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Renovating and Expanding Special Collections Facilities at Towson University

Nadia Nasr, Towson University

Introduction

One of the most important elements for enabling use of archives and special collections materials is having appropriate facilities with space to process, store, and provide access to these materials. The original Special Collections facilities at Towson University (TU) were built when the school was known as Towson State College (TSC) and the current Albert S. Cook Library building was constructed in 1969. TU opened its doors in January 1866 as the Maryland State Normal School (MSNS) in downtown Baltimore and moved to its current location in Towson in the fall of 1915. The MSNS's original mission was to train teachers in the "Science of Education and the Art of Teaching and the mode of governing Schools."¹ The school's mission evolved over the years and it became a liberal arts college with a strong focus on teacher education². In 1973 the school achieved university status, a change reflecting its growth into a comprehensive university.³ Today Towson University is the second largest public institution in Maryland with a student population of over 21,000.⁴

The first library on the Towson Campus was housed in the Administration Building⁵, now known as Stephens Hall. In 1958 the library relocated to the new Albert S. Cook Library building built behind Stephens Hall and named for a Maryland State Superintendent of Schools.⁶ This new building had a book capacity of 100,000 volumes and a seating capacity of 450 and included stacks areas and general reading rooms, a periodical room, a seminar room, microforms rooms, a listening room for phonograph records, a lecture room, a teaching materials center, and several typing alcoves.⁷ In 1969 the library moved into the new facilities, an addition to the 1958

building with increased capacity to accommodate the library's growing collections and the increased enrollment of students on campus.⁸ This new library addition was several times larger than the 1958 building and included space for housing special collections.

Special Collections at Towson University started out simply as the College Archives Department in 1970. The archives collections generally consist of records of the university including administrative records from various departments, photographs, course catalogs, student newspapers, and oversize materials such as blueprints and architectural drawings. Over the years the archives has evolved into a special collections department by incorporating special book collections and non-school records. Users have primarily been University community members - faculty, staff, and students, as well as the occasional alumnus - who visited the archives by appointment to make use of the collections.

According to departmental correspondence and anecdotes from Cook Library staff the Archives has traditionally been staffed by one full time employee who was occasionally supplemented by a part time secretary or student assistants. The first archivist was Dorothy Reeder, one of Cook Library's past directors. A veteran librarian by trade Reeder attended archival management training at the National Archives and Records Administration and set about establishing policies and collecting materials for the College Archives Department. When Reeder retired in 1973 she was succeeded by Dr. Herbert D. Andrews, a faculty member who worked in the Archives on a ten hour a week basis in conjunction with his teaching activities. Andrews continued part time as the archivist until about 1996 when he was succeeded by Nancy Gonce who transferred into archives from Cook Library's circulation department. Gonce retired in 2006, shortly after Deborah A. Nolan started as Cook Library's new director. With a new vision for archives and special collections Nolan hired the first professionally trained archivist in

December 2007. In February 2009 Archives staffing was effectively doubled when the department hired a full-time paraprofessional at the library associate level.

The original facilities designated for the college archives as seen in Figure 1 comprised approximately 3,100 square feet and were located in the northwest corner of the fifth floor of the Library. The facilities consisted of a conference room known as the Towson Room (room 507, approximately 1,150 square feet), the archivist's office (room 506, approximately 135 square feet), and a closed stacks area (room 505, approximately 1,990 square feet) used to process and store special collections materials. Users entered the facilities through the Towson Room door after turning a corner from the main stacks and proceeding down a long hallway. The Towson Room served triple duty as a meeting space for library and campus departments, as a temporary collections processing area, and as a reading room for users of special collections. It also contained two sets of open bookshelves which were used to house two collections of non-circulating books. If a group was meeting in the Towson Room then users had to move into the closed stacks to continue using collections and staff leaving or returning to the facilities did so as quietly as possible so as to avoid interrupting meetings.

The original archives facilities had minimal collections processing space and provided no room for future growth of archives staff. At a mere 135 square feet the archivist's office was just large enough to comfortably accommodate one staff member with the requisite office furniture and computer. Processing space was limited to a built-in sink cabinet with an attached desk adjacent to the archivist's office. Archives staff could use the conference tables in the Towson Room for processing large collections but work was slow going if archives staff had to pack up in the middle of a processing project to accommodate groups that had reserved the Towson Room for a meeting. As an alternative to using conference tables in the Towson Room archives

staff resorted to using shelving in the closed stacks to sort and organize collections. The original design of the space and layout of shelving did not allow room for adding additional work tables and the facilities had become inadequate for the department's needs.

The highest priority for long term preservation of special collections is to create a physical environment with ideal environmental conditions that support preservation.⁹ This includes maintaining appropriate temperature and relative humidity levels and controlling exposure of collections to light.¹⁰ The existing closed stacks space was not designed with appropriate environmental conditions to support long term preservation. The climate was controlled by fan-coil units connected to the building's air conditioning and heating system whose temperature settings were remotely controlled from the campus power plant. The north wall of the closed stacks was an exterior wall with three floor-to-ceiling, drafty windows. Both the exterior wall and the windows contributed to fluctuating temperature and humidity levels by creating opportunities for conditions such as excessive moisture buildup, condensation, or air leaks.¹¹ Additionally, the three windows exposed collections to sunlight which promotes fading of materials and can speed up chemical reactions.¹² Establishing and maintaining appropriate environmental conditions in a new closed stacks area were addressed in the design documents for the renovated archives space.

Security against theft and fire were also problematic issues of the original archives facilities design. One key provided access not only to the Towson Room but also to the archivist's office and the closed stacks area. If the archivist was out of the office groups meeting in the Towson Room were granted unsupervised access. Both the collection of non-circulating books in the Towson Room and the archival materials in the closed stacks were vulnerable to loss. For reasons unknown, when Cook Library was built in 1969, only the second floor of the

library was equipped with a sprinkler system for fire suppression. The only tool for fire suppression in the archives was a fire extinguisher. Security against theft and fire were also addressed with the project to renovate the archives space.

