Rejuvenating Xavier University Library at 50

James Green  
*Xavier University - Cincinnati*, greenj11@xavier.edu

Anne Rycknost  
*Xavier University - Cincinnati*, ryckbosta@xavier.edu

Christian Sheehy  
*Xavier University - Cincinnati*, sheehyc@xavier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/univ_reports_library

Recommended Citation  
Presentation made at Society of Ohio Archivists Annual Conference, 2018

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the University Reports, Surveys, and Other Materials at Exhibit. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library by an authorized administrator of Exhibit. For more information, please contact exhibit@xavier.edu.
Xavier University Library celebrated the 50th anniversary of its McDonald Memorial Library building in 2017. Under the vision of a new director, marketing, programming, and outreach became a strategic focus for the library beginning in 2015. The 50th anniversary offered a prime opportunity to refresh its image and present the library to new audiences. A library committee consisting of six members planned and executed a series of programs and activities to celebrate the anniversary. The multi-faceted approach resulted in broader engagement (community, faculty, administration, and students) and greater library staff participation.

**Vision**

The culmination of the 50th anniversary celebration was a public reception. The event featured a welcome from Xavier University President Fr. Michael Graham, SJ, and a talk by Fr. Thomas Kennealy, SJ, University Archivist, on the history of Xavier libraries from the 1830s to the present. The talk was recorded and is available through the library’s institutional repository. Attendees reminisced about their favorite library memories at the reception afterward.

**Lessons Learned**

Reflecting on the process and experience, we learned that:

- A strong core vision is needed in order to move project pieces forward with continuity and clarity.
- It is valuable to have individuals on a planning committee from every library unit. The diversity of the committee encouraged surprising results, but even greater participation could have resulted in other creative products and stronger buy-in.
- University and library units can become insular. The planning committee worked to encourage interdepartmental communication, but more could have been done.
- Staffing is a challenge. The University Archives Librarian retired in the middle of the planning and the new one came on board toward the end of it.
- Budget constraints are the real deal. Due to a limited budget, we were restricted in the type of programming we could do. The library director was enthusiastic about the anniversary and provided extra funding.
- It is difficult to sustain motivation and enthusiasm of committees over time.

**Public Program**

Our goal was to encourage all members of the Xavier community to join us in celebrating the 50th anniversary. We invited students to the reception where University Archives student employee Matthew Gertz performed for guests using the recently conserved violin of a beloved Xavier historical figure.

A 50th Anniversary Photo Contest, open to students, awarded a prize to the photograph that best embodied the McDonald Library environment and what makes it special. We received 11 submissions and the library staff voted on the winner. The winning photograph and its description were displayed at the 50th celebration. We plan to print and display all the entries in the library.

**Student Activity**

The 50th anniversary was not only used to promote the newly created Makerspace, but also to produce commemorative ornaments to give to attendees. The ornament’s design incorporated resources from University Archives and hardware from the Makerspace. Makerspace staff digitized the line drawing from the Grand Opening brochure (1967) and converted it into a file format that could be laser cut. After text was added to the image, the resulting ornaments were cut from birch plywood sheets.

**Makerspace**

A physical exhibit and an accompanying digital timeline explored the history of the university’s libraries since its 1831 founding. While few materials remain from previous iterations of library buildings, the 1967 dedication of McDonald Memorial Library was well-documented and provided a rich collection from which we drew for the exhibit. The former University Archives Librarian had selected items and the newly hired University Archives Librarian installed the exhibit. It opened in January and was displayed throughout the semester in a prominent location in the library, reaching an audience beyond the event. The digital timeline, displayed on an iPad next to the exhibit and promoted on the library website, incorporated University Archives photographs and research.

**Exhibits**

The former University Archives Librarian had selected items and the newly hired University Archives Librarian installed the exhibit. It opened in January and was displayed throughout the semester in a prominent location in the library, reaching an audience beyond the event. The digital timeline, displayed on an iPad next to the exhibit and promoted on the library website, incorporated University Archives photographs and research.