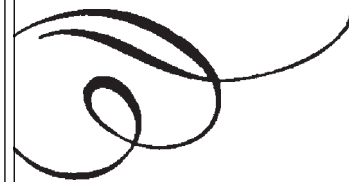


THE ARCHITECTURE LIBRARY AT BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

by Amy E. Trendler



Ball State University's Architecture Library is a branch library that supports the students and faculty of the College of Architecture and Planning (CAP) as well as the larger university community. The Architecture Library is located on the ground floor of the Architecture Building, which also houses the college's studios, faculty offices, and facilities. The importance of this location for a student population that spends a great deal of its time "in studio" cannot be overstated.

CAP is Indiana's only school of architecture supported by public funds (Notre Dame University has a School of Architecture and an architecture library). The college's 700 current students pursue bachelor's or master's degrees in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning, or a master's in historic preservation. More than 50 faculty members teach in the college, which offers a range of facilities including computer labs, a digital fabrication lab, a digital simulation lab, and a drawings and documents archive.

The Architecture Library collection consists of 100 current periodical subscriptions, more than 27,000 volumes of books, CD-ROMs, bound periodicals, and a Visual Resources Center of 119,000 35mm slides and an ever-expanding collection of 20,000 digital images. Like any branch library, the Architecture Library must replicate many of the services of the main library while offering additional or enhanced services that support subject-specific research. Three full time staff members (a professional librarian, a library coordinator, and a slide curator) and a number of student employees assist students and faculty with their research and learning needs. The staff performs the tasks necessary to operate a branch library including circulation services, collection development, managing electronic and paper class reserves, shelf maintenance, and many other duties. Reference and instruction services are offered by the librarian and the full time staff.

Students at Ball State attend library skills classes as part of required courses in English. In these classes they are introduced to the library catalog and basic search techniques for using the university's wide range of

databases. Students in CAP's First Year program participate in brief sessions designed to introduce them to subject-specific resources and research in the Architecture Library. In their second year, students in the college's required history classes complete library tutorials that help them refine their research skills and efficiently find resources in the Architecture Library.

Individual classes may meet with the librarian to cover special topics in resources and research methods. For example, students in a landscape architecture class preparing for a study trip attended training sessions designed to help them learn how to find resources on buildings and sites in New York City. Faculty members may also arrange for the librarian to talk to a class about topics such as finding resources for a term paper or searching the Internet for architecture information.

The library's collection covers a wide range of topics in architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, and historic preservation. In addition to reference works covering codes and standards, technical manuals and reports, the collection includes a wealth of material on architects and designers, history and theory, building types and famous sites, and topical subjects such as sustainability or digital fabrication. Publications in the fields collected range from richly illustrated coffee table books on famous architects or well known sites to detailed analyses of technical components and treatises on theory. Works published on architecture and designers in Indiana are an important part of the collection, and the library is fortunate to have the CAP Drawings and Documents Archive near at hand.

Ground-breaking designs and in-depth features, scholarly research and essays may be found in the pages of the library's current periodicals. The essential index for the design disciplines is the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, the only such resource devoted to architecture and the related fields of landscape architecture, urban planning, historic preservation, and interior design. Other useful databases are business databases like Business Source Premier that cover planning literature, art databases such as the Art Index, America: History and Life, and the public affairs database PAIS International.

Newspapers are also a good source of information

on the built environment and the issues that affect it. Architectural critics and reporters review buildings and projects, report on historic preservation efforts, or profile big name designers. Sprawl, sustainability, affordable housing, and many other topics of interest to the architect, planner, or designer are featured in newspaper articles. As a branch library supported by the resources and collections of a university library, the Architecture Library is able to provide access to a wide range of resources that supplement those targeted specifically to the design disciplines. From newspaper resources such as Lexis Nexis to the literature of fields such as art or science, the main library vastly extends the reach of the branch library in these directions.

Like many visual resources collections, the Architecture Library's Visual Resources Center is in the process of transitioning from a collection of 35mm slides to a collection of high quality digital images. The slide lecture has long been a staple of the architectural history class and the images used in these classes have been the first priority of the center's digitization project. Due to the nature of the classes, which cover their topics from ancient to modern times, these images also form a good, core image collection. Slides depicting buildings and sites in Indiana have also been priority candidates for digitization.

Digital images not only replace the slides that were once used, they offer additional functionality. Faculty members can quickly search and view many different, disparate digital images without the physical impediments imposed by the layout of the slide collection. Gone are the days when the only copy of a needed image had been checked out by another library user; digital images allow for multiple uses by multiple users. Another advantage is that images and text may be combined in presentation software such as PowerPoint, saving instructors from flipping back and forth between related images or interrupting a lecture to spell names and repeat dates. An instructor might also search for a digital image on the fly to show to a class, either as part of an image lecture or on a laptop in studio.

With these advantages come new challenges and a changing role for the center's full-time curator. Instructors must learn to use presentation software to prepare lecture images and confidently display them in the classroom; the Visual Resources Center must be able to provide instructional support and assistance with presentations and presentation software. The center and the main library must also work together to digitize

slides or catalog purchased digital images and quickly make them available to users.

Digital images offer new opportunities too. Whereas a donation of slides from faculty or students required donors to pay for film and printing, the donation of digital images is a much simpler, less costly affair. In a college where study trips at home and abroad are considered essential components of a student's education, there are a great many opportunities for students and their instructors to take pictures of buildings and sites the world over. Students from CAP's World Tour/Polyark 2003/2004 trip were among the first to donate digital images to the collection. Their images of buildings and sites in the 18 countries they visited may be viewed, along with the Architecture Images collection, at <http://libx.bsu.edu>.

Beyond the image lecture, the Visual Resources Center's digital image collection offers faculty and students a searchable collection of high quality images that may be used in presentations and projects. Images found on the Internet are a useful resource, but oftentimes the image quality, especially for large scale projection in a classroom or auditorium, may be less than ideal. Furthermore, while general Internet image searches for a specific building or site may be successful, it is more difficult to search broadly for building types, styles, or periods. A student searching for images of urban parks or Art Nouveau architecture is much more likely to meet with success in a collection, such as the Architecture Images collection, which has been cataloged with attention to subject, type, period, geographic area, style, and other potential access points.

Strategically placed to serve the needs of the students and faculty in the College of Architecture and Planning, the Architecture Library continues to grow and change. Digital image collections, emerging topics in architectural publishing, and evolving instruction efforts insure that the library is a dynamic place. Although digital image resources have already made a significant impact on the library, the book and periodical remain, for the moment, the standard method of delivery for information resources in these disciplines. And yet there are presently several architecture periodical titles and some codes and standards resources available online. Clearly the future of this library will be focused on the continuing challenges and opportunities of digitization, but just as clearly reference, instruction, and research assistance will remain among the library's most important services.