Funding the Renovation Project

The University Librarian and the University Archivist prepared a proposal requesting funds to renovate the northwest corner of the fifth floor of Cook Library where the archives and special collections facilities were located. In February 2008 the proposal was submitted to the President, Provost, and Vice President of Administration and Finance. With the proposed renovation the library sought to modernize the special collections facilities and achieve six major goals:

- Create a new main entrance to the facilities and increase the visibility of the department upon entering the fifth floor stacks; the original main entrance was located around the corner and down a hallway.
- Create a brand new area for users to access and make use of archives and special collections without interruption. Special collections users had to relocate from the Towson Room into the closed stacks if a meeting was scheduled in the Towson Room.
- Create a brand new collections processing area with storage space for supplies and work tables for organizing and re-housing collections.
- Create dedicated work stations for support and student staff.
- Create two separate, secure storage areas for archival materials with no windows or exterior walls and with heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units that

control temperature and humidity to maintain appropriate environmental conditions for long term preservation of materials.

- Renovate the Towson Room and create a second, new conference room to facilitate special collections instruction and host scholarly seminars or departmental meetings.

Planning the Project

With the assistance of the campus Facilities Management department the University Librarian initiated planning for the renovation and expansion of the archives facilities before the University Archivist was hired in December 2007 and before knowing if funding would be available to go forward with the renovation project. Two staff from Facilities Management served as the architectural designers and used Thomas Wilsted's *Planning new and remodeled archival facilities* (2007) as a guide to prepare the concept design documents. Their design and planning activities were supplemented with necessary engineering support by one of the University's on-call mechanical, electrical, and plumbing consultants to complete the contract documents. Planning for the archives renovation project was truly an inside job.

The first drawings of the archive expansion project were completed in December 2007 and offered three possible options. The first option (Figure 1) would involve demolishing the east wall of the closed stacks, permanently dismantling seven rows of bookshelves in the general stacks, and extending the north and south walls of the facilities two structural bays (the approximate space between two structural columns in a building) or approximately forty-five linear feet (approximately 1,800 square feet). Figure 2 shows details of these demolition activities. Additionally, the Towson Room would be gutted and refinished with new carpet, a new ceiling and lighting fixtures; new wall finishes replacing the wooden paneling, and new conference room furniture. The expanded footprint of the archives facilities would be

reconfigured to create a new main entrance that would lead into a reception area. Upon entering the reception area users would be escorted past two new staff workspaces into the dedicated user area outfitted with tables and chairs. A wall fifty-six inches in height would divide the user area from the collections processing area and allow natural light from the existing windows of the north exterior wall to filter into the collective people spaces. Staff in the collections processing area would be able to access two new closed stacks rooms each equipped with independent HVAC units. Figure 3 shows construction details for this first option which had a projected cost of \$719,791.

Demolition and construction for the second option of the archive expansion project were similar to the first option with one exception, seen in Figure 4. One-third of 505B as seen in Figure 3 is sectioned off to create 505C in Figure 4. 505C as seen in Figure 3 is shown in Figure 4 as 505D, a conference room accessible from the reception area upon passing through the new main entrance. The projected cost for this option was \$731,291.

Demolition and construction for the third option would be similar to that for the first and second options with two exceptions. First, the third option would require demolition of three more rows of bookshelves in the open stacks than required for options one and two. The third option would include the same layout of 505B as seen in Figure 3 and 505D as seen in Figure 4. The third option would differ from the first and second options by adding a second closed stack, 505C, oriented perpendicularly to 505B and 505D. Figure 5 shows the details of the third option. The projected cost for this option was \$886,851.

In March 2008 the Library received word that the proposal to renovate the archives and special collections facilities using the second option as proposed in the concept design documents was funded with a projected start date of January 2009.

Relocating the Archives Department

To ensure the safety and security of the collections, to minimize out-of-pocket expenses not covered by the renovation funds, and to keep the collections accessible the Library took responsibility for packing, moving, and storing collections during the renovation. The University Archivist surveyed the Library building for unused storage space for collections and shared office space to house the archives department. The options for collections storage included a series of unused, lockable study carrels located at the back of the second floor, empty bookshelves in two separate conference rooms, and a mixed-use storage closet adjacent to the Library Administration offices on the fourth floor. Staff and collections most often used to answer reference questions could be relocated to shared office space in a room on the second floor adjacent to the hallway where the study carrels were located.

Figure 6 shows a floor plan of the second floor of the Library; the hallway containing the study carrels is indicated with lettering on the far right. According to anecdotes from library staff the study carrels had once been used as faculty offices. As office space became available elsewhere on campus the study carrels fell primarily into disuse. A few of them were used for storage. With the help of carpentry staff from the campus Facilities Management department it was quite simple to retrofit the study carrels not in use for collections storage. Each study carrel measured approximately seven-and-a-half feet long by six feet wide. Each was furnished with a wall-to-wall built-in desk situated perpendicular to the door and most had a three-foot wide set of free-standing wooden bookshelves. Over the years some of the bookshelves have been appropriated for use elsewhere in the library. We moved seven wooden bookshelves to the Library Administrative Offices conference room and secured them to the wall with L-brackets.

Figure 7 shows a diagram of the hallway containing the study carrels; black shading indicates a carrel that we used to house our collections. Repurposing dismantled metal shelving from the fifth floor the carpenters installed one three foot wide bay of shelving on each of the two empty walls in thirteen study carrels. We were unable to outfit a fourteenth study carrel with metal shelving because of waist-high drywall wainscoting so we used this carrel as a general storage room for oversize boxes and archival supplies. The shelving and desks in the thirteen study carrels would be used to store both our processed collections and our collections backlog.

With some improvisation the carpenters mounted one bay of shelving to each of two empty walls in the study carrels. Each bay of metal shelving is composed of two metal standards, upright metal columns with cutouts for hanging shelves. The metal standards are bolted at the bottom to transverse base pieces. Two horizontal metal spacers connect between two standards to form a frame. A removable, overhanging canopy piece provides dust cover and a bottom shelf sits on a metal kick-plate affixed to the ends of the transverse base pieces. Bracketed shelving can be hung at various heights to accommodate materials in a variety of sizes. The carpenters mounted the standards directly to the wall but had to improvise with the base pieces. The transverse base pieces were designed for shelving assembled in a double sided configuration and not for wall mounting. The simplest solution was to cut eleven-inch long sections of two-by-four lumber. With the two-inch side to the floor the carpenters bolted the standards to the new wooden bases and then mounted them to the wall. Figure 8 is a photograph that shows two bays of shelving installed by the carpenters in one of the study carrels.

