

Shannon Library Renovations, 2018 Final Report to Administration





ST. THOMAS MORE COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Office of the Library Director, Dr. Donna Brockmeyer

To: Administration Committee Members

Date: January 30, 2018

Re: Final Library Renovation Report

From: Dr. Donna Brockmeyer

It has been my pleasure, and indeed my vocation, to have served St. Thomas More College during its Renovation of the North addition and Library expansion. I was advised by my supervisor to document my contributions in my Yearly Report of Activities, which I have done. For consistency, I would also like to document this for the Administration Committee.

I would like to begin by thanking the Library Committee, Dean Arul Kumaran, Dr. Michael Cichon and Dr. Bohdan Kordan for their support and enthusiasm. I would also like to thank my staff, specifically Amanda Gieni and Dorothy Abernethy, as well the student desk assistants, especially Marina Ellis, who all contributed a great deal. Dorothy was an affirmative voice to the renovation ideas and kept circulation services going throughout this process. Amanda was the mastermind of the book storage and tracking and maintains access to the off-site storage today. Marina Ellis is an extraordinary student desk assistant who, with her team, labored through the packing and moving of books, each single item tracked and accounted for, and then waded through “the flood” with the stamina of soldiers. I am also very grateful to Dr. Carl Still, who led the way for my involvement with the Architects, and to CFO Derrin Raffey and President Terry Downey, who secured both the will and the funds for this project, and with whom I worked to secure a Federal Infrastructure Grant Award (of \$1,060,000.00). I also extend gratitude to the Architects, building managers, and construction crews.

Here, I will highlight the very real and tangible results to which I have made a contribution in the library renovation. I met with the Architects, Edwards, Edwards and McEwan during many if not most of their meeting here at STM, beginning in 2015 onwards and met with them on at least three or four occasions at their offices to discuss my overall Renaissance Library vision, which was a vision of a very grand old-world library with barrel vault ceilings, rich earth tones and a copper colour consistent with the copper doors in the college. I also wanted light to flow from the south windows all the way into the existing library. I wanted a seamless symmetry of grandeur which would inspire the students to an esteemed sense of self through which they could become positive forces of agency in the world, thereby improving the human condition. Believing, as Sir Winston Churchill intuited: *We shape our buildings, and thereafter, they shape us.* To achieve this, I considered everything in overall design, including structure, walls, ceiling, lighting, flooring, shelving, furniture, and many small details. It should be noted that

while exciting, this entire project was expedited through in a very short time frame, and under trying circumstances, so the resulting achievement, for all concerned and involved, is significant.

In the process of those discussions and meetings, I contributed to the:

1. **North Wall:** The appealing and natural curved north exterior wall, with large windows, which otherwise would have been square and flat, and resulted in a square box addition.
2. **Barrel vaulted cathedral library ceiling:** Which otherwise would have been low and flat, or designed in a low wave.
3. **Gothic Chandeliers:** Which were locally sourced and otherwise would have been small white modern tubes.
4. **Bronze coloured ceiling in the Reading Room** and white in the new build: Which otherwise would have been all white.
5. **Lower height book stacks** to allow sunlight to transfer from the north side to the south side of the library: Which otherwise would have been tall and blocking all light. The proposed height would have also exceeded Occupational Health and Safety standards at 103”, and I brought that down to 93”.
6. **Wood finish on the new stacks:** Which otherwise would have been grey metal.
7. **Periodical shelving** on the ends: Which otherwise would have required additional periodical shelving at additional expense.
8. **Large doorways without doors** to allow for a joining of the two spaces, the old and the new: Which otherwise would have been small closed doorways as in the lower level for student services.
9. **Book shelves** built in the covered-up window wells: Which otherwise would have been plain dry-walled walls which would have wasted valuable book space.
10. **A traditional gas fireplace:** Which otherwise would have been a mid-wall, bar type fireplace, or none at all.
11. **Furniture** – locally sourced: Which was all on sale, durable, practical and which the student love.

To Conclude:

This work while challenging, was most rewarding. It is every librarian’s dream to have contributed to the build of a new library, and one which we trust will last for years. It is also particularly meaningful for me because it is this library that houses provincial, if not Western Canadian resources for our highly valued Catholic Intellectual Tradition. This particular collection, and this particular college, is close to my heart, my mind, my faith, and therefore, my vocation. I have been blessed in the opportunity to do this work.

This project was nominated for a Heritage Award, but we have not yet heard the results of that nomination. Whether or not the reward is granted, the library, as President Downey has said: “speaks for itself; it is spectacular.”