

“We provide flexible library spaces that promote academic study, reflection, creativity, and social interactions.”

Rolvaag Library Space Needs: A Planning Outline

Statement of Need

As the technologies, services, and culture of information-seeking evolve, the St. Olaf Libraries must be poised to respond to these changes in order to advance our students’ pursuit of academic excellence -- an integral part of St. Olaf’s mission. The current physical arrangement of our libraries’ services must be modified to address current and anticipated changes in student services, user expectations, institutional collaboration with Carleton College, digital scholarship, and staffing models.

This recommendation contains many proposed Action Items, some of which should commence immediately, and others that will require funding and more deliberate execution. The recommendation repeatedly calls for open dialog and collaboration, and frequently demands that we be forward-thinking in anticipation of changes yet to occur.

Vision & Objectives

As the planning stages continue, the task force recommends basing decisions on these concepts:

Hub Concept:

We propose a Patron Services Hub in Rolvaag Library that is comprised of the following services:

- Circulation
- Interlibrary Loan
- Research Services
- Information Technology
- The Writing Center

The Learning Hub will be located on the main library floor, in the flow of traffic, and immediately visible from the entrance. Flexible, semi-private consultation spaces should be included as part of this model. Our patrons will benefit greatly from a seamless integration of services comprising elements from research/writing, technology, and traditional loan services. Physical proximity of these services will alleviate patron confusion over where to get assistance as well as enable speedy referrals. In addition, patron services will be enhanced by any incidental cross-training of staff which may occur in a combined service point.

ACTIONS:

The Circulation and Reference Departments will work collaboratively to cross-train both students and staff in an effort to bring us closer to a seamless integration of services. This collaboration will benefit our users, who currently struggle to understand which

service point addresses which of their needs, and will also benefit future space planning by helping staff explore the possibilities and benefits offered by more deliberate collaborative work. This work should commence immediately.

Circulation and IT Help Desk will continue to work together to train student employees to maximize our strengths and ensure that public service expectations and philosophies are consistent between the two service points.

Continued dialog is necessary between the library and Academic Support Center to determine the most appropriate placement of ASC services within the library. Many conversations on this topic have occurred over the past 2-3 years, but it remains unclear if the ASC can and should be located on the main floor of Rolvaag Library. A small group of representatives from the library and ASC should pursue this issue in the Fall 2014. Roberta Lembke and Mary Cisar should lead these discussions.

Need to highlight role of Special Collections in future design:

In the next three years, archives and special collections will acquire greater visibility within the library and become a cornerstone of its unique identity. During this time, the autonomous special collections at St. Olaf (the Norwegian-American Historical Association, the Shaw-Olson Center for College History, and the Hong Kierkegaard Library) will likely pursue operational integration with the library. Rolvaag Memorial Library can facilitate this integration and accommodate the expansion, promotion, preservation, and accessibility of the archives and special collections with the following recommendations:

ACTIONS:

Establish the autonomous collections of NAHA, Archives, and the Kierkegaard Library within Rolvaag Library, thereby facilitating operational efficiencies and enabling the autonomous collections to share public spaces and workspaces. This can be done by re-establishing the boundaries of Rolvaag Library, rather than moving existing collections. We recommend re-opening the stairwell on the south side of building to allow library users to pass easily from Level 3 of Rolvaag Library down to the area currently occupied by NAHA, Archives, and the Kierkegaard Library.

Create public spaces, including an exhibit space, classroom, and reading room, to be shared by Rolvaag Library and the autonomous collections.

Design workspaces, including a digitization studio, staging area, storage space, and climate-stabilized vault space, shared by the library and the autonomous collections.

Shared public spaces and workspaces will 1) encourage more efficient operations within and between the various archives and special collections; 2) strengthen the conceptual links between the individual collections and heighten the profile of all the special collections at St. Olaf; and 3) enable researchers, teachers, and curators to easily work among the various collections.

Digital Scholarship Spaces:

Thanks to enterprising faculty, energetic staff, and the Mellon Foundation grant for *Digital Humanities on the Hill*, digital humanities (DH) is thriving at St. Olaf. A major goal of the DH Team is to leverage the resources provided by the Mellon grant to create a sustainable service model supporting digital work. As our services evolve and expand, so should our spaces. Because of its geographic and intellectual centrality to the campus, Rolvaag Memorial Library is an ideal location to create the spaces necessary to support digital scholarship:

ACTIONS:

Establish a centralized, flexible suite of spaces to support digital scholarship.

The suite of spaces should include:

- an expanded Media Lab
- a technologically robust classroom
- a technologically robust conference/seminar room
- minimal office space
- various workspaces for smaller groups
- a “white space” (a gallery space to display digital art and scholarship, to hold small events, and to socialize).

