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New addition to Henderson Library will open on Oct. 1

SEPTEMBER 26, 2006

For more than three decades, the Zach S. Henderson Library has been the hub of academic life at Georgia Southern University.

Since the summer of 2004, the library has also been the focus of an extensive expansion and renovation that will help it keep up with the needs of the University's growing student body.

The first phase of the \$22.7 million project an 89,000-square foot addition to the east side of the original building has been completed and will open to the public at noon on Sunday, Oct. 1.

'We are extremely pleased to finally be able to make this new facility available to our patrons," said W. Bede Mitchell, the dean of the Henderson Library. 'It whets our appetite for the completion of the entire project in 2008.

'Georgia Southern University will have one of the finest, state-of-the-art library facilities in the southeast."

Georgia Southern College had only 4,000 students when the Henderson Library was constructed in 1975. Since then, the institution has earned university status and watched the size of its student body increase by more than 400 percent.

In fact, the University began the 2006-2007 academic year with a projected enrollment of 16,850 students, the most in the history of Georgia Southern. Should that number hold up, it will mark the fifth year in a row that the University has established a new school record for enrollment.

Occupying 134,000 square feet in its original incarnation, the Henderson Library began to face significant space issues when Georgia Southern's enrollment approached 14,000 in the mid-1990s.

In June 2001, the Board of Regents approved the sale of bonds to fund a project that would renovate the existing building and construct two new sections that would add a total of 101,000 square feet to the facility.

The project began in June 2004 with the demolition of the nearby Blue Building, which housed the University's Office of Human Resources and the Office of Materials Management.

A little more than two years later, the addition to the east side of the library is ready to serve students, faculty and staff. The entrance is highlighted by a striking three-story glass atrium and a virtual waterfall.

Once inside the addition, library patrons will find wireless access and laptops that can be borrowed for use within the building; two classrooms that contain a total of 60 computers; and a multipurpose room with seating for up to 50 people.

The addition is also the home of a unique automated retrieval collection (ARC) system that is capable of storing 800,000 items in 5,848 separate bins that are stacked 45 feet in the air.

Storage space will be at a premium during the second and final phase of the Henderson Library expansion and renovation project, which is expected to begin in November 2006.

During this phase, the original building will be vacated for asbestos removal and then completely renovated. The facelift will include the removal of virtually all of the non-load bearing walls on the first, second and third floors.

Also, most of the windows in the original building will be converted into floor-to-ceiling windows that mirror the design of the new additions.

Since the addition to the east side of the library is smaller than the original building, the amount of seating and storage space will be reduced during the renovation process, but Mitchell and his staff are prepared for this logistical challenge.

'While one of the library's essential roles is to meet individual and group study needs, there is study space and there are computers elsewhere on and off campus,' he said. 'Our collections, however, are unique.

'Many of our information resources are available online, but many others are not, so we decided to keep as many materials as possible in open stacks as opposed to remote storage.

'Thus, for the next two years, most of the space in the addition that was designed for public seating will be used for book and periodical shelving.'

To further help preserve space in the addition for book stacks, Building 805 on Forest Drive was converted into a small branch library that houses government documents and the law collection. Also, the Collection and Resource Services Department was relocated to Building 803 on Fair Road. According to Mitchell, the addition's open stacks contain some 80,000 volumes, including the most recently published books, the books that circulate the most frequently, and periodicals published since 1990.

'Under this plan, we are able to keep in the open stacks that portion of our collection that accounts for more than three-quarters of our annual circulation,' Mitchell said.

Volumes that cannot be accommodated in open stacks will be stored in the ARC and the library warehouse at Gentilly Square.

The second phase of the Henderson Library expansion and renovation project will include the construction of a four-story addition on the west side of the original building. Covering 12,000 square feet, this addition will feature seating on the first, second and third floors, and a balcony on the fourth floor.

The entire project is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2008.

Unique automated system helps library deal with storage issues

SEPTEMBER 26, 2006

A library could be described as a warehouse of information.

With that in mind, it wasn't too much of a stretch for the Zach S. Henderson Library at Georgia Southern University to borrow a concept from conventional warehouses that store various and sundry items instead of books.

The new addition to the east side of the Henderson Library houses an automated retrieval collection (ARC) system a unique combination of brains and brawn that is helping the library deal with storage issues during the ongoing expansion and renovation process.

