

Brief History of the Robert B. Haas Family Library
By Jesse Vestermark, Kress Fellow in Art Librarianship
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We are proud to herald the opening of the Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library within the renovated Paul Rudolph Hall and adjacent to the newly constructed Jeffrey Loria Center for the History of Art. With this new beginning, we are delving into history of the Arts Library at Yale, attempting to shed light on its multiple iterations and colorful, dramatic past.

The Collection Begins

The Yale School of Art was founded in the late 1860s, and within the following decade, a small book collection began taking shape in Street Hall. Between 1908 and 1916, the study of architecture was gradually incorporated into the Yale program along with a related library in Weir Hall. The Drama, Slide and Photo collections began within the Art Library but eventually moved into their own respective locations. The Art and Architecture collections grew steadily until Street Hall's occupation by the Navy during WWII forced a merger, conveniently placing core materials for both disciplines in Weir.

Growing Pains

In 1953, the Art and Architecture Library moved to the former sculpture wing of the Yale Art Gallery. This shift required heavy weeding and left room only for a "working" collection, giving momentum to talk of a new building. Paul Rudolph, chair of the School of Architecture during the late 1950s, had been part of the library planning committee and was hired to design a School of Art and Architecture building within which a new library would reside.

The new building opened in 1963 and was hailed as a landmark for Rudolph and his sculptural style, which combined Brutalist textures and materials with a post-modern interlocking of 36 levels. After Rudolph left Yale in 1965, the "A & A" was subjected to increasingly haphazard patch-ups and re-designs that continued long after the 1969 fire that destroyed the upper floors.

Triumphant Rebirth

Architect Charles Gwathmey, a former student of Rudolph's, was chosen to return the building to its current, more dignified state. The Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library brings together not only the disciplines of Art and Architecture, but also Drama, Visual Resources and a wonderful, expanded Special Collections area. We hope you share in our excitement over this powerful new space and its myriad resources.