

NOTRE
DAME

LAWYER

SUMMER 2001

Bridging
Our Past and Our Future



The Search for Space

I just finished reading the first volume of Arthur M Schlesinger Jr.'s memoir, *A LIFE IN THE 20TH CENTURY: INNOCENT BEGINNINGS, 1917-1970*. As a compulsive librarian, not only in my work life but also at home, I had to place this volume with the other biographies on my bookshelves.

Unfortunately, there was no room on those three shelves for either the first volume or the other several that are sure to follow. To make room, I had to shift all of my wife Alice's bird books, her volumes on home design and her collection on women's literature, as well as my histories of American warfare — several hundred books in all — to make room for the Schlesinger work. Similarly, several months ago when I came home with the new 17-inch computer monitor, I discovered that the desk top upon which I intended to place it was of insufficient width to accommodate the new equipment, so a larger replacement was necessary. This replacement, I am learning, will probably impinge on Alice's sewing space and my daughter Sarah's workout equipment.

To a large extent, my experiences with these minor domestic space issues are a microcosmic analogue of the issues facing the Kresge Law Library every day. In our library, the issues of space are complicated by the quantities of material acquired by a leadership law school, the size of the existing collections and the impact of new technologies on a research family that exceeds 600 members among the law school faculty and students alone.

During the past year, the library acquired not the dozen or so new books that I may have received for my home library, but almost one-thousand times that number — 11,907 print volumes, on every aspect of the law. While many of these books were new volumes of law reports, revised statutes or periodicals — the library subscribes to nearly 6,000 of these serials and anticipates their arrival — we had no idea at the beginning of the year of the specific legal subject matter of the

4,347 new titles we ultimately acquired. This, of course, presented us with a challenge similar to the problem I faced in my own home library, but vastly more complex because of the number of volumes involved.

If a library has no more than 85 percent of its shelf space occupied by books, empty shelving is usually scattered throughout the entire library so that no matter what the subject matter of a new acquisition, space can be found in the right place or sufficiently proximate so that shifting volumes to find room is unnecessary or requires little more effort than finding space for my new Schlesinger memoir. On the other hand, when shelf-space occupancy reaches above 85 percent of capacity, almost every day new books arrive that cannot be located in logical order without shifting hundreds, if not thousands, of books to create a small opening. Although we attempted to extend the book capacity of the library — by placing one-third of its holdings in compact storage and by initiating an aggressive plan of purchasing material in miniaturized microforms — with 93.3 percent of all shelf space occupied, the library has reached the point of tremendous inefficiency caused by crowded shelving.

When our last addition was being planned in 1985-86, we decided that maximizing the number of seats in the library, with many patrons at carrels, was the most

desirable way to proceed. When the expanded library opened in 1987, we provided study spaces for the entire law student body and a sufficient number of carrels to seat every second- and third-year student. Unfortunately, it has now become apparent that the smallish carrels we had acquired in order to provide this number of seats cannot adequately meet the needs of the modern law student who needs room not only for books, but also for the laptop that is becoming an essential tool for many students. Moreover, we found the available library space insufficient to house so many carrels without crowding them into every nook and cranny, and even into spaces that truly should have been traffic aisles. Only in the library's historic main reading room, with its great arched space, is library seating appropriate to a major research facility. The library also lacks specialized spaces for collaborative study, visiting scholars and other members of the academic community outside the library who have need for legal materials in their research.

Like the space problem for my monitor, the 1987 addition of the building did not anticipate the widespread use of electronics in education, the birth of the Internet or the impact of computers on space and furnishings. From one small vendor-sponsored training lab with eight machines for research and two Apple IIc computers for word processing, the library now has about 85 computers, with nearly 60 designated for student use, augmented by an additional 100 computer drops, and a developing wireless network to support personal laptops. This increase in computer-support systems has also led to the constant cobbling together of space and the constant redesign of furnishings in attempts to meet our growing and developing needs. In fact, at the beginning of the 2001-02 academic year, students now occupy their fifth computer cluster location in 14 years. In order to create this space, however, the entire National Reporter System had to be moved into compact shelving in the basement of the library — space that we made available by sending 20,000 less significant volumes into off-site

BY ROGER F. JACOBS

ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES,
PROFESSOR OF LAW AND DIRECTOR OF THE KRESGE LAW LIBRARY

storage.

