The APD Committee and several other interested graduate students met with representatives from University Facilities and the architectural firm Pfeiffer Partners to discuss future plans for the renovation of Sterling Memorial Library. The Pfeiffer Partners representatives explained that the goals of the renovation are to re-envision the many underutilized spaces in SML so that the library will better serve all members of the Yale community.

The graduate students shared their hopes for, and concerns with, the renovation project. A number of desired changes were suggested. At the same time, many of the graduate students insisted that certain essential aspects of SML be preserved.

The architects provided some information about the rooms they are considering renovating, including Starr Reference Reading Room, the Franke Periodical Reading Room, the Linonia & Brothers Reading Room, and the Newspaper Reading Room. The document they distributed claimed that all these rooms were underutilized, although several APD representatives took issue with this, especially with respect to Starr. The architects responded that the characterization of Starr as ‘underutilized’ was an error.

Graduate students generally agreed on the following problems with SML currently:

- Limited hours, especially on the weekends. SML currently closes at 4:45 on Fridays and Saturdays and opens at 12:00 on Sundays. There is no 24-hour library space on Yale’s main campus which would be accessible to at least all graduate students – something Yale’s peer institutions do have.
- Occasional long lines at the security station, especially upon leaving through the main (Cross Campus) entrance
- Poor lighting, especially in the L&B Room
- Lack of electrical outlets in the reading rooms

The representative from University Facilities said that security would be modified, but did not specify details of the future security arrangement.

Graduate students also made a number of observations, some of them more pertinent to some disciplines and divisions than others:

- Not all graduate students have need of collaborative space in SML – this particularly seems to apply to scientists, who tend to have access to other facilities, such as the Center for Science and Social Science Information (CSSSI).
- However, graduate students generally agreed that the former card catalog area on the left side of the Nave (as seen from the Cross Campus entrance) is currently unused and would provide an ideal area for soft seating where students could gather in groups. However, most of those present objected strongly to the removal of the old catalogues, which contribute to the historic décor of the library.
- Other students, particularly those whose work involves digital images, expressed the need for collaborative space equipped with computers or at least large monitors.
Opinions were somewhat divided regarding the relative importance of silent spaces in the library and areas where students could talk.

Another suggestion was to provide computers with access to the library catalogue which would, like some computers in Bass Library, not require students to log in.

Some students expressed concern over the recently installed book return boxes, which may be damaging to books and other materials.

Some students expressed support for more modern design elements which would foster an atmosphere of openness and informality, such as more visible library staff work areas.

At present, Bass Library’s café offers some informal collaborative space, but its café hours are too short. There was little enthusiasm for a café in SML, however.

There was generally little desire expressed for additional lockable space, similar to the lockers on the lower level of Bass.

Graduate students resisted the possibility of adding more computers to SML, noting that the computers in the Franke Periodicals Room and the International Room are rarely used as it is.

The International Room is generally underutilized, but it appears that the room is funded by a specific donation and is not part of the renovation plan.

Currently access to SML is limited by the small number of entrances. The High Street entrance is only open until 5:00 PM on weekdays due to staffing problems. The door leading to York Street is permanently locked.

A major concern of the graduate students were library hours. However, the University Facilities representative explained that the Masters of the undergraduate colleges generally oppose longer library hours. For this reason, it would probably be easier to negotiate the development of a 24-hour space for graduate students only. **One possibility is to remove the cataloguing and acquisitions departments, currently located behind the Reference Desk at the end of the Nave, transfer those departments to the library basement (also undergoing renovation), and establish that space as a limited-access graduate student study area**, perhaps with one room for collaborative work and one for silent study. Access to this area would be provided by the York Street door.

As regards the historic rooms, the Pfeiffer Partners representatives assured the graduate students that no dividers would be placed in the rooms, although minor cosmetic changes might result from the upgrading of the heating and ventilation systems. This may apply especially to the Newspaper Reading Room, which may be converted into a digital humanities area. Since Yale cancelled its subscription to paper newspapers, the shelves of this room have lain empty, and relatively few students make use of it. Installing computers in the room would require the upgrading of the air conditioning system.

For further suggestions or questions, please write to Pfeiffer Partners at jgraham@pfeifferpartners.com.