

NCSU Libraries

VISION FOR THE JAMES B. HUNT JR. LIBRARY 2008

The James B. Hunt Jr. Library will be a beautiful and inspiring “signature” building that embodies the essence of Centennial Campus as a community built around knowledge. Located on the academic oval, this iconic building will be a vibrant intellectual and social forum for the campus community, showcasing the latest technologies and research achievements of the university. The timeless aspects of the library’s mission as a gateway to the world’s knowledge will be reflected in the building’s design -- forming a dynamic environment that brings diverse people and disciplines together and enables interaction, innovation, and the creation of new, nontraditional partnerships. In the design of this landmark building, NC State seeks nothing less than to create the best learning and collaborative space in the country.

The Hunt Library will be notable for its emphasis on the importance of both exterior and interior design in the human experience. The building should be both inspiring and of human scale, emerging harmoniously from the landscape and incorporating high-quality finishes to create a warm, welcoming environment that facilitates engagement, creativity, and learning. The NCSU Libraries focuses on the needs of faculty and students and the challenges they face, measuring its success by how well it meets those needs. The building will recognize the various needs of different user groups – graduate and undergraduate students, faculty members, and researchers -- and will offer spaces tailored to those unique demands. Faculty members will find everything they need to advance their research in and across disciplines and to support their teaching and service activities, including specially equipped collaborative spaces and private study rooms. The building will be designed to offer ample access to electrical power and with the flexibility to accommodate future technologies, serving as a technology “incubator” and demonstration space where the real and virtual worlds come together. It will feature inviting areas for exploration, contemplation, and conversation, including a café and public gathering spaces for lectures and events. This physical nexus for Centennial Campus will enable faculty, students, researchers, librarians, technologists, and other partners to forge new intellectual connections.

The Hunt Library will be located prominently on the Centennial Campus academic oval. Taking advantage of its elevated site, the Hunt Library will offer views of Lake Raleigh and the downtown Raleigh skyline in keeping with the spirit of the intellectual quests within. Although the architecture will have a formality and dignity that expresses the central role the library plays in the intellectual and social life of Centennial Campus, it will draw users with a well-defined, welcoming entry. The interior will be flooded with natural light, a feature that faculty and students consistently find appealing, and acoustical materials and configurations will soften the sound of voices, footsteps, and equipment. Wall space will be utilized for the occasional display of photographic and other two-dimensional art exhibits that engage and inspire the NC State community. Warm and colorful interior finishes and furnishings will complement the architecture and add to the inspiring feel of the whole.

The Hunt Library is integral to the NCSU Libraries' vision to be NC State University's competitive advantage—a library that is a major factor in attracting and retaining the best faculty and students. The library system currently includes the D. H. Hill Library, four branch libraries in Design, Natural Resources, Textiles, and Veterinary Medicine, and the on-campus Satellite Shelving Facility. The collection includes more than 4.3 million volumes and approximately 62,000 print and electronic journal subscriptions, with particular strengths in the sciences and engineering. The Libraries has achieved national and international recognition for being at the forefront of developing technology-based access and discovery tools and of addressing scholarly communication issues. However, the Libraries is handicapped by inadequate physical facilities. The most heavily used building on campus, the D. H. Hill Library frequently has more than 10,000 visits in a day and is struggling to accommodate increasing demand for study and collaborative space. Students are often unable to find seats, which detracts from their academic success and quality of life at the university. Ranked lowest in the University of North Carolina (UNC) system in terms of square feet per student, the Libraries is able to provide seating for less than 5 percent of the student body, while the UNC standard is 20 percent.

The Hunt Library will house collections critical to inter-disciplinary research on Centennial Campus. The collections environment must be well controlled with stable temperature and relative humidity for secure, long-term preservation. The library may utilize high-density shelving strategies such as an automated retrieval system in order to maximize the public space.

Another key feature will be an open workspace environment for staff that is itself a collaborative learning environment, embodying the same guiding principles that characterize Centennial Campus and the library's public spaces. In accordance with the Libraries' Master Plan, the Hunt Library's design and footprint will allow for the planned doubling of its size in the coming decades to provide critically needed growth space for collections and seating for the significantly increased user population that will result from increased enrollment and the planned "build-out" of Centennial Campus.

The Hunt Library will provide workspace for a significant percentage of the Libraries' staff who will relocate there. These staff include those responsible for selecting and processing the physical materials acquired, the majority of which are in science and engineering subjects. Thus, the building must have an easily accessible loading dock with adequate space for receiving large shipments. Public services staff will move there to meet user needs, along with specialists in digital technologies, including those with expertise to support the cutting-edge incubator facilities. A suite of offices for the Libraries' administration will be created. Staff members will share common spaces such as conference rooms, break areas, and office equipment clusters. Staff spaces will incorporate open design concepts that facilitate collaboration and communication among staff from different departments and units.

The library's design and its security systems will function together to ensure the safety and security of all who study and work there and of the collections. This will be accomplished in part by a single point of entry and egress, open lines of sight, security cameras where appropriate, and central, visible locations for elevators and stairs.

The NCSU Libraries enjoys tremendous support of the faculty and students it serves, a reflection of the Libraries' focus on understanding and anticipating their needs and applying expertise to respond creatively. The vision for the Hunt Library must be realized through a deep understanding of its prospective users. The challenge is to exceed their expectations, now and for many decades to come.