

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM  
FOR A  
NEW LIBRARY BUILDING  
FOR  
BENNINGTON COLLEGE

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PRELIMINARY PROGRAM FOR A NEW LIBRARY BUILDING FOR  
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Part I

Introduction

Bennington College is a four-year undergraduate college for women. It makes available to qualified students individually planned programs of study leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree. Enrollment is limited to 335 resident students. In addition there are usually a number of special students, but the total registration does not exceed 360. There are no plans for expansion of the College, but the site for the Library should be selected and the building planned so that expansion would be possible if it were necessary.

The function of the Bennington College Library is the support and furtherance of the educational plan of the College, the central aim of which is the development of the capacity for, and the practice of, sustained independent work. The Library is a teaching tool of prime importance and a specialized and structured educational experience.

Student initiative and voluntary activity are an essential part of the learning process. The Library should make all of its resources easily and pleasantly available to all students. This means that study areas and reading areas

should be attractive and quiet, and that books should be shelved so they are easily accessible. The Library's resources should be presented in such a way as to encourage students to develop an informed acquaintance with fields of knowledge beyond their special interests. The arrangement of the Library should be an invitation to explore, and in their use of it students should be entrusted with a maximum of responsibility.

A new library building should encourage students to make use of all kinds of bibliographical and reference materials, not only the Library's card catalogue and its formal reference collection, but also the bibliographical aids which a fuller inquiry might require. These sources should be immediately apparent.

Bennington's Library is, and will remain, a small one; its book collection should be selected in context with the academic process of the College, and it should reflect the requirements of the curriculum. Undoubtedly, the collection will be stronger in certain fields than in others. Any emphasis in the collection should grow out of educational needs; completeness should not be an end in itself. Special collections are not appropriate for this Library. Books must be available to meet the needs of members of the faculty, but it is to be remembered that faculty members and students have the opportunity to use large libraries during the winter field and reading period, as well as during the summer months.

The resources of the Library will be considerably extended when additional space is available. Besides adding to the book collection, microphotographic material and sound recordings will be acquired. Reading machines and a listening room will be provided.

Under present teaching conditions, when classes are expected to read books within a limited time, it is necessary for the Library to maintain a section for reserve books. Although this need must be provided for, the Library as a whole should be planned to encourage in students the significant functioning of their own tastes, powers of discrimination, and capacity for collecting and controlling data.



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Part II

Floor Requirements

1. The Main Floor should provide for:

1. A small entrance lobby with a public telephone booth adjacent. A small coat room (without doors) off the lobby might be considered. There might be some exhibit space alongside the outer lobby or inside the foyer surrounding the control desk. An overnight book deposit chute here.
2. The service, or circulation desk. This might be separated from the lobby by glass panels. This desk should be so placed that one member of the staff can operate the library during quiet periods. The desk should not be centered conspicuously in an open area, nor backed against open stacks. However, there should be shelves back of the desk for reserve books.
3. Space for the card catalogue near the service desk, with provision for 3 counter height tables with 2 high stools each for users of the catalogue.
4. Space for microphotographic material (machines and files). This should be near the service desk and the reference room so that a staff member on duty in either place can instruct students in the operation of reading machines. It should be so located that there is a minimum of natural light.
5. A reference room for reference books and current periodicals. This should be visible from the service desk (the upper portion of the separating wall could be of paneled glass). The alcove arrangement might be used. It should seat 25 people, provide for 3500-4000 volumes, and should have sufficient space for atlas cases, dictionary stands, and pamphlet files. Files for a picture collection could be located here or in one of the reading areas.

Current periodicals would be placed at the front of the room, i.e. near the entrance. Space should be allowed here for several easy chairs.

Periodical indexes would be placed between the current periodicals and the reference collection. Daily newspapers might be near the entrance of this room or in a reading area near the lobby.

