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Ann Hamilton and Fred Smith inspect "The ARC." (Photo by Frank Fortune)

Expansion and renovation of Georgia Southern University's Henderson Library spurred by quintupling of student body

by Ann Hamilton and Mark Holland

For more than 30 years, the Zach S. Henderson Library has been the hub of academic life at Georgia Southern University. Since the summer of 2004, the library has been the focus of an extensive expansion and renovation to help meet the needs of the university's growing student body. The first phase of the \$22.75 million project — an 89,000-square-foot addition to the east side of the original building — opened on Oct. 1, 2006.

When the project is completed in 2008, Georgia Southern will have one of the finest, state-of-the-art library facilities in the Southeast. Georgia Southern College had only 4,000 students when Henderson Library was constructed in 1975. Since then, the institution has earned university status and seen the size of its student body increase by almost 425 percent.

The original building included 109,515 square feet of space, but significant issues arose when Georgia Southern's enrollment approached

14,000 in the mid-1990s. In June 2001, the Board of Regents approved the sale of bonds to fund a project that would renovate the existing building and construct two new additions that would add a total of 101,000 square feet to the facility.

The project began in June 2004. A little more than two years later, the addition to the east side of the library was ready to serve students, faculty and staff. The entrance is highlighted by a striking three-story glass atrium and a virtual waterfall.



The aerial shot was taken in August 2007. (Photo courtesy of Ellis Wood)

Once inside the addition, library patrons have wireless access, laptops that can be borrowed for use within the building, two classrooms that contain a total of 60 computers and a multipurpose room with seating for up to 50.

The addition is also the home of the first automated retrieval system in the Southeast. Known as "The ARC," it is capable of storing 800,000 items in

5,848 separate bins stacked 45 feet high. During the current phase of construction, the original building is being completely renovated. The

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facelift will include the removal of virtually all of the nonload-bearing walls on the first, second and third floors. Most of the windows in the original building are being converted to floor-to-ceiling windows that mirror the design of the new additions.

A four-story addition is being constructed on the west side of the original building. Covering 12,000 square feet, this addition will feature seating on the first, second and third floors and a balcony on the fourth floor that looks down on the third floor and through huge windows. The views from the fourth floors are spectacular. When the project is completed, there will be space for most of the library's collections in open stacks, lesser-used materials in the ARC, and 3400 seats. The project is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2008. Construction progress can be viewed at <http://library.georgiasouthern.edu/building/>. Daily progress can be viewed through live Web cameras linked to that page. ►►