

THE TIMKEN SCIENCE LIBRARY IN FRICK HALL

The Timken Science Library is housed in the oldest building on The College of Wooster campus. When Frick Hall was dedicated in 1900, it was The University of Wooster's first library and served that purpose for more than six decades until Andrews Library was completed in 1962.

For more than 30 years, Frick housed The College of Wooster Art Museum as well as faculty and staff offices. Completed in 1998, the year-long \$4-million project to renovate Frick returned the building to its original purpose as a library. Made possible by a \$1.5 million grant from the Timken Foundation and several other gifts from alumni and friends, the fully restored building houses Wooster's natural science, mathematics and computer science collections, which had previously been scattered among smaller departmental libraries in the individual science buildings.

The Timken Science Library currently contains more than 37,000 book volumes—15,000 more than Wooster's entire collection when Frick Hall was dedicated at the beginning of the 20th century—in addition to an extensive journal collection.

"I'm intrigued by the symbolism of one of the College's more recent renovations being its oldest building and by the symbolism of the new science library being in the College's first free-standing library building, which was for all fields of study, not just science," said Damon Hickey, director of libraries. "In addition, I'm struck by the connection the new library provides between the students of today and tomorrow and the Wooster students who used it as a library up to 1962. The gap has been bridged."



That bridge to the past is no more clearly seen than in the building's most dramatic feature, the meticulously restored main reading room with vivid friezes and classical columns contrasting with dark-oak woodwork.

"Donna Jacobs, the science librarian, will remember the day she uncovered an old postcard depicting the reading room as it was first built," recalled architect Steven M. Foote, FAIA, of Perry, Dean, Rogers & Partners, the Boston-based architectural firm commissioned by Wooster to design the renovation and restoration of Frick. "That little image became a kind of icon for the design team, and the postcard was kept on the wall in the studio throughout the design process as a reminder of the original intent."

At the same time, the restoration of the reading room presented a number of challenges to the craftsmen working under the supervision of Bogner Construction Company, the Wooster-based firm selected to manage all phases of the construction.

"As with all renovations, we came across some surprises and had to do some problem-solving on the fly," said Ted Bogner, president of the construction firm. "For instance, a lot of the plaster work in the room had deteriorated as a result of moisture intrusion during the course of almost 100 years. The individuals working on this part of the renovation really got turned on by the creative possibilities presented by this project. So, they employed an interesting approach to recreating these old plaster architectural elements. First, they set about covering the old plaster friezes around the tops of the walls, as well as the capitals on the six existing columns, with a strong Mylar film to protect these elements as they made exact mirror-image, plaster of paris casts in specially constructed wooden forms. Once the plaster of paris had set, they cast new, exact reproductions of the century-old work. One by one the friezes and capitals were perfectly restored."

Bogner also related that the columns in the main reading room presented yet another challenge to the craftsmen.

"While the originals have the appearance of marble, the columns are actually a combination of plaster and crushed mica covered with a glaze," said Bogner. "Since the renovation plans for the room included constructing two additional columns in line with the existing columns, we had to find a way to replicate the old columns using currently available materials. In addition, the new columns

would be used to hide some of the new heating and cooling ducts being installed in the room. We obtained two prefabricated, fiberglass-reinforced epoxy, hollow columns. Once they were installed, a faux artist recreated with paint the exact look of the older columns.”



In addition, Bogner explained that meticulous restoration techniques extended to the carpentry in the reading room.

“Time and heavy use had taken their toll on the original bookcases located around the perimeter,” recalled Bogner. “Using one of the old bookcases as a model, our cabinetmakers recreated a full-size mock-up. Once approved, we replicated the design for all the new bookcases and finished them with a dark stain to match the original woodwork in the room.”

When it first opened, Frick was much smaller than it is now. The original building included the main entrance and what is now the west wing. In 1905, the building was completed with the addition of what is now the east end. Eventually a second story was added to the stacks. Frick now encompasses 19,075 square feet on three levels. The old main entrance on University Street has become one of nine windows spaced across the

upper-level front of the building. Visitors to the restored building may now enter either of two ground-level doors on the south and north sides of the structure.

The lower floor contains the circulation area, an electronic classroom and computer laboratory, offices for the science library associate and student assistants, a group study room and mobile compact shelving for science periodicals. According to Jacobs, the electronic classroom and computer laboratory are more important than the modest size might at first indicate.

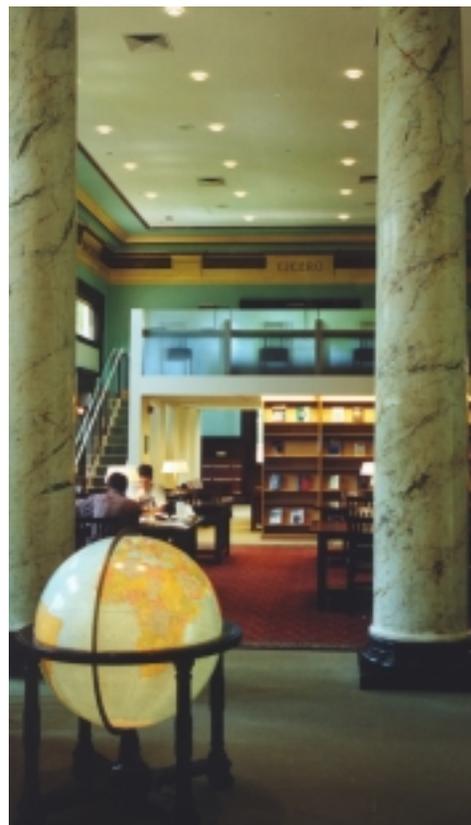
“We’re moving toward superseding paper-based science journals with online journals at a rapid pace,” said Jacobs. “The new computer lab allows students not only to bring up a reference to a certain article, but to read it online or to print it out for future reading. We’ll have access to many more journals than we could ever have in print.”

Jacobs, who teaches many Wooster students each semester the skills they need to complete efficient and effective online searches, said the electronic classroom will assist her in accomplishing this important instructional task.

“I used to have to go all over campus to teach groups of students the intricacies of online searches, which can be pretty tedious,” recalled Jacobs. “I’m delighted to have a computer lab where I can do the kind of instruction all in one place that I’ve had to do piecemeal in the past.”

The upper main floor contains the recreated reading room with its visual centerpiece, a 32-inch, full-color, internally illuminated Diplomat globe manufactured by Replogle Globes, Inc. Mounted on a hand-carved wooden base, which matches the room’s woodwork, the globe features more than 20,000 place names. It is the gift of the Bogner Construction Company and the families of Theodore, Peter and Robert Bogner.

Two mezzanines project into the north and south ends of the reading room from the stack wing. These mezzanines double as reading areas on the upper levels and, on the lower levels, house shelving for the science reference collection and current science periodicals.



The stack wing, reconstructed for additional load-bearing and better headroom, contains the compact periodical shelving on the ground floor, conventional shelving and the science librarian’s office on the main floor, and more stacks and a group study area on the mezzanine level.

“It followed that the new elements in the building should be detailed in a modernist aesthetic rather than to copy or imitate the classical original,” noted Foote. “New shelving and casework have been fitted into original walls and openings where appropriate. But by and large the materials and assembly techniques in the new work stand in contrast to the older conditions. The staircases, in steel and glass, the glass handrails and mezzanine parapets, maple casework, and interior windows are examples of this approach.”