Generous Donors Grow the WSC Library

The Westminster Seminary California library has been called a “goldmine” by its patrons. It is home to thousands of books, periodicals, journals, reference materials, and other important resources that students, faculty, and alumni rely on for their work of serving the church. As a shared place of learning, the library experiences a high level of activity. Twenty-six years of heavy use has necessitated renovation in order to accommodate the steady growth of the library’s collection and patrons. While serving as Library Director, Elizabeth Park exercised good stewardship of WSC’s resources by spearheading the research necessary for determining the scope of renovation. She observed, "The library renovations were designed to provide a place for integrating study, reflection, and conversation. Academic librarians have developed sophisticated formulas to predict how much space is needed to allow for growth in the material collection as well as the number of patrons. Based on these standards, Westminster's renovations will provide enough shelf space for over the next five to ten years of growth in the collection.”

Thanks to the generous contributions to the Robert G. den Dulk Memorial Fund, which the den Dulk family had allocated for library improvements, as well as individual gifts designated for upgrades and updates to the WSC campus, last summer the library was among the first to benefit from a long-term plan to improve key buildings on the WSC campus. Throughout the library, worn and stained carpet was replaced, light fixtures were improved, and chipped, discolored walls were repainted.

Many people were involved in the effort to renovate the WSC library, but the project was given impetus by long-time friends of WSC (who prefer to remain anonymous) who gladly devoted woodworking skills and many hours to the project. Looking back over the process and the fruit of their labors, they comment, “We tried to use our experience and abilities to help out in gardening, maintenance, and renovation. The library needed some improvements and we wanted to do something about it. Finally, I said I thought I could make bookshelves for the Reference Room. We were happy with the results.” The custom, handmade bookshelves involved much planning in order to be transported to the WSC campus in pieces. Two hundred forty cherry wood shelves were carefully designed, sized, cut, shaped, and sanded. After more than 800 hours of labor, they were transported to the seminary for installation. The bookshelves, valued at $50,000, will benefit WSC by providing enough capacity for the next seven years of acquisitions. Many other friends of WSC donated construction time and materials to the library project, including masonry and paint, which were valued at $60,000.

The Reference Room has been converted into an area for quiet study. A glass wall has been constructed across the entrance of the Reference Room with double doors for entry and exit. Sound from the Atrium no longer travels into the Reference Room. The original tables in the Reference Room were relocated to the periodical room where they continue to serve many people.

In the Atrium, the vaulted ceiling was cleaned and re-stained at no cost to WSC. New chandeliers provide more adequate lighting. Additional shelving displaying current periodicals now line the side walls of the Atrium, doubling periodical shelf space. More shelving will be constructed in future phases of renovation. Both the Atrium and Reference Room have been furnished with new tables and chairs, enabling the library to accommodate more patrons.

To give the library a feeling of warmth, a stone-faced fireplace was constructed in the Atrium. This fireplace is dedicated to the late Robert G. den Dulk, president emeritus of Westminster Seminary.
California. Among Dr. den Dulk’s great loves, including theology, teaching, and building relationships with people, was a great love for books, and especially giving books to others. A portrait of Dr. den Dulk hangs above the fireplace. “I was encouraged to see the improvements to the library,” says Nellie den Dulk, widow of Dr. den Dulk. “It was time for renovation, and it felt good when I walked into the new library for the first time. I was especially moved by the portrait of Bob above the fireplace.”

“We support WSC because of the quality of education, the commitment of the staff and faculty to the historical, orthodox Reformed faith, and the commitment to train seminarians to make a difference in the world today,” say the donors who designed and built the library bookshelves. “We think this project is important for WSC because other than the faculty, the staff, and the students, the library is in many ways representative of the quality of the institution. A classroom is a classroom, but where and how you store your books and provide a place for the students to study says much about you.”

Over 25 years ago, generous donors and volunteers built a library that provides a place for integrating study, reflection, and discussion for WSC students, faculty, and alumni to better serve the church. By exercising good stewardship of our resources, the library improvements will serve WSC for another 25 years.

Many thanks to all who contributed funds, time, and talents to enhance our library as it serves our students in their growth and study of the Word.