Built By the Book
for the Book:
A New Perspective on the
Urban University Library

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Agenda

Building an Urban University Library
Old environment
Pre-design Phase
Design/Construction
Initial Observations
Next Steps
Old Environment

- Sawyer Library 1998 - 2006
  - served a population of 5,000 FTE students (more than 7,000 heads)
  - no designated reading areas
  - extensive hard (study) seating
  - little access to natural light
  - 75% of space “underground”
Old Environment

- Sawyer Library 1998 - 2006
  - uninviting entrance
  - not conducive for reading and browsing
  - socializing overrode studying
  - a “harsh” environment
Pre-design

- Must be on Beacon Hill
- Must be near classrooms
- Must be near faculty offices
- Land acquisition cost on Beacon Hill
  - averages $1,000 per square foot
Pre-design

- Densely-packed urban area
- Renovate an existing building
- Costs to renovate
  - approximately $400 per square foot
Pre-design

- President identified the priority May 2002
- Library staff’s building program
  - include a variety of reading/study areas
  - include comfortable chairs
  - bring interest back for the book
- No space identified or available
- But then..........
Design/Construction

- 13 story office becomes available
- The Library would
  - occupy three floors
  - 40,000 square feet
  - construction/furnishings budget of $12.0M
  - open May 2006
Design/Construction

- The floor plan
  - three floors
  - abundant natural light
- Focus of design
  - designing comfortable reading areas in the three-sided area that jutted out onto the Granary Burial Ground on each floor
Design/Construction

- Three “Granary” Reading Rooms
  - contain lounge chairs
  - two-seat sofas
  - end and coffee tables
  - working gas fireplace

- Walls
  - wallpapered
  - windows are framed in cherry wood

- Hard ceilings include wash lights
Third floor Granary

- built-in shelving with bound periodicals to differentiate it from the other floors
- create an “old reading room” environment
- close to current newspapers/magazines rack
3rd Floor Granary

Newspaper area
Design/Construction

- Each of the reading rooms is adjacent to print reference, serials, and general collections.
- No visible technology.
- Wireless-saturated for laptops.
Design/Construction

- Poetry Center
  - the Zieman Poetry Collection
  - high visibility to students/faculty/visitors
Design/Construction

- There are comfortable reading areas in the corners facing King’s Chapel.
- Additionally, there is comfortable seating in most south alcove areas facing the burial ground.
Observations

- Reading areas
  - more activity than expected
  - students seek out “comfort”
  - students move the furniture around
  - group study rooms are popular for reading / studying
Observations

- Lighting is
  - indirect
  - less harsh
  - more comfortable

- Extends time students “read”
Observations

- Arrangement and mixture of tables and carrels
- Quieter areas result in encouraging and facilitating personal reading
- Location of the carrels and tables
  - between the windows and the stacks
Conclusions

- Students are drawn to high comfort
- Utilization rate – students “stay”
  - comfortable seating
  - natural lighting
  - influence noise patterns
  - all add to time spent “in the library”
- Students browse