Without the canopy on top each bay of metal shelving in the study carrels could accommodate eight shelves at shelf heights with room to store six clamshell boxes (3" H x 12.5" D x 15.75" L) of processed material per shelf. We had outfitted thirteen of the carrels with metal

shelving and, for two of the carrels, retained two wooden bookshelves with six shelves each that could accommodate thirty-six clamshell boxes. Altogether we had enough shelving in the carrels for 1,320 boxes. We had just over 1,450 clamshell boxes of processed material. Using book trucks we transported the processed material from the fifth floor to the second floor and shelved the boxes in numerical order. When we filled up the shelving in one room we moved to the next room until we used up the shelving in all thirteen rooms. In the last room, when we ran out of shelf space, we stacked the remaining boxes in order on top of the built-in desk.

On the second floor of the Library the hallway containing the study carrels sits adjacent to Room 200C, a room with approximately 1,000 square feet of space. This room has served a variety of functions in the last forty years – from study lounge to art gallery to storage to, finally, Periodicals staff office space. In the early 1990s seven Periodicals staff members moved to 200C. Over time the Library cut positions or staff moved as other office space became available and only one person remained in 200C, the Library Technician for Periodicals whose primary responsibility is the shipping and receiving of journals to and from the bindery. As the sole occupant of 200C the Periodicals Technician agreed to share space with the Archives Department staff. The campus carpenters installed more shelving in this area, eleven wall-mounted bays and one double-sided, free standing row of four bays. Figure 9 is a photograph with a view of the area overtaken by Archives Department staff (the area beyond the filing cabinet on the left and the blond-colored bookshelf on the right). We kept the most used collections accessible by storing them in 200C. These collections included our student newspapers, course catalogs, yearbooks, and faculty, class, and alumni files. We also stored our theses and dissertations in this room, primarily because we lacked the shelf space elsewhere to store them.

We had two book collections in the Towson Room that needed to be relocated during the renovation. The Towson Room collection included books on local history, limited-run books, out-of-print books, and many of the library's more expensive art books. The STC collection (short for State Teachers College collection) included second copies of faculty publications, University publications such as yearbooks, reports, and journals; and books related to education and the history of education in Maryland and the United States. We moved the Towson Room books to the Library Administrative Offices conference room and shelved them on the wooden bookshelves we had moved there. The Administrative Offices conference room is situated adjacent to the desks of the two Library Administrative Assistants who would be able to supervise access to the room. Figure 10 is a floor plan of the fourth floor of the Library which shows the Administrative Offices (410) in the upper left corner. We moved the STC books to the conference room marked as 411 in Figure 10. This room was already equipped with empty bookshelves that simply needed to be secured to the wall with L-brackets. This conference room is divided from the Library Administrative Offices by floor to ceiling windows and remains locked when not in use. Access is granted upon request by securing a key from one of the Library Administrative Assistants.

After we moved the processed material and two book collections and relocated the Archives Department to room 200C on the second floor we were left with the following:

- about 500 record storage boxes (10.5" H x 12.5" D x 15.75" L) worth of unprocessed material which we stacked on top of and underneath the built-in desks in the study carrels on the second floor;
- five map cases of oversize material; we moved these map cases to the storage closet adjacent to the Library Administrative Offices (see 413 on Figure 8);

- four filing cabinets of photographs; we moved these to the Periodicals side of 200C;
- a dozen pieces of antique furniture; these we divided up among the Library Administration offices and conference room;
- framed items in various sizes; smaller framed items were boxed up, larger ones stored upright in large cardboard bins that we wheeled into 413;
- 105 linear feet of bound grade rosters; these we shelved on existing shelving in 413 with their spines down in order to maximize shelf usage; and
- a variety of historical artifacts and odd-size materials; these we set on top of the wooden bookshelves in the Library Administrative Offices conference room.

The bulk of the moving of collections was done by two core groups of people: the University Archivist, two archives student assistants, and one of the Library Administrative Assistants who also serves as the Building Coordinator (Team A); and five permanent staff from the campus Materiel Management Department supplemented with six temporary staff (Team B). Team A moved the manageable parts of the collection that could be handled using book trucks: processed collections in clamshell boxes, the two book collections, and other bound materials such as the course catalogs, yearbooks, student newspapers, etc. Team B did the really heavy lifting. With dollies, hand trucks, and large cardboard bins the permanent and temporary Materiel Management staff moved the heavier items such as the record storage boxes, office and antique furniture, empty filing cabinets, map cases, and particularly heavy boxes from the fifth floor to the study carrels, room 413 (the storage closet), and room 200C. We left three particularly large, unwieldy pieces of furniture in the archives facilities for the duration of demolition and

construction. On the day of the big move Materiel Management staff padded these pieces with quilted furniture blankets and wrapped them with shrink wrap to protect them from damage.

When we decided to take responsibility for moving and storing our collections we undertook quite a substantial effort. The process to pack and move the collections started in July 2008 when Library Circulation staff began shifting books to empty the seven rows of shelving we would disassemble. In September 2008 the University Archivist and the Library Administrative Assistant/Building Coordinator conducted a floor-to-floor survey to identify possible storage locations. In mid-September Materiel Management staff conducted a walk-through of the archives facilities to get a sense of how much and what kinds of materials would be moved and the campus carpenters started disassembling shelving on the fifth floor and reassembling it in the study carrels and room 200C on the second floor. In the following months Archives Department staff moved the processed collections in advance of the big move of heavier items executed by Materiel Management staff on December 3. By the close of the fall semester we had emptied every room, shelf, and cabinet in the original archives facilities.

Demolition and Construction

When the renovation and expansion program was funded Facilities Management gave the Library a projected start date of January 2009, assuming that the process of selecting the architect to carry out the construction design went as planned. The University had approved funding for a very specific program of improvements to the archives and the on-call architect indicated that he did not think he could design the project and make a profit. In the end, two Facilities Planners from the campus Facilities Management department served as the architectural designers and prepared the construction documents detailing the specifics of the

renovation down, literally, to the nuts and bolts. Because of this change in the design approach the renovation project was delayed until mid-March.

