

Sterling Manuscripts and Archives reopens after renovations

Caroline Moore

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Staff Reporter

Sterling Library's Manuscript and Archives Department reopened on Feb. 2 after over a year of renovations. The facility now boasts better lighting, stricter security, air conditioning and a new classroom, among other improvements.

The renovations, which got underway in December 2016, transformed the facility from a dark, worn out space into a bright, welcoming environment equipped with air conditioning and a newly refurbished reading room. The additions also include two new conference rooms and a new classroom. The modern additions complement the historic aura of the room's vaulted ceiling, stained glass windows and walls of carved wood and stone.

"After the renovations, the archives are a much more pleasant place to sit and do research," said Head of Public Services in Manuscripts & Archives Bill Landis. "It's a much more vibrant place now and will really benefit students doing research and faculty teaching with collection material."

According to Landis, the same company that cleans the ceiling in Grand Central Terminal was hired to revive the reading room. The cleaning process revealed an ornately painted ceiling that was hidden under almost 80 years of dirt. Recessed lighting was installed across the facility to direct light towards the ceiling, and the chandeliers received a facelift with the addition of new high-intensity LED bulbs. Landis said the improved lighting enhances the beauty of the space by drawing attention to antique details.

The new classroom, which will allow Yale students greater access to the collections, is located in the Gutenberg Room, a chapel behind the reading room, which held Yale's copy of the Gutenberg Bible until the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library opened in 1963. Since the Bible was moved, the room had been a staff-only area. With the new renovations complete, students will finally have the opportunity to see and study in this incredible room, Landis said.

The renovations also included the addition of several pieces of technology to make it easier for students, faculty and the public to access collection materials. Landis said he is particularly excited about the addition of new tables that can be moved up and down with the push of a button. "People are always wanting to take photographs of really big architectural drawings, so to make it easier we got these tables that you can lay the drawings out on, then lower the tables down to 20 inches off the floor," he said.

Students interviewed by the News said they are excited about being able to study and

conduct research in the renovated space.

“I think the renovations will really impact everyone,” said Steven Tian ’20, as he studied in the Memorabilia Room, which is adjacent to the archives. “In the past, I think that a lot of students didn’t know this place existed and didn’t feel like this was a welcoming space. But after the remodeling, you see that they’ve made this a really warm environment.”

Eamonn Smith ’21, a prospective history major, said he is excited about the renovations because he is always looking for new study spaces.

“This is just one of the things that I love about Yale — that we not only have access to these great archives, but that we also have access to incredible spaces like this,” Smith said. “I can see myself spending lots of time here.”

The Manuscripts and Archives Department is open Monday through Friday, from 8:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., except on Wednesday, when it opens at 10:30 a.m.

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Correction, Feb. 14: A previous version of this story misspelled Bill Landis’s name.