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A Place of Learning . . . University of Nebraska East Campus Library

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A modernistic representation of a classic Greek Temple... An architectural and aesthetic showplace for the University of Nebraska, along with the Sheldon Art Gallery...

A utilitarian structure, of strikingly simple design, constructed to serve the needs of the University's newly-named East Campus, looking ahead at least 25 years...

All of these phrases aptly describe the new $1.25 million library which is now being used by University agricultural and home economics students and faculty.

According to Frank Lundy, director of libraries at NU, completion of the three-story steel and glass structure, faced with pebbled concrete, fulfills a long-recognized need for expanded library facilities to serve the College of Agriculture and Home Economics.

The library serving the College of Agriculture and Home Economics had been housed in Agricultural Hall (the administration building of the College) since 1905. The collection of books in 1905 consisted of about 5,000 volumes to serve a student body of 332 persons and 18 faculty members.

During the 1964-65 academic year there were 1,235 undergraduate students enrolled in agriculture and home economics, and about 200 graduate students in the two areas. The resident faculty and research staff totaled 168. In addition, the library facility is used by the agricultural and home economics Extension staff and a number of individuals with Federal appointments who are office on the East Campus in various departments.

The new library, now housing approximately 100,000 volumes, brings under one roof for the first time a number of separate collections that had been stored in widely separated locations. Books had been kept in the basement, two main floors, and attic of Agricultural Hall. Some 30,000 volumes had been stored in the basement of Love Library, two miles away on the city campus. Also being incorporated into the central collection are the few remaining departmental and laboratory libraries scattered around East Campus. Volumes in all of these libraries are being interfled with related volumes in the respective broad subject areas such as entomology, biochemistry, and others.

In addition to existing agricultural and home economics collections, several thousand volumes related to the field of biology have been moved from Bessey Hall on the city campus to alleviate bulging book storage facilities there.

Further plans call for making available to agricultural and home economics students on East Campus more references in the humanities and social sciences. Because it had not been possible to shelf additional volumes in the cramped Ag Hall book rooms, it often has been necessary for an East Campus student to make a special trip to city campus to procure a single book.

Projected University plans to locate classrooms and laboratories of non-agricultural disciplines on East Campus will broaden the function of the new library; and although it will be the home library for agriculture and home economics students, it is predicted that eventually it will become a second all-university library. The ultimate book capacity of the new library is 250,000 volumes.
Both its location and features of the library reflect the belief of University planners that it will become the hub of East Campus in years to come as the institution grows and develops. The structure is located in the midst of the rose and peony gardens, which at present is the eastern edge of the campus building area. However, long-range plans for the development of East Campus would put the library near its center.

The library is a three-story square, with a light well running through its center. It contains 52,000 square feet of usable floor space, which compares with approximately 150,000 square feet for Love Library on the downtown campus.

A 13-foot overhang on the building is most distinctive and the subject of much comment. The overhang, an integral part of the structural design of the building, allows the liberal use of tinted glass on all sides. This, in turn, brings beauty into the midst of learning by allowing users of the library to view the lovely, peaceful setting of the campus.

The outstanding characteristics of the entire library are simplicity and flexibility. There is a minimum of fixed internal commitments, such as stairs and elevators. Complete flexibility is assured by the use of free-standing book stacks. A University stipulation that floors be made strong enough to hold a maximum, reasonable weight load at any place at any time will allow the stacks to be moved or re-arranged as book collection and student enrollment grows. Statistics show that the total book collection in a typical University research library doubles every 20 years.

The main floor contains basic reference and bibliographic works of most interest to the undergraduate student. Adjacent to the study areas are browsing shelves containing new periodicals for leisurely reading. Several locations on the first and second floors are carpeted and furnished for lounge areas, adding to the drawing power of the library for students.

Study tables are especially designed for students, this after Library Director Frank Lundy visited numerous libraries over the country and concluded that most tables of this type were too small. Tables to accommodate four undergraduate students each are 48 inches wide, compared with 42 inches in many libraries. Tables for use by a single graduate student are...
42 inches wide. Tables for undergraduate students are dispersed around the edge of the stacks on the main floor, allowing both maximum concentration for serious-minded students and easy access to the books.

Grouped around three sides of the light well is a central core of offices and library staff work rooms. The lighting in the new library accentuates its flexibility. Fluorescent lighting tubes run the full width of the building . . . about 120 feet . . . so that illumination is uniform throughout. This will allow inter-changing of book cases and study tables as the need arises. A false honeycomb ceiling below the fluorescent tubes, adapted from the egg-case ceiling pattern of several years ago, diffuses the light to the extent that book pages of high-gloss enamel stock appear to be off-white to the reader. This lighting will enable students to do intensive, close reading for longer periods of time without eyestrain.

The second or top floor carries out the structure's primary function as a research library. The floor is basically a giant tray on top of columns which rise from the main floor. This means there are no physical obstructions on the top floor to hamper flexibility.

This floor serves as a faculty and graduate research area with 24 faculty study rooms located around the light well. The book collection consists primarily of pure and applied sciences. All publications of the state agricultural experiment stations and United States Department of Agriculture in the University library collection are shelved on this floor.

The 24 rooms are assigned to faculty members on a semester basis by the librarian, under policies determined by a faculty committee. These rooms are available for those pursuing research, and for concentration on serious writing.

A faculty lounge is located on this floor, along with book lockers which may be assigned to graduate students regularly using the library for advanced studies.

The lower floor, partially underground, is designed partly as a receiving and storage area, but contains active elements of the present operation along with space for future growth.

Adjacent to the entrance in the lower level is a 20 by 30-foot room which can be used by the faculty to host distinguished visitors, and for informal conferences and student-faculty get-togethers. It also is used by the Nebraska Hall for Agricultural Achievement for its annual meeting, and for other special events.

Three seminar rooms flank the other sides of the light well. In all, the library provides five seminar-type meeting rooms. Other parts of the lower floor house student typing rooms and a microfilm reading area.

The Wheat Abstracts Service also is located on this level. This service compiles and circulates abstracts of wheat research to a world-wide clientele through a monthly publication which is a project of the Great Plains Agricultural Council, and which is produced by the Nebraska Agricultural Experiment Station.

Rounding out the basement is a large closed stack area, to house the inevitable growth and consolidation of book collections during the years immediately ahead.

"Despite vastly expanded space, greater number of books, and increased traffic, careful planning in the building's construction allows a maximum of library services with a minimum of staff," East Campus Librarian Wayne Collings commented with satisfaction. "All regular patrons of the library building must enter and exit past a central circulation desk which can be handled by one person except in rush hours. This arrangement provides for a close control over books leaving the library and facilitates the handling of inquiries."

On Saturday, October 9, 1965, the University Board of Regents voted to name the new East Campus Library for C. Y. Thompson of West Point, Nebraska, a regent for 24 years, the longest period of service of any member.