Once the Facilities Planners completed the construction documents things moved quickly. In early February 2009 University Procurement sent a request for bids out to on-call general contractors. Four contractors submitted bids on February 17 and University Procurement awarded a contract shortly thereafter. In mid-March 2009, about a year after the University funded our proposal, the contractor and his crew built a temporary construction wall and started work on the renovation. The general contractor's crew demolished the back wall of the closed stacks and gutted the Towson Room, the archivist's office, and the closed stacks area from floor to ceiling. They removed wood wall paneling in the Towson Room, demolished a set of built-in bookcases, ripped out ceiling tiles, light fixtures, fan-coil air conditioning units, and existing electrical lines. They installed duct work for the new HVAC systems, pipes for the fire suppression system, new electrical wiring for light fixtures, and new plumbing to relocate the sink to the new collections processing area. Once the construction workers laid new floor and ceiling tracks and framed the walls the new archives facilities started to take shape. From start to finish the entire renovation and expansion project took about four months. We did the final walk-through with the contractor on July 15, shortly after the new furniture arrived. Within weeks after that we started to move back in to the new facilities.

Throughout the renovation project we had access to all of our collections and were able to continue our regular service activities. According to our statistics we were handling about ten requests for information per month. During the time period we were moving out, renovating, and moving back in (September 2008 – July 2009), we actually saw a slight increase in requests for information and were handling about twelve requests per month. When our requests for

information were the result of walk-in traffic, as opposed to requests received via e-mail or over the phone, we seldom had more than one or two visitors at a time and they could be fairly easily accommodated at a small table we reserved for such an occasion. It was a bit awkward in such tight quarters but it worked. We had kept our most frequently used collections closest to us in room 200C. We made a list of the collection number ranges of our processed materials stored in each study carrel so that when we got a request for information that required those materials it was fairly easy to locate them. We even had time to conduct a survey of every single box of unprocessed materials, assign accession numbers for those boxes, record some basic information about the contents, and identify the collection number to which each box of material belonged.

Going Green

For a little over ten years TU has been implementing green initiatives by preserving existing green spaces on campus, creating new green spaces, and adopting standards for environmentally sustainable construction by installing high-efficiency heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems to campus buildings and using recycled and renewable materials in renovations and new construction.¹³ In August 2007 President Robert Caret announced TU's intention to pursue LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for all new buildings and construction on campus.¹⁴ LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC)¹⁵, a non-profit organization that promotes green building. The standards for green buildings set for by the USGBC address metrics not only for energy savings, water efficiency, and CO₂ emissions reduction but also for improving the overall quality of the indoor environment.¹⁶

To align our project with TU's green efforts we chose environmentally friendly building materials and furniture made from recycled or rapidly renewable materials for our renovation and expansion project. For example, the carpet we selected was made from approximately 66-74% recycled content¹⁷ and the adhesive we used contained an average of 55% recycled content. The carpet was woven as modular squares instead of broadloom carpet rolls. Carpet squares are easier to install and replace, if needed, and create less waste during installation than carpet rolls. In the general market one may expect to pay an average cost of about two percent more for green building materials over non-green building materials.¹⁸ Because we incorporated green initiatives into the design of our project from the very beginning we did not incur any additional costs and Facilities Planners indicated that the manufacturers we purchased products from were able to comply with our requests for green materials.

All of the building materials used for the archives renovation and expansion project construction contained very low or no volatile organic compounds (VOCs). According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) VOCs are gases emitted from such solids and liquids as paints, lacquers, paint strippers, cleaning supplies, pesticides, building materials and furnishings, office equipment such as copiers and printers, and glues and adhesives.¹⁹ Levels of VOCs tend to be higher indoors than outdoors and elevated concentrations can persist in the air long after activities using materials that contain VOCs is completed.²⁰ Health effects of VOC exposure include eye, nose, and throat irritation, headaches and loss of coordination, and nausea, to name a few.²¹ VOCs present in archival storage areas can volatilize and interact with archival records, triggering unwanted chemical reactions that contribute to their deterioration.²² In addition to aligning our project with TU initiatives, eliminating the chance that our archival collections

would be exposed to unwanted air pollutants was a key reason we chose low and no VOC building materials for our renovation project.

Problems Addressed

With the new design we addressed a number of issues that were problematic with the design of the original archives facilities. First, the Archives Department suffered from a lack of visibility. The main entrance of the original design was secluded around the corner and down a long hallway primarily used by Library staff to access the service elevator. We addressed this issue by creating a new main entrance visible upon entering the fifth floor stacks from the elevator lobby (Figure 11). Second, the original archives facilities did not allow for the increase in staff. The only dedicated staff work space was the 135 square feet contained in the archivist's office. We addressed this issue by creating two new built-in staff workstations Figure 12. Third, the original facilities had no dedicated user space. Typically users worked with collections in the Towson Room but had to interrupt their work and relocate to the closed stacks during meetings. We addressed this issue by creating dedicated user space equipped with built-in work counters, tables, and chairs (Figure 13). Fourth, space for processing collections was limited and restrictive. We addressed this issue by creating a dedicated collections processing area with a new sink, built-in cabinets for storing supplies, and six standing height, large work tables and stools (Figure 14). Fifth, the closed stacks area was not secure and not equipped to maintain appropriate environmental conditions to ensure long term preservation of materials. We addressed this issue by creating two new closed stacks spaces with windowless, insulated interior walls that extend above the level of the drop ceiling all the way to the roof (Figure 15). Temperature and humidity levels are maintained by means of an independently controlled, self-monitoring HVAC system to which we can make adjustments as necessary. A card swipe system

controls access to the closed stacks and generates records of whose identification card has been used to access (or try to access) the storage space. A sprinkler system was installed to forestall loss by fire. Although it was not particularly an issue it is also worth mentioning that we renovated the Towson Room and created a second conference room (Figures 16 and 17), and equipped both with ceiling mounted projectors and screens to facilitate special collections instruction.

Lessons Learned

The renovation and expansion project was organized, well designed, and carried off with few hitches but we still found that there were a few lessons we learned along the way. There were a few details that we overlooked during the design process that have created some interesting challenges now that we are getting settled into the new space.

The layout of the new facilities was designed to utilize every square inch of available space without overcrowding people or collections. Furniture was selected with ergonomics in mind and in compliance with accessibility guidelines outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). One thing we did not take into account, in terms of functionality, was the fact that we use book trucks to store collections in process and to move things around. Although we have standing height tables in the new processing area they are not quite tall enough to tuck a book truck underneath; book trucks in and around work areas congest the walkways around tables. At the end of the day we wheel the book trucks into the closed stacks and this congests the aisles between the rows of shelving. Occasionally, pulling boxes of materials from shelving will involve moving a book truck out of the way to gain access.

