Access the Web – Library Renovations
by June L. Power, MLIS

I don't know whether it's the need to start the New Year fresh, or just an attempt to fit what I've gotten for Christmas into my already crammed spaces, but every January I feel the need for a little feng shui. I frantically begin to go through closets and drawers, to get rid of things I no longer need, and to rearrange furniture to improve flow. I am a packrat, and this yearly catharsis is necessary for me to continue to function, as library renovations are necessary for the continued successful functioning and provision of services.

While doing a little rearranging of my own, I began to thinking about library renovations, as my university is hopeful of beginning a capital project for a new information commons in the next couple of years. So I am often thinking to myself – "What I will do when we get a new building?" Part of planning for a library's structural change or reinvigoration is looking at what other libraries have done recently and examining other library's renovation websites leads to fresh, new ideas. So I began my search for the fresh and new. Very quickly I found a trove of academic library websites detailing renovation projects both big and small. Public library renovation web sites, on the other hand, were much harder to find and I was surprised by the very small amount of information available on the series of major renovations of the New York Public Library that began in 1997.

However, find them I did, and I noticed many similarities among the various web sites of both types of libraries. First and foremost, each website demonstrates the desire to communicate with their patrons to ensure them that despite whatever changes are planned, service is their number one priority. Most sites also had pictures or drawings, which always say more than mere words and give site visitors a mental image of the changes taking place, which will make the transition easier for them when the projects are finished. Attention is usually drawn to what the changes will mean for the patrons, and how this will be an improvement over current situations. "From this cocoon of noise and dust, a beautiful butterfly will emerge." The opening line of the Rodman Public Library Renovations web site (http://www.rodmanlibrary.com/rpl/renovation/index.html) concisely states the rationale behind all library renovations. We anticipate that with changing our structures, we will emerge more appealing and relevant to our communities and ensure that despite the digital age the Library as a place still has a place in that community.

Library Buildings: Renovation and Reconfiguration

http://www.arl.org/transform/buildings/

Part of a series on Transforming Libraries, this web site discusses library building projects that either were renovations or reconfigurations of academic libraries. The web site states that "a renovation refreshes building spaces to make them useful again, while a reconfiguration allows building occupants to engage in new behaviors in old spaces and may not involve construction at all." Site visitors can link to each featured libraries web site for details about each project, while the Association for Research Libraries web site gives an overview of the project and the impetuous behind the change in each situation. Ordering information is provided for the book on which this web site is based, and it includes a checklist of questions for administrators considering taking on such a project. It is a shame that the checklist was not included on the web site.

The Expansion and Renovation of Perkins Library

http://library.duke.edu/about/perkinsproject/

Duke University makes wonderful use of multimedia in their web site to present their library renovation project. Floor plans and architectural renderings are available, with photographs and a downloadable mp3 audio tour available to help it come alive. The main site provides an overview of the project and the rational behind the change and links to the various parts of the site that go into detail on the expected timeline, progress, and phases of construction. The individual firms being used for the renovation are linked to, making it easy to preview them for yourself if your library is ready to begin planning for its own renovation. Duke provides a bulleted list of ways in which it was able to construct its new "green" building in accordance to LEED standards. I was pleased to note contact information for library services, the building manager, the Director of Communications, and Library administration. Too often, with such a major renovation project, gaps in communication lead to frustration on the part of staff and patrons. Having this information prominently on the main page underscores the underlying priority of patron service, especially during a transitional period.

Renovation of the Yale University Sterling Memorial and Cross Campus Libraries

http://www.library.yale.edu/news/smlrenovation.htm

A thoroughly comprehensive renovation site, Yale not only provides information on its latest renovation, but also the renovation carried out in the late 1990s, which Yale calls Phase I. A brief history of Sterling Memorial Library is provided, along with the scope and rationale of the current renovation, Phase II. Phase I was aimed at fixing some structural problems to the then 65-year-old Sterling Memorial Library, mostly caused by water damage over time, as well as to increase building safety and accessibility by persons with disabilities and to implement environmental controls. Pictures and descriptions of each major structural problem, based on the assessment of professional structural and design engineers, provides valuable information about the effects of such damage from a preservation standpoint. During Phase I, the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library was also built, demonstrating Yale's ability to get the most out of its renovation period. As far as the current renovation goes, the renovation web site provides links to any information one might think to need during such a project. There is a section for the latest news, important changes, relocations, a project overview with key milestones, a fact sheet, FAQ, and a photo gallery. And let's not forget the all import Donor Opportunities section. Renovations are the perfect marketing opportunity to solicit support for the library.