6. Several reading areas placed in proximity to book shelves. Carrels, some small tables, one or two large tables ( $3\frac{1}{2} \times 6$ ) and some easy chairs should be in each area.
7. Stacks, or shelves. The alcove arrangement, rather than many parallel rows, is preferred when possible. One section should be especially arranged to care for oversize art books.
8. Space for bibliographic material. This must be so placed that it is easily accessible to the Librarian, the Cataloguer, students and faculty, and near the reference room.
9. The Librarian's office. This too should be easily accessible, so that the Librarian may be consulted by faculty and students. Book shelves on one wall and a coat closet will be required. The use of glass panels for one wall might be considered.
10. The Assistant Librarian's office which will be used also as the circulation and reserve workroom. This must be in close proximity to the service desk (cf. arrangement in present library). Glass doors, or a paneled glass wall between the office and the desk, might be desirable. A coat closet, and a supply cupboard, with some of its shelves 18-inch, will be required; there should be one section of 10-inch wall shelves, and two sections of 8-inch shelves. Provision must be made for several vertical files since in all probability senior theses will have to be kept here. A staff lavatory should be located off this room.
11. A cataloguing room, where all processing of books may be done. This should be as private as possible; it should not be remote, for the Cataloguer must consult the card catalogue, reference books and bibliographical tools. The room should be adjacent to the Librarian's office. Shelves, a coat closet, a supply cupboard, and a wash-bowl will be needed here.
12. A secretary's office. This should be close to, but not necessarily adjacent to, the Librarian's office. A small coat closet, a supply cupboard, and a few shelves will be needed.



13. A staff lavatory. This should be so placed that it is not available for public use. (See Assistant Librarian's office.)
14. A janitor's or a maid's closet.
15. An outdoor reading room off one of the reading areas. This must have no exit except through the Library.

16. Another floor (preferably a basement only, although a second floor may be necessary) should provide for:

1. A shipping room. Probably there will not be space for a shipping room on the main floor, therefore this should be in the basement, with a loading platform outside, and with an elevator to the cataloguing office. Wall shelving, a supply cupboard, and a sink will be needed here. Space for two large tables, and additional floor space will be wanted.
2. A storage room, for holding and processing gifts, with a connecting door to the shipping room. Large tables for sorting books, as well as ample shelving will be needed. Supply cupboards here, some with 18 inch shelves. Basement.
3. A listening room large enough for class use if necessary, although primarily for individual use of language and literature records and tape recordings. Some listening booths which can be closed are probably desirable.
4. A library seminar room, for the use of the library staff in the instruction of new students and student assistants. It should be large enough for two 3½'x6' tables and 15 chairs.
5. Typing cubicles. 6 soundproof ones, about the size of carrels. Glass doors with locks are suggested.
6. A stack room, and/or other reading areas as necessary for shelving and seating arrangements.
7. Public lavatories for men and women. Basement.

8. Typing and night study room. This should be a large room used by day as a typing room and accessible then only through the Library. By night it would be accessible only from outside after the Library has closed. No bookshelves will be wanted here. Basement.
9. A staff lounge containing a rest room, a small kitchenette unit, and a lavatory.
10. A janitor's or a maid's closet on each floor, the basement closet to be larger than the one on the main floor.
11. Space for the storage in winter of the outdoor reading room furniture.



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Part III

General Considerations

In planning for the requirements listed in Part II the following points should have consideration:

Location

The site chosen should be reasonably near the student houses, the Barn and the Commons, but not in a noisy area. Space should be allowed for possible expansion later. A sloping plot, lower in the rear, would be desirable for a basement shipping entrance, and would make less necessary damp-proof treatment of basement rooms.

Structure

If possible, the building should consist of but one floor and a basement, but footings should be strong enough to carry a second floor later, if a second floor is not planned for at this time.

The use of a dry moat outside some or all of the basement walls might be considered if necessary to insure full-sized windows in the basement (cf. Northwestern and Skidmore).

The building is to be so planned that in quiet times only one person need be on duty (cf. Part II, The service desk).

Capacity

The building should provide space for 75,000 volumes.