We made a number of enhancements to the renovation design to ensure security of the collections. Traditionally, a special collections reading room or user area would have a desk where a staff member would be stationed at all times while the department was open for business. We added a set of lockers adjacent to the user area for storing personal items while working with special collections. But the two dedicated staff desks are oriented away from the user space, so that staff are facing away and do not have a direct line of sight to supervise collection users. There is a wall between the processing area and the user area that is only 56” tall but even standing up staff in the processing area still do not have a direct line of sight to supervise users. We addressed this detail during the design process by requesting the addition of a window to the Archivist’s office that looks directly into the user area.

Because of the country’s economic situation the contractor’s bid came in under budget and we were able to add some high quality finishes to the Towson Room including all-wood baseboards, chair rails, and crown molding. As a last minute addition we also purchased wall-mounted display lighting to spotlight portraits of principals and presidents of the school that had been on display in the Towson Room before the renovation. The display lighting gives the room a museum-quality look and feel. Unfortunately, the surface area between the display light and the chair rail is only about forty-five inches and many of the portrait heights exceed that dimension by ten to fifteen inches. This realization was disappointing but will allow us to continue to display the portraits in another area of the library where they will have more visibility to the campus community. With those portraits on display elsewhere we now have the opportunity to consider rotating other framed items for display or possibly even consider hosting modest-sized traveling exhibits.

Our biggest post-renovation challenge has to do with the shelving that was selected for the closed stacks. Before the renovation the closed stacks shelving was standard adjustable units with eleven inch deep shelving, similar to what would be found in a library's open stacks. The shelving wasn't quite deep enough for the archival boxes and most of our bound materials were shelved in the Towson Room on built-in wooden bookcases. For the new stacks the designer selected archival metal shelving with fixed shelves that are not as easy to adjust as the previous shelving. The shelves are forty-two inches wide and sixteen inches deep with shelf heights of approximately ten and one-quarter inches. These dimensions are ideal for storing standard, legal-sized document boxes or record storage boxes used in archives but not ideal for shelving books. Shelving the books one book deep was a waste of space. Shelving books two deep maximized space but posed challenges when retrieving books from the back row. We addressed this issue by requesting the addition of wall-mounted shelving on the south wall of the larger closed stacks. Although the designer complied with this request we ended up with a shortage of book shelving due to a miscalculation. Our solution was to purchase book trays from an archival supplier for books with dimensions of ten inches tall by eight inches wide or less. The book trays are stored sideways on the shelves and increase our linear storage capacity by 62% per shelf. Once we are finished shifting and shelving books we will label the book trays with their call number ranges. When we need to pull a book we will simply find the book tray that contains the call number of the book, pull out the book tray and set it on a book truck, pull the book, and then return the tray to the shelf.

Conclusion

With this renovation and expansion project we have modernized our archives and special collections facilities and created a functional work and user space to support and promote the use of special collections materials. We created new dedicated user space so that faculty, staff, students, and other researchers have room to review and use special collections materials without being interrupted. To further support the use of special collections we renovated the Towson Room and created a new conference room. We have created new dedicated processing space with plenty of work surfaces to process, stabilize, re-house, and preserve our rare and unique collections. We created two secure, climate controlled storage facilities to accommodate our current collections with room for future growth. With all the amenities of a modern, updated facility we are poised to continue our development of an active, engaging program to promote the use of archives and special collections.

In the last few months we have been continuing to settle into the new space. As we have done so we have started to notice more foot traffic, people drawn through our front door by the massive, antique wooden display case that sits just inside our main entrance (Figure 18). It contains a number of pieces of Imari china collected by M. Theresa Wiedefeld, TU's seventh president. Sometimes these people who wander in had visited the archives or the Towson Room before the renovation, and they remark on the dramatic change that has taken place, occasionally expressing disbelief that where they are standing could be the same secluded, dreary space they had seen previously. Often these people have been students, faculty, or staff who have been on campus for a few years and never knew that we had anything like the special collections department here in the library. We walk them through the details of the renovation process and

indicate with gestures where walls and shelving once stood. Though they do appreciate the efforts made to create the new space they are most impressed with the collections themselves.

