to safe and inclusive restroom facilities. Key card entry for secured spaces like classrooms, offices, and lounges and a larger presence from Public Safety, possibly including a dedicated office in the Library. Dedicated faculty research workspace. 24/7 availability.

- b. Challenges: Implementation and engineering. These issues touch on a number of entities throughout the campus and CUNY.
- c. Needs: A conservative estimate of seats needed to accommodate unhindered use by the student body and faculty. Assessment of student safety reports, gate counts and use of existing research. Dedicated library space for faculty. Better connection between library and non-library personnel.
- d. MPC: Capability—Availability & Utility & Comfort

3. The Library should enhance the discoverability and “browsability” of all materials.

- a. Projects to consider: Reorganized stacks space, high-density stacks and archival material.
- b. Challenges: inherent tension for space usage because some spaces cannot be multipurposed (e.g. stacks space cannot become meeting space).
- c. Needs: Plan for collections management based on usage data and emerging trends and technology. Re-organize stacks to enhance discoverability (e.g. call number proximity). High-density or electronic storage.
- d. MPC: Capability—Availability

4. The Library should have a cohesive design.

- a. Projects to consider: Core library functions and programs should be logically and intuitively distributed across the library's levels and within each floor. This may include color, “brand,” and signage uniformity. Design elements should reinforce commitment to access, as in point 2 above.
- b. Challenges: The “floor by floor” nature of the past renovation, e.g. differences between 3 and 6/7.
- c. Needs: Enhance uniformity in the remaining spaces and make a commitment to access. Unify signage within Library, if not across the entire campus. Input from Library Department, planners, & architects. Consideration should be given to durability and ease-of-maintenance of the designs.
- d. MPC: Quality—Campus Identity & Aesthetics, and Capability—Availability & Utility & Comfort

5. The Library should prioritize the adaptability and flexibility of spaces.

- a. Projects to consider: Designing modifiable spaces that can adapt to schedules of demand e.g. computer classroom space that can become computer lab space when not needed for instruction. Also designing spaces that can be adapted to future uses, such as a re-evaluation of novel uses of the Information Commons.
- b. Challenges: predicting needs; adjusting, scheduling, and maintaining these flexible spaces. Making sure that these spaces have adequate services (wifi, electrical plugs, etc.).
- c. Needs: A clear assessment of the spaces are the most desirable, needed, and likely to be maintained adequately. This should be based on analysis of usage data and emerging trends with info from the architects, including data from the 7th Floor. Study of Library policy on food.
- d. MPC: Capability—Availability

6. The Library should be connected to the street level and Hunter’s exterior spaces.

- a. Projects to consider: Allowing ground floor access to the Library (e.g. via Poses Park), thereby increasing campus identity and meeting student desire for more comfortable outdoor space that includes food service options. A new Hunter presence at ground level could be exceptionally high impact and provides a number of new opportunities for community engagement.
- b. Challenges: Cost, implementation, and potentially community concern.
- c. Needs: Feasibility study that includes cost, engineering, and community issues. Consultation with other CUNY campuses that utilize street level urban spaces.
- d. MPC: Quality—Campus Identity & Aesthetics, and MPC: Capability—Availability & Utility & Comfort

Participation:

One of the MPC Principles relates to participation. For the development of this document, two Senate committees were brought together (Master Plan Committee and Library Committee). The committee members were drawn from across the campus.

MPC <u>Chair:</u> Michael E. Steiper, Anthropology <u>Committee Members</u> Marnia Lazreg, Sociology Adrienne Alaie, Biological Sciences Nicora Placa, Curriculum & Teaching Jeff Mongrain, Art & Art History Nancy Eng, SLPA S.J. Dodd, SSW Andrea Baden, Anthropology Amy Chen, Student Katrina Bakhl, Student Stephon Odom, Student Sandra-May Flowers, Student Priscilla Amanquah, Student	Library Committee <u>Chair:</u> Michael O. Benediktsson, Sociology <u>Committee Members</u> Weigang Qiu, Biological Sciences Michelle Macroy-Higgins, SPLA Terry Mizrahi, SSW Danise Hoover, Library Philip Swan, Library Peter Moller, Psychology Wendy Raver, Religion Mason Brown, Library Betsy Laganis, Student Brianna Finley, Student Marcus Artigliere, Education Leigh Jones, English
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