Provision is to be made for seating 135 readers, not including the chairs in the night study room, typing cubicles, seminar and listening rooms.

Of the 135 chairs, at least 45 should be in carrels or at individual study tables.

### Entrances

There should be no entrance steps, not only because easy access to the library is important, but because steps as a gathering place for students and visitors produce noise and congestion.

There is to be only one public entrance and exit. If state fire laws require a second exit, a panic lock door should be used.

If the building is rectangular in shape, the entrance should be on the long side.

A driveway to the loading platform and shipping entrance must be planned for.

Parking space for the Library staff's cars should be provided. There could be parking space nearby for other cars, but this may be neither necessary nor advisable.

### Construction

The building should be as fire-resistant as possible.

Modular construction, or at least modular construction to some extent, is, at the present time, much favored as an economical way of insuring flexibility by making possible the easy shifting of partitions.

The more costly large modules are now preferred because, unless the horizontal dimensions are on the large side, the structural columns may turn up in awkward places. Modular construction, therefore, may be neither practical nor necessary for a building of this size.

It is generally reported that movable steel walls are satisfactory.

It is generally reported that cinder blocks have not proved satisfactory.

### Lighting

North, east, or northeast light is preferred for the reference room, for reading areas and for the offices. There should be no low windows opposite the service desk or staff desks.



The enormous glass windows now appearing in many new buildings are not recommended. Not only is the initial expense high, but they are difficult to curtain and to clean. However, the north windows in the Lamont Library reference room which are broken by columns, are of a size to be considered.

It must be possible to open some, if not all of the windows, even if the building is fully air-conditioned (see later paragraph). Mechanical controls, so that staff members may open and close windows easily, are advisable. (The high windows in the present reading room are an example of how not to handle this problem.)

For artificial light, fixtures should be recessed in the ceilings in the reference room, in all reading areas and in all offices.

Fluorescent lighting in areas where lights are not frequently switched on and off may perhaps be given preference over incandescent lights. Where there is frequent on and off switching, incandescent is probably to be preferred.

Quality, not price, must be the prime consideration in installing fluorescent fixtures; inferior products have ballasts which hum.

Before any decision is made in favor of fluorescent lighting, the Bennington College Comptroller and the Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds should be consulted to make certain that regular weekly inspection of fixtures can be provided.

If incandescent lighting is favored, it is suggested that consideration be given to the use of photo-electric cells for maintaining uniform illumination regardless of changing light from out-of-doors.

In stack areas, light switches should be on the walls, not on the stacks.

Light control panels should be centralized. Wiring should provide for alternate lighting.

What candlepower is necessary seems to warrant further investigation. Estimates of proper candlepower in reading and work areas range from 25 (Lamont considers this adequate) to as high as 75 (at Oklahoma A & M).



### Heating and Air-Conditioning

No central heating plant is available to serve the library. It is therefore suggested that the architect consult the Comptroller and the Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds as to the kind of heating most suitable. The number and location of thermostats should be approved by the Comptroller and the Superintendent. Thermostats should be so placed that they will not be reached by the sun's rays.

The possibility of a completely air-conditioned building must be given every consideration. The college library is used the year round; for the preservation of books as well as for the comfort of the users and the staff, there is need for relative uniform humidity and for air cleaning. Provision for complete air-conditioning in new libraries is now coming to be considered a necessity; if complete air-conditioning at once is not possible, ducts for future use could be installed.

Obviously smoking must be permitted in some parts of the library, although the experience of other librarians indicates that smoking in stack areas is unnecessary and undesirable. Air-conditioning in areas where smoking is allowed seems to be the only successful way to take care of stale smoky air; such air-conditioning appears to require special units.

Air-conditioning systems do get out of order occasionally; it is possible that they can even be turned off on fine autumn or spring days. It is recommended that, even if there is complete air-conditioning, there must be some windows in the building which can be opened when such opening will not interfere with the air-conditioning system. (The Wayne University General Library has key-locked handles on certain windows.)