Figure 1. Cook Library, Fifth Floor

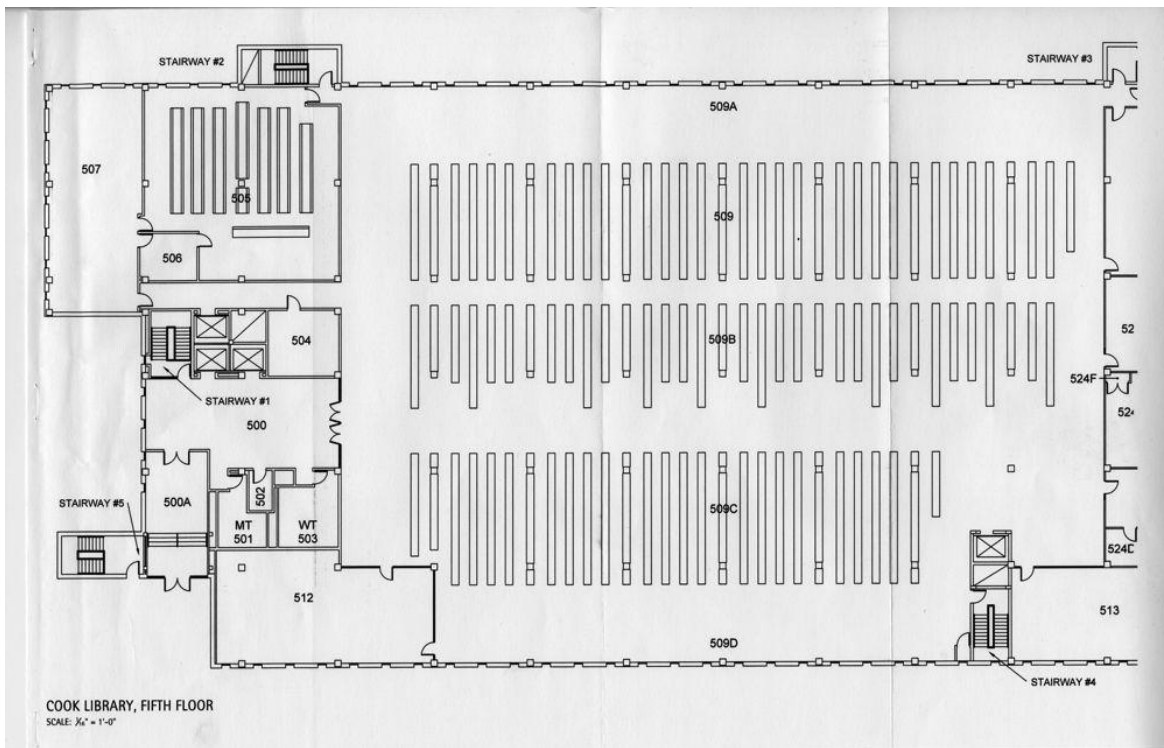


Figure 2. Proposed Demolition

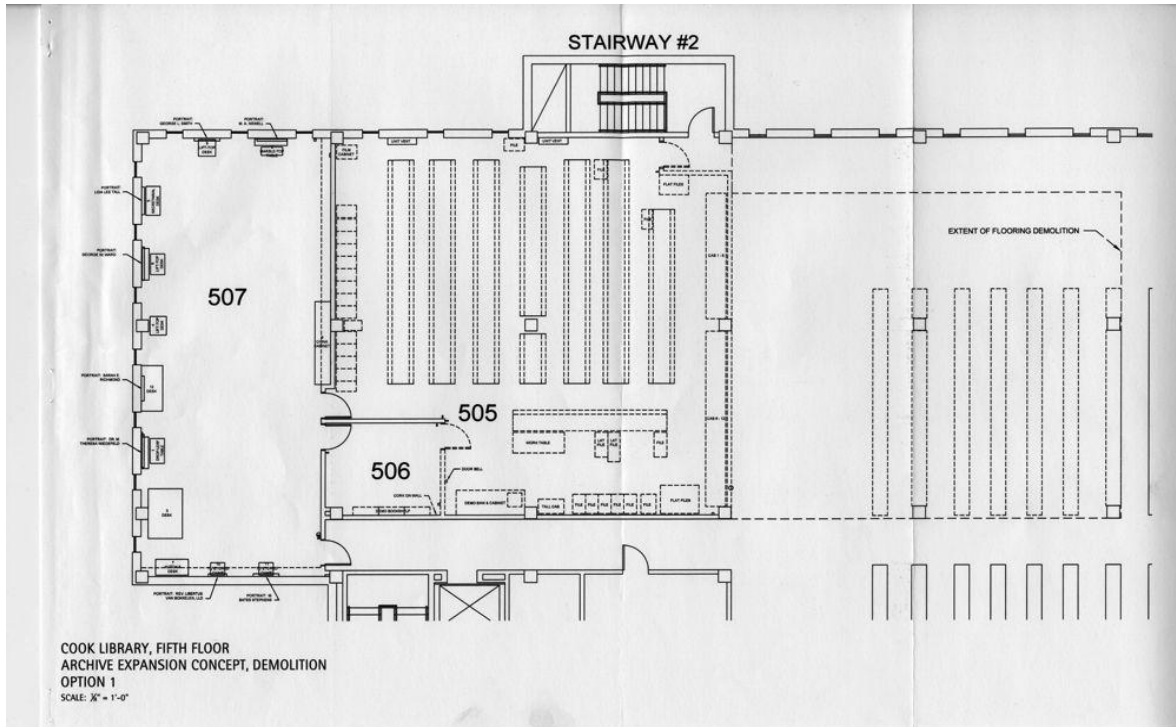


Figure 3. Renovation, Option 1

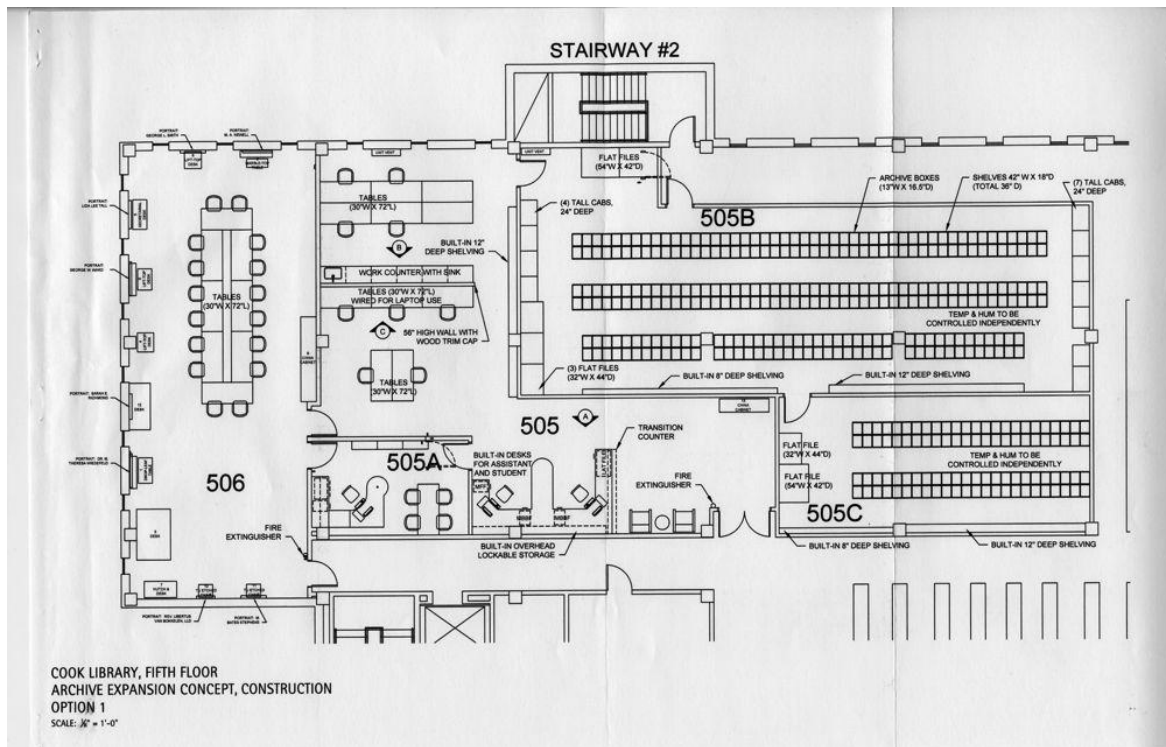


Figure 4. Renovation, Option 2

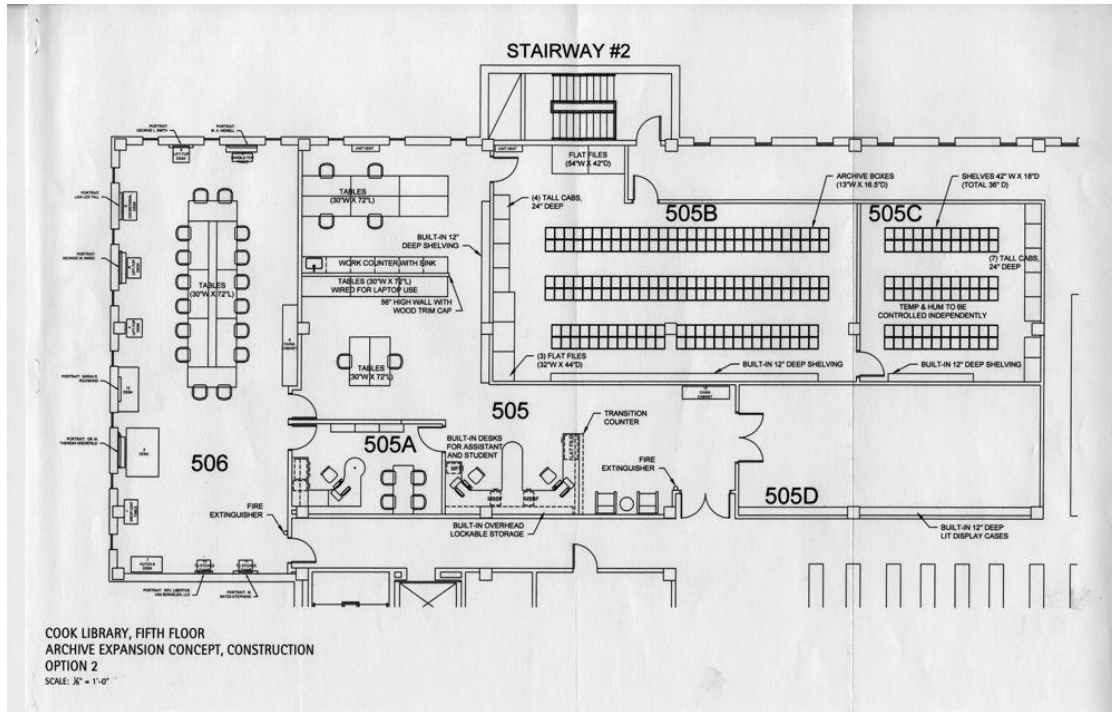


Figure 5. Renovation, Option 3

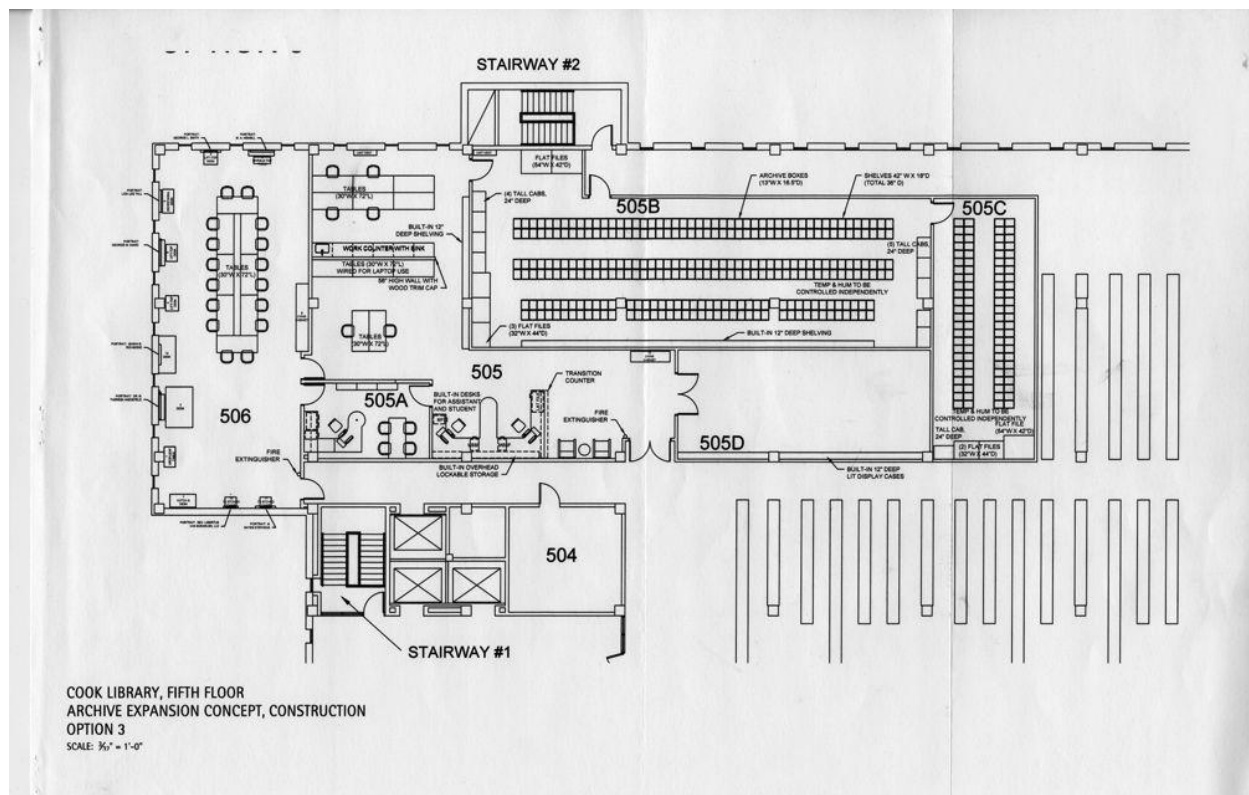


Figure 6. Cook Library, Second Floor

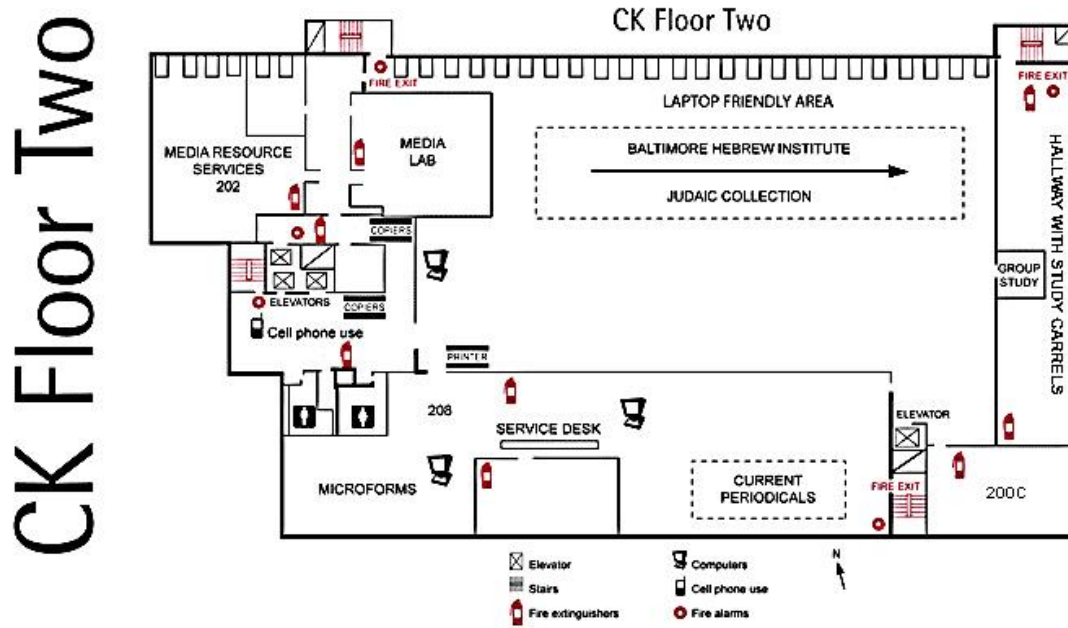
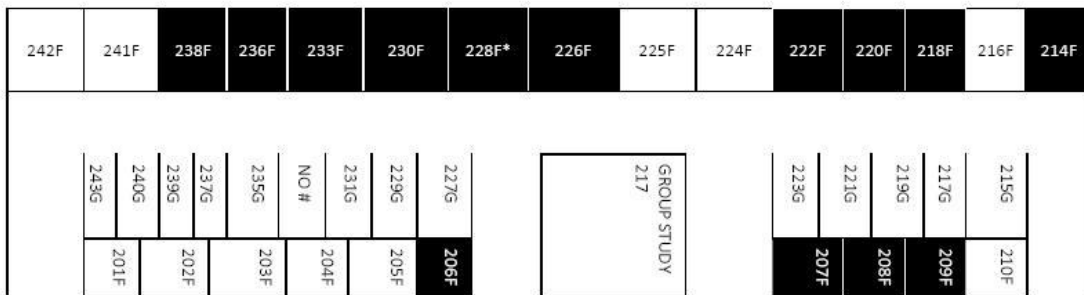


Figure 7. Study Carrel Diagram

DIAGRAM OF 2ND FLOOR STUDY CARRELS



NOT TO SCALE

Black background indicates study carrel used for storage of archival material.

*We did not install shelving in this room because of the drywall wainscoting.

Figure 8. Study Carrel with Shelving



Figure 9. Temporary Archives Office



Figure 10. Cook Library, Fourth Floor

