

U.C. Berkeley

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Building for the Future

A Place

Some would try to make the case that in this era of instant Internet access to information, library buildings are becoming irrelevant to the user.

In fact, paradoxically, the opposite is true. The Library as a place seems more important than ever. Use of reading rooms and other facilities is up. Students especially seem to identify with their favorite place to study. When the new Earth Sciences and Maps Library opened this summer, students immediately spotted a particularly welcoming niche, a window bench with a view to the Golden Gate Bridge, and have kept it steadily occupied ever since. As symbolic monuments to learning, new national libraries in both the United Kingdom and France represent a source of national pride and history.

Ellen Meltzer, Director of the Teaching Library, tells me that Moffitt Library, in spite of its ragged edges and furniture worn out after 30 years of hard use, is another favorite spot. Students head for the solitude of the fifth floor stacks, with its wide window vistas, and find a cozy nook. Though library buildings haven't lost their purpose as places for storage, their normal configuration is changing and group study rooms (once unheard of), computer centers, and teaching classrooms are deemed necessities. In fact, we have named three group study rooms in the *David Pierpont Gardner Main Stacks* in Doe Library in honor of generous friends to the Library: **Phyllis Johnson O'Shea '49**, **Charlene Conrad Liebau '60**, and **William T. '52** and **Ruth Moosman Hart '54**.

Faculty and University administrators recognize that libraries still need buildings -- Cal's libraries occupy almost a million square feet of space in 22 separate buildings. Two Library projects, the *Music Library* and the *East Asian Library and Studies Center*, have been identified as top priorities in the University's current capital *Campaign For a New Century*. (We will report to you next year on the progress of these two projects.) Down the line we need to restore the "great rooms" on the second floor of Doe Library and reconfigure the old "core space", where the Doe Library stacks were formerly located, into new facilities. Finally, the Bancroft Library's existing space needs to be expanded, seismically retrofitted, and modernized.

Three smaller projects that we have just completed, or will complete in a few months, illustrate my point.

The *Free Speech Movement Café* will open in January 2000, as part of the Moffitt Undergraduate Library. It has been conceived and designed as a central meeting place for undergraduates to gather, socialize, debate, and learn. Funded by **Stephen M. Silberstein '64, '77**, it is anticipated that the café will become a campus hub for free expression of ideas and dialogue.

In addition, the café will present to the campus community exhibitions, lectures, and readings.

Designed for more traditional purposes, the reading room providing *Graduate Services* at the west end of Doe Library has already opened, and the **Rosberg Reading Room** (formerly the Rosberg Library of International and Area Studies) will open in spring 2000. Typical of the times, both of these rooms will allow users to switch easily between online and printed materials, whichever is more convenient and useful.

Finally, the **A.F. Morrison Memorial Library**, with its wonderful wainscoting and comfortable chairs, reopened after having been closed for the last two years to retrofit the north end of Doe Library. Talk about the importance of Library as place! Morrison is, I think, one of the spaces on campus for which many generations of Cal students and alumni have the greatest affection and attachment. It seems to be the first place that alumni recall when they enter Doe, and their memories often include discovery of a favorite piece of music or poem found in the Morrison collections. Welcome back!

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Last update 03/03/05. Server manager: [contact](#)