

Library Building Project

Excitement is in the air as planning begins for a new library at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC). Governor Phil Bredesen and the Tennessee Legislature have provided one-time funds in the amount of 48 million dollars to plan and build the new library. The current UTC Library building has a gross square footage of 116,349 and is no longer adequate, due to its size and design, to serve the needs of the students and faculty. Equally important, since the current Library's opening in 1974 library usage patterns and student learning styles have changed dramatically. The new library is anticipated to be approximately 180,000 gross square feet which equates to gain of just over 60,000 square feet from the existing library building.

Since 1974 UTC has increased enrollment by over two-thirds, growing from a count of approximately 4,574 to 9,553 students in 2007. The existing Library originally had a seating capacity of 1,100 which has decreased to approximately 670 seats due to necessary additions of shelving, technology, and new learning spaces. The Library opened its doors with 170,000 books and periodicals in its collection and now, over 30 years later, the collection has grown to over 1.7 million pieces of materials, including books, online resources, periodicals, DVDs, CDs, microfilm, etc. Another major development has been the explosion of online materials and search tools not on the horizon in 1969 when the old library was programmed. Due to the construction design of the existing Library building, with water pipes above and below floors, adapting the space for current student needs has been challenging, when possible at all. Overall, a space analysis conducted in the year 2000 found the existing Library 58,575 square foot deficiency, per THEC standards.

The UTC Library in the form of its staff members, collections and services supports and serves the research and curricular needs of students and faculty. Last year the Library fielded just under 12,000 research questions, taught over 300 instructional sessions reaching over 5,800 students, filled over 13,000 interlibrary loan requests, circulated over 34,000 items, 9,000 laptops, and provided group study space to approximately 4,800 groups.

The faculty, staff, and students assistants at the Lupton Library envision the new Library as the academic and intellectual center of campus, a marketplace of ideas. The new Library will be the focal point for collaborative research and teaching in the 21st century. In building a new space, the UTC Library seeks to blend old traditions with new developments in library usage -- carrels providing quiet study among book stacks on one floor, complemented by comfortable chairs, wireless laptops, and an area designated as information commons to enhance group study and the navigation of library databases and other electronic tools on another. The new library will offer an academic and social gathering place for students, faculty, and members of the academic community through classrooms, labs, meeting and event spaces, and technology-equipped study areas and rooms. The Library's goal is to create a warm, welcoming environment that brings UTC community members together to study, work, and relax.

The Library as the academic and intellectual heart of the campus is the core philosophy that will drive the design process. A library committee, composed of faculty and staff, was formed in July and has conducted site visits to newly built and renovated libraries. A New Library Program Statement Committee, composed of discipline faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community representatives, is now underway. In an effort to create an open, collaborative, and transparent process, all information about the project, including meeting minutes, photographs, videos, etc. are available on the Library's wiki located at www.library.utc.edu/building. Please contact Theresa Liedtka at theresa-liedtka@utc.edu with any questions regarding the project.