

East Asia Library: Programmatic Vision and Space Redesign

The plan to reconfigure and renovate the East Asia Library represents a unique opportunity to transform the nature of interaction between East Asian Studies faculty, students, visitors, and staff and provide enhanced support for East Asian Studies program at Yale. This proposal suggests ways in which available space could be utilized in support of these objectives. Its recommendations are based on three premises:

First, East Asia Library public space on the second floor of Sterling should become the central campus *focal point* for an otherwise dispersed East Asian Studies community at Yale. An enhanced East Asia Library therefore needs to provide facilities, collections, and service areas that will appeal to Yale-based users and our frequent domestic and international visitors, as well. The space does not adequately support the current program for any of these groups and requires re-conceptualization to attract undergraduates, provide a base for graduate students, better support faculty research and teaching, and accommodate visiting scholars.

Second, the emphasis needs to shift from the current exclusive focus on housing physical collections to planning for the enhancement of *interactions between readers, library staff, and print and electronic resources*. While the need for immediate transition to an environment that will allow for computer and network use is obvious, spaces to ensure proper technical support, training, and instruction are also necessary. An area for reference consultations, small group study, and other activities that do not fit well with quiet study zones is also desirable. In addition, flexible design to account for a future that is less dependent on print resources is essential.

Third, while the East Asia Library spaces are spread between two floors and myriad rooms in Sterling, they should be viewed in a *holistic manner* to ensure as much flexibility in use as possible. Planning should allow for the flow of collections and staff between the floors and among the rooms as necessary over time to accommodate changing needs. In addition, the provision of comfortable staff areas located to enhance contact with library users and designed for efficiency will allow better provision of all East Asia Library services.

Current Status of East Asia Library Space

The East Asia Library occupies space on the mezzanine and second floors of Sterling Memorial Library and consists of three discreet areas:

I. Mezzanine Level

The *Mezzanine Level* is where technical service functions are performed (acquisitions and cataloging) and most EAL staff actually have their desks.

II. Second Floor Inner Corridor

Ranged around the south and west sides of the SML second floor *Inner Corridor* (adjacent to the Music Library core) is a warren of small rooms supporting both public service and staff needs. The space includes areas used for offices (Rooms 212 and 213), collections and collection support functions (Room 210), and teaching (Room 207).

III. East Asia Reading Room

The *East Asia Reading Room* is located on the north (Wall Street) side of the second floor. It actually consists of four rooms, as follows. (Note that for unknown reasons there is no Room 220).

1. Periodical Reading Room (Room 218)
2. East Asia Reading Room (Room 219)
3. Asia Reading Room (Room 221)
4. Old Yale Classification 'Fv' Range Stacks (Room 222)

These four rooms are referred to collectively as the *East Asia Reading Room* and provide space for five collections (the Periodical, Reference, Sinological Seminar, Asia Reading Room, and Old Yale Class Fv book collections) and associated public service activities. This space, as currently configured, is no longer adequate to support the EAL program:

1. Collections. Reference and periodical collections are beyond full capacity. Nearly half of currently received periodicals are kept in a staff area due to lack of public space, greatly inconveniencing readers. Reference books that should be readily accessible are sent to the stacks due to space constraints.
2. Public Services. There is no zone where reference transactions and instruction can take place without disturbing readers. There is no secure zone where the collection of reference CDs and equipment for printing and scanning can be maintained. Two tier stacks preclude access by the disabled.
3. Reader Services. There is no wiring to support laptop use. In addition, due to years of deferred maintenance, the room and its furnishings are dingy and unappealing, making the space ill suited even for its "reading" function. Lighting is inadequate, temperature control is problematic, and the furniture has neared the end of its life span.
4. Instructional Services. The Reading Room supports university teaching as well as and a full EAL instructional program. Three faculty members use Room 207 for all class meetings and others use it for some class periods. However, this room is no longer suitable for teaching given the lack of electronic capability.

Recommendations

Based on the program envisioned above, the following goals are recommended:

1. Expand space for Periodical and Reference Collections.
2. Improve periodical browsing area with comfortable chairs.
3. Create attractive areas for group and individual study with appropriate lighting and wiring for computer use.

4. Improve the ability of graduate student to secure library research materials and have some privacy for quiet study.
5. Construct a seminar room with capacity for electronic instruction.
6. Add a multi-media area for CD use, scanning, etc.
7. Introduce an area to support language learners. Include access to both electronic and print resources.
8. Provide display cases to showcase East Asian collections and faculty publications.