Minneapolis Public Library: New Buildings and Capital Projects

http://www.mplib.org/future.asp

The Minneapolis Public Library New Buildings and Capital Projects web site is unique among the other public library web sites reviewed in that, instead of serving a single library, the site provides information and links about all of the renovation and capital projects in the Minneapolis Public Library System. The main portion of the web site provides just a handful of links. The first is to the Central Library construction project, the highlight of the system-wide renovations, which links to an extensive amount of additional information and photographs of the project, as well as public articles about the construction. The second is to a list of capital projects at each branch library, each with its own list of links to fact sheets, updates, sketches, floor plans, and images. This community libraries pages also includes links to narratives – one to provide an update on all community library projects called Great Libraries for Minneapolis and a second titled Outlook 2010 that looks to discuss improving all Minneapolis Public Libraries. A unique feature of the main Minneapolis Public Library New Buildings and Capital Projects web site is the link to the web form titled Your Ideas on the Library's Future. MPL invites their patrons to contribute their comments, suggestions, and questions about the various library capital projects occurring in the

city. The main page finally provides a link to information on the referendum passed in 2000 that is funding these projects, and a link to a narrative explanation of why libraries are needed in a digital age. With so many capital projects ongoing, it is not hard to see why the Minneapolis Public Library has developed such an extensive web site to keep the taxpayers informed of what exactly is being done with the funding they voted to provide.

Wellesley College Library Renovation of Clapp Library

http://www.wellesley.edu/Library/Renovation/renovationpics.html

The Wellesley College Library Renovation web page is a good example of short, sweet, and to the point. A brief history of the library is provided, with a link to additional information for those interested in learning more. An overview of the project is given along with an update on the progress that has been made. Relocations of services are noted and links to different areas of renovations with pictures are made available. If your goal is not to document in its entirety every detail of your renovation, but to provide the most relevant information and keep open the lines of communication, the Wellesley College page is a good model to follow.

Thompson Library Renovation – The Ohio State University

http://library.osu.edu/sites/renovation/

OSU provides another example of thorough documentation of the renovation process. The main page is very clean, providing links to relevant information rather than trying to overwhelm the main page.   Visitors can view news and updates, messages from the Director and President, locations of collections and services, a project overview, and a breakdown of the different project teams – a useful link if you are deciding how to distribute your personal resources during a renovation. Photos and renderings are available under the Design and Construction Section. Patrons can make comments and suggestions regarding the renovation or check out the FAQ. As with the Yale renovation, a prominent link for financial contributions is on the main page as a way to garner financial support for the University libraries. The project overview not only gives a good overview of the rationale for renovations and what the renovations will entail, but also of the history of the building and the changes it has already seen from its opening in 1913 through it's subsequent renovations. As with Duke University's web site, OSU details how they have met the "green" standard to become a LEED-certified building.

Main Library Renovation – Fairfield Public Library

http://www.fairfieldpubliclibrary.org/libren.htm

The Fairfield Public Library renovation web site definitely has a bureaucratic flavor to it, as expected with an institution that has to justify its actions to the taxpayers who pay for its operations. The eye is immediately drawn to the artist's rendering of proposed library renovations, before it scrolls down the page to the more mundane executive summary, architectural overview, project costs, project schedule, funding information, and supplemental information of various types. The detailed financial breakdown and executive summary are a great resource for administrators responsible for the overall planning of a renovation, regardless of the type of library, as is the link to the long range plan for the Fairfield Public Library. Links to the library building history, library fact sheet, and renovation highlights provide additional information for those interested in how the renovation will affect patrons and staff and affect services.

Marquand Library Renovation

http://libweb5.princeton.edu/marquand/buildingpics.htm

Rather than providing numerous links to information about an ongoing renovation, the Marquand Library Renovation web site is more of an essay detailing a completed "transformation" of the library. Details of the changes that were made are given, and there are a number of photographs to help site visitors visualize the changes. What is unique about this site is that it is an excellent source for getting you to think not just about the building's construction, but also the design of the building. The interior design concepts used in the renovation are artistically discussed in one part of the commentary. Interior design tends to be a part of library renovations that is sometimes overlooked. Interior design concepts are vital for ensuring the continuation of libraries as a place – for ensuring that libraries continue to be inviting places for patrons.

Wheaton Public Library – More About the Library Expansion Project

http://www.wheaton.lib.il.us/library/buildingmore.html

Even more succinct than the Wellesley College renovation web page, there are just three components to the Library Expansion Project web page for the Wheaton Public Library. There is a short narrative that gives an overview of the project, followed by the upcoming changes and things for patrons to expect to find in the completed library. There is a very basic drawing of where the proposed addition will be located. Again, the key to this web page is keeping it short and simple. When you don't have a lot of staff or time, both of which are especially stretched during a renovation, a single web page with just the basic facts might be more appropriate than a heavily detailed web site.

Temple University Library Blog – Library Renovations Archives

http://blog.library.temple.edu/liblog/archives/library_renovations/

Already have a library blog? Don't want to maintain a separate web site for your renovation project? Temple University makes good use of the blog medium it was already using for communicating with the community to keep patrons apprised of the renovation project. Their blog has posts sorted by date and by category, so they added a category for Library Renovations to their blog, making it easy for patrons to find all the library information they need in one place. With the pace of life ever-increasing, this type of one-stop-shopping will become increasingly important for our patrons. The blog medium also makes it easy to track the progress of the renovation, as the newest updates appear at the top of the page and the rest are in reverse chronological order. Temple used this blog format to inform their community about small scale renovations like the Paley Library Elevator Renovation Project and restroom renovations to the completion of the new Library Depository and the newly created Science, Engineering and Architecture Library. The Temple University blog is a fantastic example of incorporating renovation news into existing communication venues, and providing patrons with all of the news without having to burden them or your webmaster with all of the fanfare.