

# A NEW LIBRARY TO BECOME A REALITY

By Laura Bennett-Kimble '95  
Contributing Writer



## IT'S BEEN RUMBLING AROUND CAMPUS ALMOST AS LONG AS THE COLLEGE HAS BEEN AT ROBINSON ROAD – TALK OF A NEW LIBRARY

Now, after decades of talk, plans, and even announcements about its existence, construction of a new library on the Aquinas campus began in July after the location and design had been decided, funding pledged and approval given by the Board of

Trustees. Now, the time is right. Over the coming months, the Jarecki Center for Advanced Learning will be enlarged and, except for space for the School of Management, converted into the Grace Hauenstein Library.

This new chapter of the library story began in 1997, when incoming President Harry Knopke addressed faculty for the first time and spoke of one of his major priorities: a new library. In 1999, a committee was formed to brainstorm the idea. By 2002, a 12-member committee included faculty from the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Education and Management, Provost Ed Balog and staff. Next, a survey was taken to get input from employees and students.

During this period, Gary Eberle, English Department chairperson, realized that the Jarecki Center appeared to offer much that has been identified as desirable in a library. In 2003, a four-member subcommittee was formed: Eberle, Balog, then-library director Teresa Sturuss, and Tom Summers, director of physical plant.

“After the subcommittee spent two hours touring Jarecki with a detailed checklist, it turned out that, at first glance, the building met 90 percent of what we wanted in a library,” Eberle said, listing items including natural lighting, nearby parking, access for the disabled, technology infrastructure, and meeting spaces. “Looking at this from the point of view of the institution, if this could work, we could save the College \$6 million... I thought that was a pretty nifty idea.”

Others thought so, too. “The most significant aspect of this new library is that by attaching it to an existing building, the College can reduce construction costs by at least 40 percent,”

said Balog. “The funds were raised more quickly than if the building had been more expensive and will thus be ready for student use earlier.”

The three-story library, which will cost \$6.7 million for construction and an endowment, was designed by Progressive AE, which also designed Jarecki. It will be approximately 50,000 square feet when completed. Construction by Erhardt Construction should take about 12 months, said Knopke, with fall 2006 targeted for comple-

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tion. The new building is being created with the goal of receiving Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). And, it will contain shelving and other library furnishings donated by Kalamazoo College and Steelcase furnishings donated by Peter Wege. Faculty with offices in Jarecki will be displaced

for about a year, Knopke noted. “The School of Management has been in makeshift quarters for three years, using the former chapel for offices. Once the library is complete, they – along with the provost, deans and other faculty – will have permanent offices in the three wings of the renovated second floor of the Academic Building, where the library has been located since 1977.” Renovation will begin after the library vacates the second floor.

Not surprisingly, the library staff is delighted with all of this. In May, Francine Paolini, library co-director with Shellie Jeffries, said, “We have been providing premium library services for years. It would be really great to have a building that reflects those services.”

“In many ways, this opens up the campus with a second major hub,” said Chad Gunnoe, chairperson and associate professor of history. “In some ways, it’s our completion as a liberal arts college to have a full-fledged freestanding library that’s in a suitable home.”

“The entire library staff is really excited”, Paolini said. “It’s just a huge step forward for the entire Aquinas community.”