### Flooring

Rubber tile flooring is essential for all areas on the main floor except the following:

- 1) staff lavatory (ceramic tile or terrazzo)
- 2) janitor's closet (asphalt tile)

Asphalt tile should be used in all basement areas except the following:

- 1) lavatories (ceramic tile or terrazzo)

### Ceilings

All ceilings throughout the building are to be of acoustical tile, off-white or buff for reflecting value.

### Acoustics and Noise Prevention

The matter of noise prevention must be given careful attention. Sound absorption is especially important around the service desk, the catalogue, all offices, typing cubicles, the listening, seminar, and night study rooms, and all lavatories.

The use of materials which contribute to, or intensify noise, should be avoided. Cinder blocks and asphalt tile are examples of such materials.

The level of quietness desirable for each area will probably require different treatment for the various areas.

### Stacks and Shelving

All stacks will be open, as now.

All shelves in the reference room, in the offices, and at the service desk as well as any wall shelves, must be of wood. Steel shelving may be used in other areas. (No bracket-type stacks will be wanted.)

All wall shelves are to be built-in and adjustable; free-standing shelves and stacks are to be ordered through library supply companies.

Parallel stacks should be placed to provide at least 40" aisles; perhaps a space of 44" between stacks (i.e., in the clear) would be preferable.

There should be clearance of five feet between tables and shelves.

### Carrels

All carrels are to be the open type. All are to be of wood, except those in the night study room, which should be of steel. Wooden carrels are to be equipped with one adjustable shelf, and a coat hook.

Carrels are to be secured through a library equipment company.



### Finishes

With all its disadvantages, the present reading room is generally considered by students to be attractive because it has both warmth and informality; a new library should give the same impression.

Definite recommendations for wood finishes and wall colours to be used will be made in a subsequent plan.

At present, it is suggested that tables, chairs, the service desk, catalogue cases, and similar equipment be in walnut. Soft and unobtrusive, but not dreary nor violent colours will be wanted on the walls; any steel stacks should be in pleasing colours.

Built-in shelving, wainscoting and interior finish must be matched by the contractor with the equipment secured from the suppliers of the library furniture.

### Outdoor Reading Room

The first suggestion ever made for a new library building for Bennington College was for an outdoor reading room. This was in 1932; each year since then the suggestion has been made again by students who supposed the idea was original with them.

Some sort of space for outdoor reading and study certainly must be provided. It may be a loggia, or a walled garden, or a terrace, or a screened porch, or more than one of these. It need not cost much, and furnishings can be acquired later if present funds do not permit.

Entrance to, and exit from, any outdoor reading space must be through the Library.

### Lavatories

It may be unnecessary to mention the importance of ample lavatory facilities, but it seems advisable to do so because of the numerous complaints of inadequacies along this line in many recent buildings.

Fixtures should be of the not easily marked kind. Soap dispensers for liquid soap are preferred to soap dishes.



Mirrors should not be over washbasins, but shelves for notebooks should.

There should be a coat hook, and a shelf, on the inside of each compartment door.

Hung plumbing, if the water pressure permits, is recommended; this type of fixture makes for easier cleaning.

In any case, partitions should be hung.

### Elevators and Stairways

It is hoped that one public stairway conveniently, but not conspicuously located, will be sufficient.

An electric elevator for transporting books from one floor to another, and especially from the shipping room to the cataloguing room, is essential. One directly inside the cataloguing room could be used by a handicapped person going to another floor. It seems unnecessary in a building of this size to provide an elevator for general use.

Corridors should be avoided as far as possible, so that there will be no waste space.

### Electrical Wiring and Equipment

Clocks will be needed in the following places:  
1) the service desk area, 2) the reference room, 3) each office and workroom, 4) the staff lounge, 5) the shipping room, 6) the night study room.

There should be table height electric outlets in the Assistant Librarian's office, in the cataloguing room, and in the storage room, for use with special equipment.

