# Sighs and Smiles of Remodeling Projects

presented by Jim Mancuso of Northeastern Baptist College 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

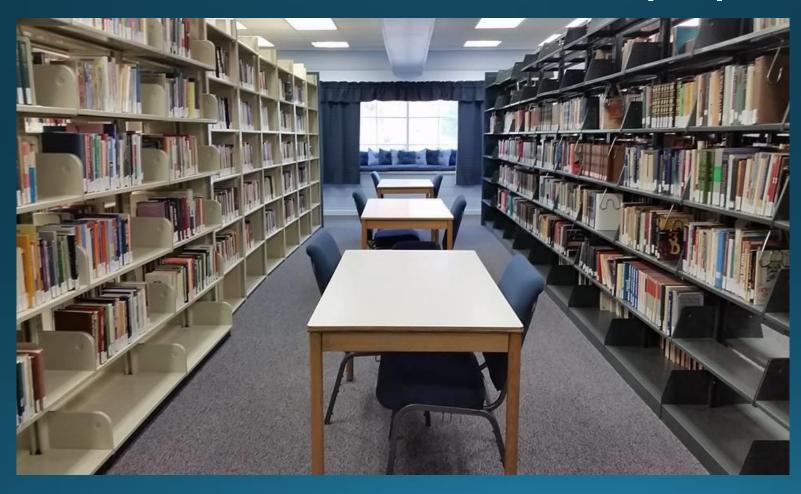
- Parameters of using an existing building :
  - Sigh: constricted by what you have, often not what you need/want
  - Smile: can provide a built-in inspiration for things you may not have thought of.
- Take-Away:

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

| The original layout called for:        | But we ended up with:                         |
|--|---|
| 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?