In 1987, the distinguished Boston architectural firm of Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbot determined that the library contained 28,158 square feet of usable space. This space ranked the Kresge Law Library 134th of 183 schools approved by the American Bar Association. When compared to 13 peer leadership schools, the library has less space, by half, than the average library size for these schools. In fact, the peer law school with a usable area closest in size to Notre Dame has 20,000 additional square feet for its library. With these comparisons, is it any wonder that our space is exhausted? How can a library with such limited capacity respond to pressures for additional book storage, more spacious accommodations for readers, enhanced physical support for technology

microform collections will each be doubled to accommodate 600,000 books and 400,000 book equivalents respectively. One-third of the library book collection will continue to be housed in compact storage. This number may seem grand, particularly in an age where the conventional wisdom suggests that electronic information will soon replace books. When this shelving is made available, however, we shall approach the median capacity that our peers reached some time ago. Moreover, in recent years, our library has been averaging about 4,000 titles and nearly 11,000 new print volumes per year. We anticipate maintaining that growth rate into the future. Additionally, as we continue to build what we hope will be a leadership research collection, we expect that regular acquisitions will be supplemented

seating with unparalleled cachet.

The new library, while continuing to build a stellar print collection, will not stint on technological advances. The complete wired or wireless networking of all library workstations will be central to this effort. Additionally, the library's existing automated library system, which supports electronic acquisition of materials, controls in-processing and routing, provides cataloging records, and supplies numerous administrative reports, will be supplemented by an electronic teaching facility. This teaching lab will provide library faculty with the appropriate tools to introduce students to the power of computer-assisted legal research as offered by the two major legal-information vendors, and a host of additional resources now becoming available on the Internet. This facility will allow

When renovations are complete, the library will offer significantly more seating than presently available, it will be designed with the needs of the law student in mind, and it will provide a spacious and inviting setting.

and space for appropriate staff? The answer, of course, lies in the exciting recent announcement of a major expansion of the Law School building.

The accepted design plan will maintain the centrality of the Law School's historic building while doubling its size with a new and complimentary collegiate gothic structure on the site now occupied by the post office. As noted in the article by Dean Patricia A. O'Hara '74 J.D. that begins on page 3, the existing and new buildings will be connected by a three-story double arch that will provide a dramatic entry into the north end of the DeBartolo Quad. The current plan is to place in the new structure all the Law School classrooms, administrative and faculty offices, and space for all student activities. The removal of all of these functions from the historic building will then allow us to completely remodel the 1930 structure, with its 1973 and 1987 additions, to respond to all of the library requirements mentioned above.

The details of space assignments in the new library are yet to be determined, but we are assured that all of the needs identified by the Shepley Bulfinch study can be met in the remodeled building. Shelving for print volumes and storage for

by the acquisition of significant special collections underwritten by Law School benefactors. Consequently, notwithstanding the increasing number of legal titles available in electronic form, the need to shelve sizable quantities of print volumes must be anticipated well into the foreseeable future.

Among the most obvious changes in the new library is more generous seating for library users. At the moment, we plan to provide 626 workstations in a host of configurations, including seats at tables, seats at 380 more-spacious carrels, special enclosed carrels for graduate students, and 20 of the extremely popular study rooms designed for two-to-six-person study groups. We have also set aside space to provide small offices for the increasing number of visiting scholars that spend a month to a year doing research at the Law School. All of these workstations will be outfitted with power and wired or wireless data connections for the ubiquitous computer support expected of modern legal education. When renovations are complete, the library will offer significantly more seating than presently available, it will be designed with the needs of the law student in mind, and it will provide a spacious and inviting setting. It will be library

Notre Dame to match the very best schools in preparing students to be immediately productive attorneys upon graduation.

The remodeled library will also ameliorate other, but possibly less obvious, shortcomings. The entrance to the library and the primary service desk will be located at the point where patrons enter the building. This entry will offer a spacious and welcoming invitation to the immense treasures that lie within. The Law School's rare book treasures, now stored in the Hesburgh Library, which provides both physical security and environmental protection, will be returned to the Law School and placed in spaces appropriate for their storage and use. The traffic flow within the library will be adjusted to overcome the present labyrinth of spaces, dead-ends and meandering paths users have had to master to use the collection effectively. Clearly, at the end of the day, my decade-long mantra of "our library has eight levels, 23 discrete spaces, and 17 exit doors" may give way to a simpler and more appealing description: "We offer a four-floor, 80,000 square-foot, efficient and open library with seating, shelving and technology well-suited to serve future generations of students and faculty."