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Monday September 24, 2018

Roesch Refresh

By Eric F. Spina

Roesch Library has always had personality, some might even say a bit of an attitude.

After taking a sneak peek at the second-floor makeover, part of a \$10.7 million modernization that will wrap up next August, I predict “Club Roesch” — as students lovingly call it — will be one of the coolest university libraries around.

In some ways, it already is. What other campus library organizes 15-minute dance parties at midnight during finals week for students to relieve stress? Where else can you find the world’s largest collection of material on Mary, the mother of Jesus? And its exhibits — from rare books to an indoor living garden — are legendary.

But this renovation ups even Roesch’s game.

Gone is the floor-to-ceiling shelving lined with row after row of bound journals and periodicals on the second floor. (Don't worry, access to these important scholarly materials will still be very easy for students and faculty whenever they need them via their computer, tablet or phone.) The space is now open, airy — and inviting. I immediately noticed the abundance of natural light coming in from the windows, the flexible space in the middle of the room for small or large gatherings, and the spot by a window that's been dubbed "the living room" because of the comfortable furniture and decorative ceiling lights that will soon be installed.

Around the corner, visitors will find a "Scholars Lounge" for engaging with fellow researchers and faculty and "The Collab" for team projects, library instruction, and group study. A group of innovative students from the Institute of Applied Creativity for Transformation brainstormed the concept for "Concourse D," a collaborative space where "new ideas and solutions take flight."

"This renovation is transformational for the way we offer services and for the people who come in and use the space," says Kathleen Webb, dean of University libraries. "We didn't add a single window on the second floor, but now you can actually see the windows. We did add a lot of glass doors and walls — all to take advantage of the natural light and give a feeling of openness. We also asked for input from the campus community every step along the way."

I believe the Roesch Library renovation, when completed, will stand as a testament to digital and collaborative learning in higher education. About half of the print journal collection has been replaced with digital back files, and the librarians are working with faculty to "rightsize" the collection of more than one million books, journals and microfilms, some of which are duplicates or available through the OhioLINK network, to give way to spaces and technology that support 21st century learning.

There's much work still ahead over the next 10 months, but you can take [a video tour](#) and glimpse the future.

We're closing the library Oct. 4-5, the first two days of midterm break, while staff and faculty relocate the check-out desk, other services, and work space to the second floor — most of these moves will be temporary — so that the final phase of renovation can begin in the lobby and throughout the first floor, where some windows will be added.

In August, when students return for classes, they'll walk into a bright, open lobby, complete with an artist's gallery, a "refueling station" with refreshments, a consultation space for help on writing and research, a tech control center for computing and printing, and a distinctly Marianist feature — a "Dialogue Zone" for people to be "at the table" engaging in challenging conversations.

Welcome to the library of the future.

