

Introduction

You cannot appreciate how happy I am to report near completion not only of the building project but also the fund drive to pay for the building project. The building is more than 80 percent complete—we have occupied both newly constructed areas as well as remodeled portions.

The fund drive has raised more than \$5.35 million of the \$6 million the Law School is contributing to the total \$16.1 million project. While some difficult ground still needs to be covered, I thought it was time to issue a preliminary report on how we have reached 90 percent of the private funding required.

As I have traveled around the country, alumni have come forward to help. An oft-used phrase, “too numerous to mention,” is used to shorten many thank you speeches. I do not want to dismiss even the smallest contribution to this building. This preliminary report, and the final report that will follow, will contain the names of everyone who has made a contribution.



Dean Daniel O. Bernstine

If you have made a contribution, make sure your name is listed and if you have yet to make a gift to the building fund, it's not too late to have your name included in the final report.

Building Basics

The scope of the Law School addition and remodeling project should have been evident, at least when the blue prints first arrived. Two volumes of prints, spreading more than two feet by three feet and almost an inch thick each, were needed to just begin the project. As the project neared completion, the volume of bid documents, change orders and supplemental drawings was enough to fill a small room. And there weren't many small rooms to begin with!

A Bit of History

For its first 25 years, the Law School had no permanent home. The most famous location consisted of rented rooms over a State Street saloon. It wasn't until 1893 that the Law School finally had its own home, when a Michigan-sandstone building, built in the Richardsonian tradition, opened on the south side of Bascom Hill, just up from what is now Music Hall.

For the next 25 years, the building adequately accommodated the School as its reputation, faculty, traditions and distinguished alumni grew. The first major problem was the lack of an adequate library for the rapidly increasing collection. In the late 1930s, the library most know as the “Old Library,” was grafted onto the southeast corner of the 1893 building.

As wonderful as the exterior of the building was, the years of hard use by a growing faculty and student body began to take a toll on the building's interior. Faculty “offices” resembled closets (as they were probably intended when constructed). Pieces of ceiling began crashing down during classes, giving students real hands-on experience with torts. In the early 1960s, after years of wrangling and negotiations, a plan was finally conceived to replace the 1893 building.

A “modern” addition to the law library was the construction project. This portion opened in 1960, and was attached to the southwest corner of the 1938 “Old Library.” Before the classroom portion of the building could be built, however, plans were revised, resulting in the famous “Reality Checkpoint,” the stairway that led to nowhere and has endeared a generation of graduates.

Problems Surface

Looking back, it is now clear that too many compromises were made in the 1960/1963 law building. The building lacked any of the distinction of the buildings that surrounded it. It also lacked the prestige that should be afforded to one of the nation's top law schools. Dean Cliff Thompson liked to tell the story that when he first saw the Law School he thought it looked like a "pretty good" junior high school. As he traveled throughout Wisconsin, he saw many junior high schools and he realized that the building did not approach that standard.

Our problems went beyond appearance. In response to the avalanche of applications in the late 1960s, the Law School began to accept more students. It wasn't long before more than 1,000 students were occupying space designed for 650. At the same time, faculty recruited to teach these additional students were forced to use offices in the law library where they competed with both books and technology for valuable library space.

By 1977, the University and the state came to the aid of the Law School. In Phase I, a small addition that wrapped around the south and east sides of the "New Library" was constructed to alleviate library space problems. In the great Wisconsin tradition of trying to do more for less, however, certain compromises were made in even this limited addition—the floors could not support library stacks; there was no air conditioning in the space that faced the south; and two planned floors were deleted to meet the budget.

Larger problems surfaced regarding Phase II, the portion that would have provided high-quality teaching space. Plan after plan would be presented for more than ten years, only to be rejected for a variety of reasons. Meanwhile, the classroom building was deteriorating at an accelerating pace: Formica began peeling from the desk tops; electrical service was proving inadequate for computers, faxes and copiers; and heating and cooling devices rumbled so loudly that students, already straining to hear fellow students in classrooms designed for lecturing and not discussion, began giving up and abandoning hope.

A Solution Appears

For years the project languished at the bottom of the campus priority list until a young campus architect, Christopher Gluesing, took a new look at the site and the problems we were facing. The enclosed courtyard, while lovely to look at but limited by climate to a few useful months each year, suggested a solution to Gluesing: why not fill the "whole in the doughnut" with space to solve our problems, he asked?

