

Sighs and Smiles of Remodeling Projects

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in Bennington, Vermont

Background of the college and its library

- Northeastern Baptist College is in its third year and has been accredited by Vermont Agency of Education as a degree-granting college in the state.
- Located on a main street in Bennington.
- 60 students, majoring in theology, counseling, business, and music.
- the Hogue Library, named after the president's in-law family, was the Paradise Inn restaurant from 1963 to 2003.
- We rented, then bought the building.
- We started work on repurposing it in April 2012.

Hogue Library as it looks today:



The rooms of the library

- Main Room: collections: Main, Oversize, Fiction, Reference, Biblical language reference, New England.
- Rooms still under construction
 - Music
 - Gordon Henry (a special donated collection)
 - Book sale
 - Rare book storage
- Completed rooms
 - Ballard Collection (a special donated collection)
 - MARBLE (rare books in a 1914-style room)
 - Offices and work rooms
 - Conference Room
 - Hebrews Café

Need for a new approach to library architecture

- Printed materials – yes, still relevant and useful
- Device-dependent “media” – no longer useful
 - We opened a brand new library *without* these media: vinyl records, microfilm, microfiche, movie reels, audio cassettes, & VHS tapes.
- Site of collaboration for learning: “meeting space”
- Need for social interaction: “café .”
- Continued need for special collections for targeted information needs.

Re-purposing existing space

- Parameters of using an existing building :
 - Sigh: constricted by what you have, often not what you need/want
 - Smile: can provide a built-in inspiration for things you may not have thought of.

- Take-Away:

We can all look at how existing space has been utilized and reconsider it: “Is this still the best configuration for this space?”

What we planned vs. How it came out

<i>The original layout called for:</i>	<i>But we ended up with:</i>
Assistant librarian's office	A staff kitchen
Processing Room had a courtyard window	Switched with the Conference room
Music Collections Room	Computer & printer area
Reference Collection Room	Lounge for families
New England Collection on the far wall	--placed on a near wall (not blocked from view)
Study carrels along the front wall	--had to add shelving there due to growth
Reference desk	Biblical language study desk
Study tables all in a row	3 tables grouped as a collaborative workspace

The central aisle— natural light,
beautiful window seat, study space.



Need for collaborative workspace



“Collaboration” is broadly defined.



The *Sighs* that come with experience:

- Volunteers might lack the necessary skills.
- Work on communicating a clear vision to all involved.
- Use excellent materials the first time.
 - don't settle for what is quick and easy.
- Survey the whole project first, and then move forward.
 - no idea that the furnaces and roof were in such poor condition
 - lay out an overarching plan for the entire project first
 - very hard to anticipate all the new needs that arise
 - lost an entire office and two large closets to furnace installation
- Color choices:
 - a matter of personal taste
 - keep it simple
 - in the end, just repainting is sometimes the best or only solution.

The *Smiles* that come with experience:

- New, good, better ideas come along after you start.
 - anyone involved can be the source of a good idea
- Staying flexible to new developments can bring about awesome results.
- Donation of a whole new collection can necessitate design changes for rooms that you did not anticipate.
 - NEBC changed its degree majors, which altered the library's collection strategy, which created the need for more space for Business and Music, and less for Education.
- Don't fight the need to switch gears, re-design and keep moving.

The *Smiles* that come with flexibility:

- “Allow yourself the pleasure of serendipitous gain.”
- Have a vision for the end result that allows leeway for new, wonderful things to come along:
 - wide central aisle allowed for natural light and study space
 - window seat with cushion and pillows
 - reference desk became biblical language study area
 - book sale room outgrew its area and evolved into a computer use room
 - used a new, reproduction Arts & Crafts style door

A brand new repro door looks just as convincing and period appropriate, but was very easy to install.



Some tips and practical advice

We are glad that we—

- kept all the original windows or doors so that the exterior maintains its original architectural integrity
- invested in being close to downtown: proximity to shops & stores, museums, pizza shops, convenience stores
- made the hallway 5 ft. wide
- have a conference room as meeting and classroom space
- created a quiet lounge area behind the Main room
- used a cool, calming color scheme in the Main room
- made good use of original features such as the fireplace and café area
- hired experts to design the interior of the café

Cool blue color scheme creates a calming effect.



Lounge area in the rear makes a safe haven for young mothers, or just a relaxing area for quiet reading.



Main Room under construction in 2013



Main Room as it looks today



A back-corner
room that
was set aside
to house
rare books,
Spring 2014



Rare Books Room, one year later



Rare Books Room as it looks today:



Hebrews Café under construction



Hebrews
Café
as it
looks
today:



Let's learn from each other—

What similar anecdotes, tips, and strategies do you all have to share?