

# RENOVATING D'ANGELO CREATING THE MODERN LAW LIBRARY

Students have been grumbling for a while about the inadequate study and meeting space at the D'Angelo Law Library. The vast majority of law students use laptops now, and since they are no longer restricted to computers at home they have moved back into the Library to study and meet with study groups. But efforts to retrofit the D'Angelo Law Library tower to accommodate new technologies have met with limited results.

Architects and designers faced a considerable challenge transforming the Library tower into a comfortable and technologically accessible space. The renovation plan calls for allocating half of the third floor to a new student services suite, and replacing large sections of book stacks with study and conference areas. The problem is what to do with all those books.

The changes underway at the D'Angelo Law Library, however, are less about rehabbing and more about creating the modern law library. Such a transition is both encouraged and complicated by the rise in importance of digital media.

#### WHO NEEDS BOOKS?

The notion that all resources for legal research are available online has become widely accepted. Many law libraries

have even concluded that digital media represent the better value compared with the expenses of housing a print collection. Stanford Law School, for example, no longer retains most law journals: they buy current journals, but discard most after five years. Stanford's law library has also withdrawn its state official reports. Most law firm libraries have shed much of their print collections as well.

With vast amounts of information searchable in hundreds of ways, the rise of digital media has undoubtedly transformed scholarship. Randal Picker, '85, the Paul H. and Theo Leffmann Professor of Commercial Law, discovered an interesting repository in the Google Book database: full text versions of Congressional Records. Before the Internet, finding these records involved a lot of reading, but now they are fully searchable online. A few keystrokes in Google Books helped Picker locate specific information in the Congressional Record. "And then," Picker said with a laugh, "I went and got the printed volumes to work from. It is much easier to search digital information, but you need specific sets of keywords or phrases. Print allows you to browse, which can be very useful because you don't always know exactly what to look for."

Picker's fall 2006 class on antitrust law may shed some light on how student preferences are evolving. He does not assign a casebook for his class. Instead, students can choose whether to download course materials from his web site or purchase a photocopied course pack. "It may be that students today don't need all that paper," Picker said. "It will be interesting to watch their choices."

#### THE DOWNSIDE OF DIGITAL

But digital media has its limits. Electronic casebooks have not been successful; students still prefer hard copies when they must read long text. Data aggregators such as LexisNexis are not libraries; they do not serve as repositories of knowledge. They make decisions regarding content based on other criteria. LexisNexis recently stopped providing articles from American Lawyer Media, publishers of *American Lawyer*, *National Law Journal*, and *Legal Times*. A researcher might locate an article online one day, but be unable to find it again because the aggregator removed it. LexisNexis also routinely removes the earlier years of state statutes and session laws because of low usage rates. This policy is not a problem for most practicing lawyers, but it can be a serious obstacle for students and scholars.

"The same thing can happen with print," said Judith Wright, Associate Dean for Library and Information Services at the D'Angelo Law Library. "Books can and do go missing, but they are relatively easy to either replace or locate in another library. In addition to the dangers of relying on commercial vendors with financial motives, digital archives are fragile in a different way. You may not know a resource isn't available until you click the link and discover the file is corrupt, or the link is bad or just gone." True digital archiving is expensive and a challenge to manage because the data, software, and hardware need frequent migration and upgrades.

Digital resources also face issues of reliability because of how easy they are to "fix." Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, is a good illustration of the temporal nature of digital media—everyone can and does correct everyone else. In theory, and very often in practice, this constant revision improves available information. But a Wikipedia entry can also read one thing one day and something entirely different the next. One person's fix is another's revanchism. Law depends upon reliable citation, so the transient nature of electronic information is cause for concern.

Last year, the University conducted an extensive survey to investigate how students and faculty used available resources. The survey was part of an effort to plan for the future of campus libraries. Professor Andrew Abbott,

AM '75, PhD '82, chaired the research group. "The noncorrelation of a student's electronic everyday life with his or her research practices surprised most of us," he wrote, "and the powerful positive correlation between electronic- and traditional-research practices was quite unexpected."

Understanding that students, faculty, and researchers use both print and digital resources led the University to continue expanding its digital holdings, while establishing a formal commitment to print.

#### THE PLEDGE TO SAVE PRINT RESOURCES

The University of Chicago Library—which includes the D'Angelo Law Library—is one of a handful of libraries in the country that is formally committed to preserving print resources. To facilitate this commitment, the University will build an addition to the Regenstein Library—a high-density automated storage facility in which books are shelved by size, tracked by barcode, and retrieved by

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robots. This ambitious project—known in Hyde Park as the Automated Storage Retrieval or ASR—will ultimately house 3.5 million volumes, giving the University libraries a combined capacity of over 10 million volumes, one of the largest print collections in North America.

Internationally renowned architect Helmut Jahn will design the building. Douglas Baird, the Harry A. Bigelow Distinguished Service Professor of Law and a former Law School dean, served on the committee that selected Jahn for this project. "The challenge," Baird said, "was to create a building that accommodates the technology while respecting the site and the University's traditions. Jahn's plan demonstrated that he understood this combined commitment. The print collections will be safe and accessible, the building will accommodate new and emerging technologies, but its most striking public feature will be a spectacular reading room—one that we felt was perfectly in keeping with the University's intellectual traditions."

The University is set to break ground on this facility in autumn of 2007. The site will house 200,000 books from the D'Angelo Law Library—thirty percent of the current collection.

## BOOKS ON HOLD

With long-term storage solutions mapped out, law librarians could create a plan of action for renovating the D'Angelo Law Library. The last few years have been spent in preparation: librarians undertook the daunting task of deciding which books, monographs, and journals would stay in the collection; which would stay in the tower or in

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compact shelving, which would be sent to the ASR; which would be digitized; and which would be deaccessioned. They removed duplicate copies from the collection, donating most to other libraries. These donations included the 2,500 volumes sent to Tulane University to help rebuild their law library after the destruction brought by Hurricane Katrina and 30,000 volumes sent to the University of Hawaii to replace books lost to the recent flooding there as well.

Other parts of the collection will sit in “dark storage”—an interim, off-site space—until they can be settled in the ASR. Most of the information in these books is available

digitally, which should alleviate concerns that large portions of the collection will be inaccessible. In addition, the downtown Chicago law libraries—Chicago Kent, DePaul, John Marshall, Loyola, and Northwestern—still retain their print collections. Because of the University of Chicago’s commitment to print, these law libraries are expected to deaccession large portions of their print collections in coming years, relying as needed on the collections housed in the ASR through traditional interlibrary loan programs.

In the short term, students are still coping with a scarcity of study space. But the Law School has solutions to mitigate the crunch. “Students are free to study in the classrooms whenever they are not in use for class or meetings,” Levmore said. “They can use the classrooms for both individual and group study. We went through the previous of renovations to make the classrooms cutting edge and comfortable, and we hope they will make full use of those spaces. But if students prefer a library environment, they are also welcome to study in any of the other libraries on campus, where all online materials from our library will be available to them via their laptops.”

The path to the modern law library is marked with obstacles, from the seemingly mundane issue of storage to the challenges of technology. But overcoming these challenges and inconveniences now will pay vast dividends for future generations of students and scholars.