The ARC is comprised of a computer system, two laser-guided cranes that move on rails, and 5,848 individual drawers, which are called bins. Stacked to a height of 45 feet and divided into two aisles, the bins are capable of storing up to 800,000 individual items.

According to Ann Hamilton, the associate dean of the Henderson Library, Georgia Southern is the only institution in the Deep South to have an ARC in its library. The University of Louisville is the closest school with such a system.

'The capacity of the ARC will allow our library to continue to grow for decades without requiring another addition to the building,' Hamilton said. 'When growth warrants more space, adding a third aisle of bins would be more cost effective than adding bricks and mortar.'

Because the original building is being closed for a complete facelift that won't be finished until the fall of 2008, space in the Henderson Library will be at a premium for the next two years.

In an effort to maximize every available square foot in the recently completed addition, the library turned to the ARC, which has been adapted from the automated storage and retrieval systems used in commercial warehouses all over the world.

The ARC occupies some 5,000 square feet. The system is housed in its own room, but windows on the third floor of the library allow any interested parties to look down and watch the ARC in action.

Here's how the system works:

When a library patron wants an item that is stored in the ARC, they make a request through the automated circulation system, which sends a message to the ARC computer.

After locating the bin in which the requested item is stored, the computer tells the crane to pull the bin and deliver it to the nearest workstation.

A library employee pulls the item from the bin, a printer at the workstation produces a receipt, and the receipt is placed with the item so that it can be delivered to the proper patron.

'Books can be requested from any computer that is on the campus network,' Hamilton said.

'Periodicals and audiovisual items must be requested from computers in the library, but periodicals do not circulate, so they have to be used in the library anyway.'

Each bin is 24 inches wide and 48 inches long, and they come in heights of 6, 10, 12, 14 and 18 inches. The varying heights allow the bins to accommodate items that range from small microfilm boxes to 'oversize' books with a minimum of wasted space.

In fact, items are arranged according to size rather than subject matter in order to achieve maximum use of the space in each bin.

The bins are divided into four sections that are separated by two aisles. Each section is 34 bins high and 43 bins wide.

The cranes move between the bins on a rail system that is 112.5 feet long and similar to conventional train tracks. Lasers help to guide the cranes to a specific bin.

The cranes also move up and down, and they are capable of lifting up to 750 pounds, although the capacity for each bin is 'only' 500 pounds.

More than 160,000 items have been loaded into the ARC. For the most part, the system is being used to store seldom-requested items, such as bound periodicals that were published between 1971 and 1989, and special collections holdings.

Once the present expansion and renovation project is completed, the square footage of the Henderson Library will have increased from 134,000 to 235,000.

However, even with all of that additional room, the ARC will continue to be an integral part of the library.

'We can gradually transfer seldom-used materials to the ARC as needed,' Hamilton said. 'That means we will be able to add new acquisitions for decades without having to remove seats for patrons to make room for shelving.'

Irish poet to speak Oct. 10

SEPTEMBER 26, 2006

Acclaimed Irish poet Moya Cannon will present a poetry reading Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 7:30 p.m. in the College of Education lecture hall.

Cannon studied history and politics at the National University of Ireland and at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. She served several years as editor for Poetry Island Review, Ireland's premier poetry journal.

Cannon received the Brendan Behan Memorial Prize for her first collection, "Oar." Her second collection of verse is titled "Parchment Boat," and her third, tentatively titled "Carrying the Songs," will debut soon. She was also the recipient of the Lawrence O'Shaughnessy Award, the chief plaudit for Irish poetry in the United States.

In addition to speaking Tuesday evening, Cannon will conduct an afternoon workshop with students in an upper-division creative writing course.

Cannon's visit is sponsored by Georgia Southern University's Center for Irish Studies and the Department of Writing and Linguistics. The poetry reading is free and open to the public.

Blood drive Oct. 8

SEPTEMBER 26, 2006

Give the gift of life on Sunday, Oct. 8, from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Eagle Village, a residence hall on Georgia Southern University's campus.

The Office of Volunteer Services, in collaboration with the Savannah Community Blood Bank, will host the drive as part of the 'Five Points of Life Ride.' The 'ride' is a group of bicyclists traveling from Ottawa, Canada, to Miami, Fla., to raise awareness of the importance of giving blood.

Participants are invited to bring their families as the event will have free food and games, including bocce ball, croquet, Frisbee, and potato sack races.

For more information, contact Angela Williams at 912-247-6028 or angela_n_williams@georgiasouthern.edu.