Table height electric outlets should be considered for the typing cubicles and for the night study room, in case electric typewriters may be used.

Q-floor wiring is recommended if possible, in order that additional electrical outlets can be provided at any time.

Bells to be rung at closing time, for both (all?) floors must be installed.

Electric buzzers for signals between the service desk and the offices will be needed for calling for assistance. (cf. Intercommunicating telephones.)

### Telephones

Telephones will be needed as follows:

1. Librarian's office
2. Assistant Librarian's office
3. Public telephone booth
4. Service desk (a plug here for use when only one person is on duty)
5. Intercommunicating? Probably not; a buzzer system may serve.

### Miscellaneous

There will be a few large tables, as indicated in Part II, but no space need be planned for rows of large tables.

Chair rail, or shoulder height, protection for plastered walls could be considered. (Georgia Tech has used electronically treated plastics, the initial cost of which is high, although maintenance costs are said to be non-existent.)

Door saddles and changes in floor levels are to be avoided in all offices, workrooms, and reading areas.

Built-in bulletin boards of cork will be needed inside the service desk area.

All screens must operate from the inside.

Coat hooks in strategic but not noticeable spots in all reading areas would be very useful. (cf. Lamont and St. Rose arrangements)

It is recommended that glass in partitions be 40" - 42" from the floor.

Coat closets in offices are to have a ventilating panel in the door, a mirror on the back of the door, a shelf for packages and hats, and a pole for coat hangers.

Dust catching spaces must be avoided.

If corners along floors could be rounded, cleaning problems would be simplified.

The possibility of 5-inch micarta bases as protection to shelving from janitors' mops might be investigated.

There is to be a drinking fountain on each floor.

Ink filling stations on each floor should be considered.

There is to be a master key for the library and all public rooms, but separate locks are to be provided for all non-public rooms, and the night study room.

Heating coils should be under the floor of the entrance lobby, and an inset cocoa mat there is suggested.

Bids for furniture and equipment are to be separately placed.

If the building is located on the site west of the Barn and north of Commons, plans must be made for a new exit from the Barn on its west side.



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Part IV

Space Requirements

Space Name	Population and/or Capacity	Recommended Unit	Area in sq. ft.	Level
Stacks and all shelving except that in offices	75,000 vols.	15 vol. per s.f. (includes Reference room collection)	5000	Main as far as possible
Entrance, i.e., lobby, and Service Desk with space for reserves			500	Main
Card catalogue area $2\frac{1}{2}$ x present (107) and 3 tables with 2 stools each			300	Main
Reference and reading areas				
a. Bibliography			300	Main
b. Ref. room	3500-4000 vols. 25 persons	30 s.f.	1200	Main
c. Other reading areas	75	25 s.f. (40 for easy chairs?)	2300	Main : one o'
Library staff areas				
a. Librarian	1		200	Main
b. Assistant Librarian & workroom	3	100+	325	Main

Space Name	Population and/or Capacity	Recommended Unit	Area in sq. ft.	Level
Library staff areas (Cont.)				
c. Cataloguing and proces- sing space	3	125+	400	Main
d. Secretary's office	1		125	Main
e. Staff room			200-250	Basement Second
Receiving. Storage & Supply areas (Supply cupboards, in each office as well)			1000- 1500	Basement
Carrels	45	20	900	All
Microfilm machines & cabinets)	4		300	Main
Audio-visual room (lit. records, tapes)	25		500	Basement Second
Library seminar room	15	20	300	Basement Second
Typing room and/or typing cubicles	25 6	20 25	500 150	Basement Basement Second
Lavatories				
a. Staff				One in staff and one adjoin- workroom
b. Public				Basement

Space Name	Population and/or Capacity	Recommended Unit	Area in sq. ft.	Level
Lavatories (Cont.)				
c. Janitors' closets				All
Coatroom?			150	Main
Outdoor reading Room				Off Main
(Total approximately 15,500 sq. ft. not including stairways, lavatories and cor- ridors, nor outdoor reading room)				