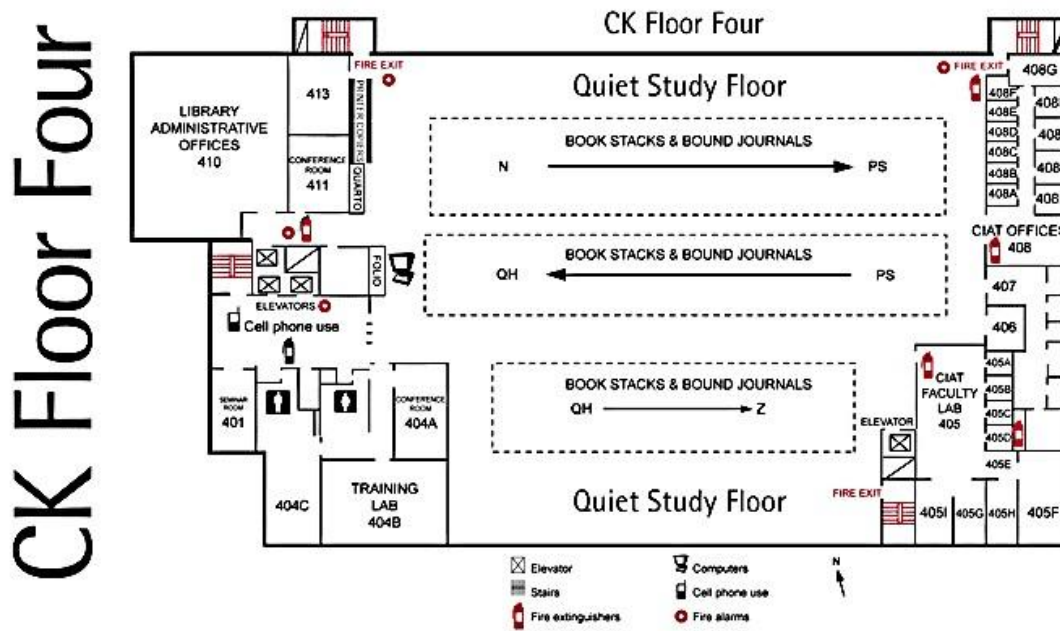


Figure 11. Special Collections Entrance



Figure 12. Special Collection Reception Area (with Staff Desks)



Figure 13. User Space in Special Collections



Figure 14. Staff Workspace in Special Collections



Figure 15. Closed Stacks



Figure 16. Towson Room in Special Collections



Figure 17. Conference Room in Special Collections



Figure 18. Wooden Display Case



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- ³ Towson University. *Undergraduate Catalog* (Towson, Md.: The school, 2006), 2.
- ⁴ Towson University. "About TU: Towson at a Glance." 9/2009.
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- ⁵ Maryland State Normal School. *Preliminary Announcement* (Baltimore: The School, 1915), [1].
- ⁶ State Teachers College at Towson. *Catalogue* (Towson, Md.: The School, 1958), 8.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Towson State College. *Bulletin, 1971-1972*. Towson: The School, 1971, p.3.
- ⁹ Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn. *Preserving Archives and Manuscripts*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1993), 51.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*, 51.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, 77.
- ¹² *Ibid*, 59.
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- ¹⁵ U.S. Green Building Council. "Intro – What LEED is." 2009.
<http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=1988> (accessed December 15, 2009).
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- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn. *Preserving Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1993), 78.