

Expanded Knowledge

Oregon's largest research library has been remodeled many times since it was constructed

By Dennis Bolt
Oregon Daily Emerald

Everything around campus seems to be named after Phil Knight. The library and the new law school are two of the largest buildings that have the Knight name. But, did you know that the library existed long before Phil Knight ever came to campus?

The Knight Library, the largest library between San Francisco and Seattle, is a building that houses much history and has undergone three major additions.

Before the current library was built in 1937, the collection of books was stored in Fenton Hall, which was specifically designed as the library in 1907. The remnants of the old stacks are still put to good use by the University archives and the mathematics library.

Both the current library and its neighbor, the Museum of Art, were designed by the most influential campus architect and planner, Ellis F. Lawrence.

No state funds were used to build the original Knight Library, and the total cost of the 1937 building was only

\$500,000. In comparison, the 1994 addition cost almost \$30 million, and the state contributed almost \$18 million.

As well as founding the architecture school, Lawrence was responsible for designing the majority of the historic buildings on campus. His most typical buildings are those surrounding the Knight Library in the Memorial Quad and those near the "Pioneer Mother" statue.

The library was envisioned as the backdrop for the main academic quad on campus. This effect can best be seen by watching the opening scene in

Animal House, where a fake statue creates just the right "Ivy League" atmosphere in front of the library's 60-year-old brick facade.

Works Progress Administration workers helped create the library's art deco look when building it during the height of the Depression. Much of Lawrence's work at the library and museum uses artwork in the design.

The Knight Library is one of the best examples of architecture integrated with art in Oregon. From the carved inscription over the main doors to the stone heads at the top of the facade, there are touches of art everywhere. In the original building, metal gates, murals and stone carving all add to the

experience of Lawrence's original design.

The stone heads represent 15 areas of academic life on campus, and include such notable figures as Shakespeare, Thomas Jefferson and Darwin. According to a University publication, Edna Dunberg, the University student who carved these figures, died in her twenties, only a few months after the library was complete.

Continuing the artistic tradition, the 1994 addition helps reunite the old building and the subsequent additions. Brick, stone and copper make this newest addition appear much like the new science buildings.

According to Andrew Bonamici, the associate University librarian, the newly completed addition was a long time in coming and attempts to satisfy many user questions. In the late 1980s, students complained there were too few seats, too few places to study and too much variation in temperature.

On the 50th anniversary in 1987, planning for a new addition came up with four goals: integration of the three major additions, expansion of reading spaces, flexibility of use and recognition of library history.

Built long before Knight was on campus, the library is continuing to grow and is approaching the 2.5 million book mark. While it serves a large part of students' academic needs, it also is an integral part of the Lawrence campus plan.



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Faculty, staff and students of the University of Oregon, as well as members of the public, are invited to attend a presentation of findings and recommendations by the 1997 Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges Accreditation Evaluation Committee.

Wednesday, April 23, 11:30 a.m.
Knight Library Browsing Room



This presentation of recommendations marks the conclusion of the Evaluation Committee's review of the University of Oregon's 10-year accreditation process.