

Preserving the Pratt

Renovation of the Enoch Pratt Free Library Will Restore Building's Grandeur

By Jessica Lavin Reid

One of the city of Baltimore's most cherished landmarks, the Enoch Pratt Free Library's flagship building on Cathedral Street opened in 1933. Known as the Central Library, the building also serves as the State Library Resource Center, and houses nearly two million books, pamphlets, and tapes, as well as a vast inventory of periodicals, maps, DVDs, state and federal documents, and other resources. The library's special collection of rare books and documents includes the Edgar Allan Poe Collection, the H.L. Mencken Collection, an Antiquarian European Map collection that dates back to the 17th century, and a collection of African-American sheet music that dates back to 1835.

The Romanesque Revival-style Library features a majestic central hall, ornate ceilings, large display windows, and many elegant architectural details throughout the 300,000-square-foot building. Long one of the most recognizable and popular buildings in Baltimore's downtown community, the Central Library building is now clearly showing its age, both in terms of structure and systems, and in its ability to accommodate 21st-century library programming. As a result, the Library has embarked upon a long-planned renovation that will modernize building systems, increase energy efficiency, restore the central hall, and create new and expanded spaces for children and teens.

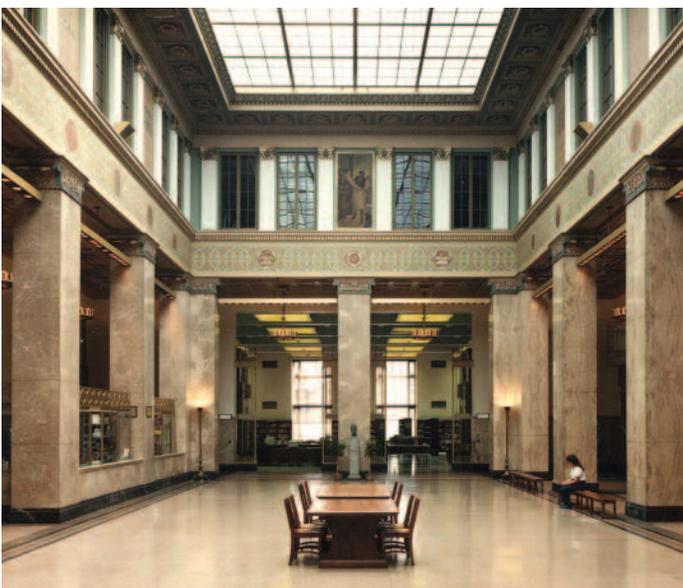


A Challenging Renovation

Among the most challenging aspects of the renovation is the installation of all-new heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems, which will improve energy efficiency while creating a more comfortable environment for visitors. The existing heating and cooling system dates back to 1956, with periodic upgrades that have resulted in inconsistent temperatures throughout the building. The facility also lacks the types of sustainable technologies that are common today, such as occupancy sensors, LED lighting, and a building automation system.

"This is a very unusual structure," says Darren Anderson, PE, CPD, LEED AP BD+C, an associate with Mueller Associates, the firm providing the mechanical/electrical engineering. "We're trying to fit modern HVAC equipment into limited spaces with minimal impact to the historical structure. It's been a puzzle to explore design aspects, such as where large ductwork could be routed, where new floor openings should go, how to incorporate fire-protection sprinklers into ornate ceilings, and how to accommodate new system equipment. We've also been working with very limited existing building drawings. It has required close coordination by the entire design team, working with a detailed 3D REVIT model created by using a point cloud laser scan of the existing building."

Anderson notes that an additional challenge has involved staging the project's construction so that the Library can remain open throughout construction. "Our first phase



will include installing a new custom air-handling unit on the roof to maintain HVAC to occupied areas while other equipment spaces are renovated,” he says. Construction is anticipated to begin later this year, and to be completed by 2018.

Anderson points out that the Library’s facility managers will see many advantages following the renovation, which is aimed at LEED® Silver certification. “It will be a much more reliable building,” he says. “This is important, not only for the comfort of patrons, but also to protect the Library’s special collections. This is the State Library Resource Center, so it is vital to meet climate-control requirements to protect these documents, manuscripts, maps, and other resources.

“The building will also be much more energy efficient and easier to maintain,” Anderson continues. “There will be a new building automation system (BAS) tailored to the Library’s needs. There are new energy-recovery ventilators, and a condensate energy-recovery system. Another benefit will be the removal of obsolete equipment from the building. For example, there are chillers and cooling towers that were taken out of service many years ago, when the Library was connected to the city’s chilled-water system. But it was impossible to remove that equipment before this major renovation to the building. The renovation enables us to clear out abandoned equipment and make room for the new, energy-efficient components.”

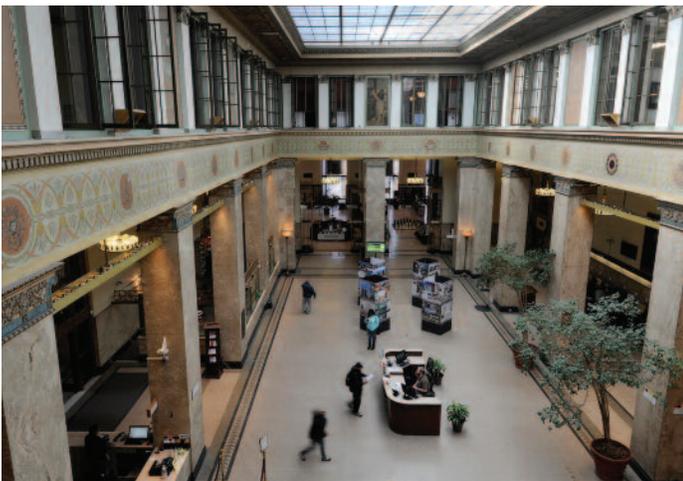
Preparing for the Future

While the modernization of the Central Library will not add square footage, the design will optimize existing space and create expanded training and conference facilities, a new Teen and Young Adult wing, an expanded and restored children’s department, a Job/Career Center, and new “Creative Stations.” The project is being designed by the team of Beyer Blinder Belle/Ayers Saint Gross Architects with Mueller Associates, the same team that designed the Library’s annex in 2003. The annex now houses some of the library’s oldest and rarest materials, including an African-American history collection.

“I live in the heart of Baltimore and this is a grand old building,” says Anderson. “It’s a treasure for the city. I feel that I’ve benefited from far-sighted people like Enoch Pratt, so I’m proud to be able to contribute to the library’s future. It’s a building that has changed people’s lives.”

A gift from the industrialist Enoch Pratt to all people, “rich and poor without distinction of race or color,” the Enoch Pratt Free Library was established in 1886. The Central Library building opened in 1933 and will be renovated by 2018.

Jessica L. Reid is Director of Marketing & Business Development at Mueller Associates, Inc. Consulting Engineers in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, and can be reached at JReid@muellerassoc.com.



Lessons Learned

Today at 7 a.m., I woke up feeling ill, but decided I needed the money, so I went into work. At 3 p.m. I got laid off. On my drive home I got a flat tire. When I went into the trunk for the spare, it was flat too. **A man in a BMW pulled over, gave me a ride, we chatted, and then he offered me a job. I start tomorrow.**

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