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Watch it rise: Hale Library's transformation into a next-gen institution

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WATCH IT RISE

Hale Library's transformation into a next-gen institution

BY CAILIN RILEY

TWO YEARS AGO, ON WHAT STARTED AS A NICE SPRING DAY, THINGS AT HALE LIBRARY CHANGED FOREVER.

The fire that broke out on May 22, 2018 and the resulting damage from water and smoke impacted several sections of the library, including Historic Farrell Library and the famous Great Room. The catastrophic damage to the library was a hit to the entire K-State community, as Hale Library is often viewed as the heart of campus and a place where everyone is welcome to share a quiet moment of reflection or study. At the time, it seemed that the incredible task of restoring the 550,000-square-foot building would be the greatest challenge the library and its staff have ever faced.

Now, the challenge lies not only in finishing the restoration of Hale Library, but in preparing to re-open the building.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, construction has continued on Hale Library at a rapid pace. Every week, the changes at the library become more and more visible—we would say that the library is starting to look like its old self again, but that wouldn't be true. Instead, Hale Library is beginning to look like its new best self, a mix of the historic and the future.

For example, Joyce and Joe's Cornerstone Café on the first floor has a clean design, the latest kitchen equipment and a modern-looking fireplace. But the chevron design ceiling is actually made out of

wood salvaged from pieces that were damaged in the fire. This design juxtaposition continues throughout the library—collaboration rooms, soft seating areas and table spaces are all made to work practically for students, but still maintain the traditional sense of community that Hale Library is cherished for.

The new second floor of Hale Library features comfortable soft seating areas and 99 computer stations for student and community use.



The Great Room has undergone a vigorous restoration process; care has been taken to keep the space's historic atmosphere.



Joyce and Joe's Cornerstone Café features a modernistic design, complete with faux marble counters, a ceiling made from salvaged wood and a color-changing fireplace.

“We’ve received a lot of questions from students who miss the more traditional sections of the library,” said Dean Lori Goetsch. “We want to assure the community that those sections are coming with the upper floors and the restoration of Historic Farrell Library. We love the historic, beautiful architecture that Hale Library features and we can’t wait until you can explore those renovated spaces.”

Historic Farrell Library, perhaps the most recognizable part of the library and arguably the most beloved, took a significant amount of damage from

every piece back into its original place, the Great Room is starting to look as many will remember it—albeit shinier and better lit. The murals have been covered with protective boxes, but they are scheduled to be professionally restored later this fall.



The second floor of Historic Farrell Library will feature a cozy reading room. The Dow Center for Multicultural and Community Studies will be located behind the beautiful wooden doors.



The original bookshelves located in the east and west alcoves of the Great Room are in the process of being restored. After the bookshelves are repaired, they are stripped and then varnished by hand.



The Sunderland Foundation Innovation Lab will expose students to the latest technologies, including 3D printers, a virtual reality lab and makerspaces.

“WE WANT THE LIBRARY TO NOT ONLY BE A COMFORTING STUDY SPACE, BUT A PLACE WHERE STUDENTS CAN FEEL CHALLENGED AND USE TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE THEIR PROJECTS MORE DYNAMIC.”

— DEAN LORI GOETSCH

the fire. The Great Room and the first and second floors of Historic Farrell Library have undergone a dramatic transformation in particular. After more than two years of work removing debris, restoring the ceiling

the limited number of study spaces. It will now feature shorter bookshelves and more seating so that the striking, historic space will be filled with natural light. The second floor was previously used for staff cubicles, but will now be turned into an additional

The first and second floors of Historic Farrell Library will also experience a major makeover. Previously, the first floor contained tall, cramped bookshelves that restricted natural light from brightening

reading room for students and others to enjoy. It will also house a new location for the Dow Center for Multicultural and Community Studies.

A completely new and experiential section of the library will be the Sunderland Foundation Innovation Lab on the first and second floors. The Innovation Lab will give visitors access to the latest technologies such as digital media production, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, immersive digital environments and other emerging innovations. The space also will include 14 3D printers, a Glowforge laser cutter and a studio that will allow users to record high-

quality video with a single touch of a button. This innovative space will help make Hale Library a leader among academic libraries in terms of pursuing and showcasing next-gen technologies to support student learning.

“The Innovation Lab will give students access to new technologies that

they might not have the opportunity to use anywhere else,” said Dean Goetsch. “We want the library to not only be a comforting study space, but a place where students can feel challenged and use technology to make their projects more dynamic.”

As for the books and materials that belong to Hale Library, all of the paper materials within the physical collection have been cleaned, and now the process of unpacking and sorting 147,000 boxes begins. The boxes of cleaned materials are being transported to Manhattan and collections staff have started

unpacking and sorting items. The Libraries plan to begin reshelving items in Hale Library in August.

Both the first and second floors of the library are expected to be open to students and the community at the start of the fall semester, with the remaining upper floors and Historic Farrell Library on track to open collectively in mid-January of 2021. Interestingly enough, the new second floor was scheduled to open to the public on the exact day that campus shut down because of COVID-19. Despite the unforeseen setback, the Libraries are excited to witness students exploring this new space.

“It’s exciting to think about what it will be like in Hale Library by next year,” said Dean Goetsch. “I think everyone—students, staff and the community—can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We’re getting Hale Library back as our home again, and it’s going to be even better than before.”



The Friends of the K-State Libraries Instruction Room will provide a large space for librarians to teach research and information literacy skills to students from across campus.

VIRGINIA CARLSON FAMILY READING ROOM

K-State Libraries’ juvenile literature and curriculum materials collections will find a new home in the Virginia Carlson Family Reading Room, located in the beautifully restored first floor of Historic Farrell Library. Virginia (Bulkley) Carlson, a 1952 K-State graduate, taught at elementary schools in Kansas City and Manhattan, Kansas. In 1970, she began her library career as the children’s librarian at Johnson County Library. She went on to work on the bookmobile, at several branches and ultimately led automation (now called Information Technology) for the Johnson County library system. Virginia was passionate about children learning to read. She created a list of recommended children’s books for library patrons, which her own family used to choose books for their children, her grandchildren. The Libraries are extremely grateful to Virginia’s son, Mark, and his wife, Sue, for their investment in the renovation of Hale Library. Their gift honors Virginia’s memory and passion.



Even as we near the end of the renovation of Hale Library, your gift can still make an impact.

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