Vision for the Library Program

The intellectual heart of the campus, the Neilson Library complex advances and celebrates learning, benefiting all who come to Smith. The Library complex (Neilson Library and Alumnae Gymnasium) welcomes diverse modes of knowledge making – from quiet, solitary reading and study to lively brainstorming and collaboration – enabling the **purposeful exploration, creation, and sharing of knowledge**. In the complementary spirits of continuity and transformation, we envision a sustainably designed library that supports scholarship and teaching, provides access to knowledge, and inspires and equips future leaders of a networked world.

Our renovated Library complex is the center of a rich learning and research ecosystem. It curates outstanding **resources**: books, documents, artifacts, digital resources, and other technologies consulted by researchers from around the world and open to the explorations of every member of the Smith community. The library’s users – learners, teachers, readers, researchers – convene here to study and connect, exchange ideas, access expertise and to create knowledge. The digital library within the physical library may be imagined as a hub with spokes: anchored in the physical building and supporting teaching and learning across the Smith campus and beyond. In the service of its overall mission, the Library maps pathways to multifaceted **services** and convenes **expert staff** who partner with faculty and students in the enterprise of teaching, learning and research.

The Library complex connects Smith’s past to its future. Originally constructed in 1909, two decades before Virginia Woolf’s famous protest in *A Room of One’s Own* against the exclusion of women from great libraries, it remains a material expression of Smith’s early and ongoing commitment to advancing the future of scholarship and women’s education.

In ways that are appropriate to their diverse functions and that promote intensive use, library spaces will be **reconfigurable, inclusive, flexible, inviting, responsive** and/or **technology-rich**, consistent with Smith’s deep commitment to sustainability in all our human practices.

Guiding Philosophy and Principles

Activities, services, and resources in the library **share an intensive focus on three core aspects of knowledge making: exploration, creation, and sharing of knowledge**. These are the cognitive and social foundations of learning and scholarship at all levels. The four additional principles below are aligned with the commitments emerging from the parallel Committee on Mission and Priorities strategic planning process.

1. **Create flexibility now and for the future**, ensuring adaptability of the building over time, to the best of our ability.
2. Provide for the range of activities that comprise purposeful and playful knowledge making, spanning quiet, contemplative study and lively collaboration:

   o Align with what we have learned about how students and faculty work. [Highlights will be listed when complete.]
   o Emphasize *uses and activities*. Prioritize those that can only happen in the library, happen best in the library, and benefit from the library’s special resources and purposeful atmosphere to create new synergies that advance Smith’s mission.
   o Promote inclusive excellence in learning and research: as appropriate to their diverse functions, all spaces will be **reconfigurable, accessible, flexible, inviting, responsive, and/or technology-rich**, consistent with Smith’s commitment to inclusiveness in our human practices.

3. Apply campus sustainability principles to functions, services, and resources:

   o Priority will be given to those functions that answer common needs, share and/or integrate services, so as to maximize our ability to meet the interests of multiple users, given our resource constraints.
   o Program in a way that’s less about historical ownership of space and more about modes of work and modes of learning – so as to use space efficiently and effectively to meet the interests of core users. (CMP retreat 9/3/15).
   o Avoid or limit highly-customized spaces; instead, offer fewer, higher quality, more flexible, and more intensively used and shared spaces. (CMP whitepaper fall 2015).

4. We acknowledge that not all campus needs will be met in this renovation.

   o The program committee seeks to balance the core needs of three key user groups: students, faculty, and library staff who use the library in very different ways, as our campus study makes clear.