After years of refining plans and making trips to the Campus Planning Committee, the Law School was finally poised to head into the 21st century as a facility that not only would function as a law school, but as Building Committee Chair and faculty member Tom Palay said, "raise expectations of students, faculty and alumni, rather than dampen them."

The Grainger Effect

As the law building project left the campus and headed to the State Building Commission, a glorious new Business School was rising on the corner of University and Mills Streets. The Business School, hoping to advance its project on the priority list, had suggested it could raise a substantial portion of the cost of construction from private sources. The Building Commission, finding this an admirable idea in a time of tightening state budgets agreed, stipulating that the Business School raise one-third of the estimated construction cost. Unbeknownst to either the Business School or the state was the fact that David Grainger, a 1950 electrical engineering graduate, and his wife Juli Plant Grainger, a 1948 graduate of the College of Letters and Science, were considering a significant gift to the School of Business. The couple and The Grainger Foundation together gave \$10 million for the project, which would eventually cost more than \$40 million and benefit from \$17.5 million in private support.

While raising money for buildings is relatively new to public universities, and raising large sums of money is never an easy task, there are some particular benefits to the use of private funds for building projects. Private support allows the hiring of the best architects and provides for a finished quality structure not typical of a public building.

With the Business School precedent set, the Law School went to the state with a similar proposal for the project that was originally estimated at \$14.5 million. State approval was given for bidding with the condition that the Law School raise \$5 million in private funds. Confident that our loyal alumni would see us through, we agreed and the bidding commenced. Midway through construction, the project cost had risen to \$16.1 million and our share had increased to \$6 million. The increase was due to unexpected asbestos abatement expenses, the addition of remodeling of the administrative area, and the construction of an all new Career Services Office.

Scope of the Project

When the decision was made to "fill the doughnut," we knew that B25 and 225, our two largest lecture halls, faced expensive and extensive remodeling. Designed as a lecture hall with a professor lecturing to as many as 195 students, the rooms were steeply banked tunnels. Students could not see or hear well and discussion between students and with the professor was severely hampered. The two classrooms also blocked major construction access to the courtyard, where most of the new space would rise.

By now a team of architects was on board and Chris Gluesing had been joined by the Chicago-based firm of Holabird & Root, known not only for its preeminence in law school design but also its ability to meld old and new. Also joining the team was the Madison firm of Bowen, Williamson & Zimmerman, which was accomplished in the intricacies of university and state construction regulations. From this group would come the suggestion that it was more cost-effective to demolish and replace the two largest classrooms. The new classrooms would be designed for discussion and would incorporate the latest in classroom technology and provide a pleasant place to learn.

The School also needed more courtroom space. Clinical and simulation courses had grown enormously and even more demands would be placed on skills training in the future. One overworked and poorly designed courtroom would become two courtrooms—one new and one completely reconfigured. The new courtroom also would be adjacent to a judge's chambers and a jury room, both of which can double as seminar or small classrooms.

Faculty who were consigned to borrowed library offices will move into the faculty tower portion of the building and the faculty library will be relocated to a new space. The old faculty library will be remodeled into ten faculty offices.

The major portion of the construction has been library-related in both the new and remodeled areas. New stack space, additional seating for patrons, adaptation to electronic technology and consolidation of the scattered library staff is being accomplished primarily on four levels built in what had been the courtyard.

Culminating the space—and perhaps the entire project—is a dramatic new Grand Reading Room. A glass wall facing Bascom Hill allows visitors to look out over Bascom Hill and down State Street to the Capitol.

While the net floor space of the building will be increased by almost 50 percent, virtually every remaining square foot has received some attention. New lighting, higher in output and efficiency, is being installed throughout the building. Classrooms are being wired to accommodate computer terminals, digital cameras and video technology. The ill-functioning and noisy HVAC system also will be replaced.

Imminent Completion

As we near Labor Day 1996 and the start of classes for the 129th year of the University of Wisconsin Law School, there will only be the finishing touches left to the new building. The last of the construction debris will have been cleaned from halls and crews will have restored damaged sidewalks and planted grass and shrubs. The entering first-year class will be greeted by a sparkling new building. Returning second-year students, who have known only the old Commerce Building classrooms, will no doubt marvel at their new surroundings. It will be only the third-year class who will truly appreciate the final transformation.

A law school's reputation depends on a number of factors, not the least of which is the pride that its faculty, students and alumni take in their institution. For the first time in many years—perhaps since the fall of 1893 when the original building opened and located where the Grand Reading Room is today—our Law School family has a facility of which it can be proud. It is a facility we helped to build and in which our reputation can safely reside and grow for the next century.