The services and suite of spaces should be

- managed by the DH Team
- to the extent possible, available to all members of the St. Olaf community during library hours
- maximally flexible, to accommodate changing patron and administrative needs over both the long-term and the short-term.

Staff Space & IT presence within the library:

Staff space should be designed with key adjacencies in mind between staff positions as well as between staff and student workers. In order to achieve the maximum level of efficiency, we recognize the need for both collaborative open space as well as quiet contained work areas. While some functions fit well into a certain type of space on a more permanent basis, we imagine that some staff could move between spaces depending on the task at hand. Similarly, some staff space near the third floor hub could be rotated rather than permanently assigned. As some staff work spaces become more structurally open, a separately available staff commons area will be important in order to reduce noise and environmental contaminants in designated work areas. Above all, staff spaces must be flexible in order to meet our current needs as well as to allow for future changes in roles and positions and further collaboration with Carleton and other partner organizations. **Consortial dialog on future directions with staffing and space use will be critical.**

Given our increasing collaboration and the need to offer more seamless service to our community, Information Technologies should provide a much stronger forward-facing presence in Rolvaag Library. Incorporating the IT Help Desk adjacent to the higher traffic service points in the library is strongly desired. Ideally this move would also move the IT offices to be in close proximity to this new Help Desk location, with the caveat that all IT staff remain close to one

another. Along with creating a more public presence in Rolvaag, IT also would like to make more technology available to the general community. This may include moving the Media Lab in to the library shell where it can be more accessible in a higher traffic location within the Library proper, as well as having more technology available to use or checkout. IT also needs to maintain a secure location for storing and servicing technology, as well as have easy access to the building's loading dock.

ACTIONS

Hire a space design consultant and/or architect with experience designing or redesigning libraries.

Determine whether it is feasible to relocate all Rolvaag Library and IT staff to a common location/floor. This will require expertise from a professional space planner, an open exploration of alternative office plans, and frank dialog between library and IT staff.

Identify a small group of Bridge staff, including Directors, to have a forward-thinking conversation about the direction of the consortium and how space planning might be impacted. Any planning of staff/departmental space must be informed by an understanding of how increased collaboration will impact our work and space.

Classroom/Teaching Space:

Teaching will continue to be an integral part of the services the libraries provide, and to that end, spaces dedicated to this purpose are essential. Because teaching approaches, methods, needs, and technologies are constantly changing, the group recommends **four** classrooms of **varying types and sizes** (e.g. for seminar/conference, workshop, special collections, information literacy/lab, etc.), each equipped with **flexible, movable furniture** and outfitted to **accommodate evolving technology** as best as possible. These classrooms would be shared by the many offices/departments residing in the Rolvaag Library shell: Library, IT, Digital Scholarship initiatives, NAHA, Kierkegaard, and Archives.

ACTIONS

As above, hire a space design consultant and/or architect with experience designing or redesigning libraries. Give careful consideration to teaching spaces when working with consultant/architect.

User Needs:

Current spaces need to be modified to include more group study rooms (reservable, if possible), a minimum of 4 classrooms in the Library proper, open group study spaces that incorporate technology such as view screens, and designated areas for cell phone use throughout the building. Open spaces should be amenable to both study and socialization, with more hard and soft furnishings plus individual standing desks. The proliferation of portable technology requires an increase in outlets and charging stations in convenient locations. A "graduated quiet area" schematic should be designed to reduce ambient noise when moving away from the Learning Hub. The overall effect should be that of a welcoming, visually pleasing environment.

ACTIONS

Continue to document and track statistics on current space usage. Statistics on current use will help inform upcoming decisions about how much space should be allocated to study rooms and open seating in future building configurations.

Identify a small group of staff to send on site visits to peer institution libraries that excel at addressing user needs through thoughtful space planning.

Branch libraries

As trends in library services continue to demand more centralized, collaborative spaces, the St. Olaf Libraries should consider possible changes in the role of branch libraries on campus.

ACTIONS

Evaluate the current branch library systems prior to any renovation of Rolvaag Memorial Library, as well as explore the potential benefits and drawbacks of incorporating branch library services and collections into the evolving Rolvaag Library space. This analysis might include careful attention to circulation statistics at each branch and gate count statistics.

Other Action Items

In addition to the items outlined above, the task force recommends the following actions:

Explore ways off-site storage might serve our libraries and our collaborative partnership with Carleton College. We believe that Carleton College's Gould Library is similarly challenged to find sufficient shelfspace for their print collection. Identify other departments, outside of the library, that might likewise benefit from off-site storage shared by the two colleges.

Engage in conversations with Carleton's library about future consortial space needs.

Establish "aesthetics committee" to address issues of aesthetic upkeep within the libraries. This group would be allocated funding from our operating budget.

Explore the location(s) of vault space(s) (for HVAC, risk assessment, accessibility) with a careful consideration to consolidating the three separate vault spaces that currently exist within the building.