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## A Few Remodeling Projects Make Major Impact: The University of New Mexico School of Law Librarys new reading room, reference desk, and classroom reflect the library as a vibrant activity hub

Carol A. Parker

*University of New Mexico - School of Law*

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# A Few Remodeling Projects Make **Major Impact**

*The University of New Mexico School of Law Library's new reading room, reference desk, and classroom reflect the library as a vibrant activity hub*

by Carol Parker

The University of New Mexico (UNM) School of Law Library in Albuquerque recently undertook several major and minor remodeling projects. These included creating the Governor Bruce King Archives and Reading Room inside the law library, remodeling our 35-year-old reference and access services desk, creating a classroom within the law library, and replacing carpeting and furniture. Thanks to these updates, the law library went from appearing a little drab and run-down to looking like the colorful, vibrant hub of activity it really is.

## **Governor Bruce King Archives and Reading Room**

Former New Mexico Governor Bruce King donated his personal papers to the UNM School of Law in 2001 to establish archives for researchers interested in public policy and New Mexico government issues and history. The collection, which consists of more than 900,000 items, is being inventoried and processed by university archivists. In July 2008, the collection will be transferred to the UNM Law Library, placed in a 500-square-foot climate-controlled storage room, and made accessible to researchers through the use of an online index.

As part of the project, the UNM Law Library constructed a reading room with funds raised through private donations and from a special appropriation obtained with the assistance of former King administration cabinet members. The total cost for the project was approximately \$185,000.

The 1,000-square-foot room was created from a cavernous copy room and three adjoining offices and storage rooms in a prominent location on the upper floor of the library. UNM Remodel Division of the Physical Plant Department handled the construction with the help of an interior designer. The project had a firm deadline for completion—Governor King's birthday—at which time we would have a dedication ceremony...ready or not!

I oversaw the project and found working with the university physical plant employees to be a wonderful experience. But every construction project has its challenges. In the middle of the project, our designer quit without warning and moved to Kansas. Two months before the dedication, the law school's dedication ceremony planner left unexpectedly, leaving it to the library to complete that work as well. I joke that the experience was similar

literature, and art objects collected by Governor and Mrs. King during their decades of public service to the state of New Mexico. Artifacts include a desk, chair, and credenza used by Governor King when he was in office, as well as a ceremonial drum that was created by local Native American artisans.

Handcrafted cabinets, built by Sunray Construction of Albuquerque, display memorabilia and were carved with the King Brothers' Ranch brand. The ceiling beams mimic the spokes of a wagon wheel, also evoking Governor King's ranching roots. The official state seal that hangs on the wall was hand-carved from wood recovered from a



Carpet installers remove old carpeting.



Workers install new manufactured stone counter tops for the new reference and access services desk.

to remodeling your kitchen just before hosting a wedding for 400 in your home—and by the way, if it doesn't go well, it's just your career!

We barely had walls built three months before the dedication, but ultimately, all the loose ends came together with a week to spare, thanks to the hard work of physical plant personnel, the entire library staff, many members of the law school staff, and outside volunteers. Governor King dedicated the reading room on the occasion of his 82nd birthday, at an event attended by about 400 guests and dignitaries, including members of the New Mexico Congressional delegation and several governors.

The reading room now houses and displays memorabilia from the King Collection, including furniture, photographs, mementos, campaign

tree damaged by a forest fire. Native American pottery and kachinas on display are from the personal art collection of Governor and Mrs. King, who were actively involved throughout the project.

Governor and Mrs. King and I chose to make the King Reading Room available for special events, meetings, and seminars so that it can be enjoyed by as many people as possible. Consequently, it was designed to provide meeting space for 20 and lecture space for 40, with the addition of extra

seating. It is equipped with a speaker's podium, laptop, projector, screen, radio receiver, DVD/VHS player, wired and wireless Internet connections, wireless keyboard and mouse, and speakerphone.

Since its April 2006 dedication, 243 events have been held in the King Room.



The new King Reading Room features a conference table that seats 22 and custom woodworking.

Hundreds have signed the guestbook, including visitors from as far away as England and Japan. The King Room has significantly raised the profile of the law library on the UNM campus, as well as with state government officials, who are invited to use the room for meetings when they are in Albuquerque.

### Law Library Reference and Access Services Desk, Classroom, and New Carpeting

The UNM Law Library is a busy place, with seven librarians, 11 staff members, and numerous student employees. We are open to the public an average of 90 hours

per week, and our gate counter logs about 130,000 visitors per year. In an average year, the law librarians complete approximately 400 faculty research requests and deliver approximately 1,000 books and articles to faculty members. In addition, the law librarians answer nearly 4,000 questions at the reference and access services desk each year.

Meeting these demands for public service from the 35-year-old desk was challenging. Its layout did not anticipate

computers and electronic resources; the building is constructed from poured concrete, making wiring difficult; and age had taken a toll on the desk itself.

In spring 2007, we replaced the library's reference and access services desk near the front entrance to better accommodate

computer equipment and provide ergonomic work space for staff. The new desk provides nearly twice the work and storage space that was available before the remodeling. We also nearly doubled the amount of shelving near the desk and now have

a surfeit of data connections. Today, the area houses reference, reserve, and pro se collections, and it boasts upgraded lighting, new carpeting, and new patron furniture and PCs. Two of the patron desks are adjustable to accommodate wheelchairs.

We worked once again with the UNM Remodel Division and the same cabinetmaker who worked on the King Room. We also used the services of an interior designer, who chose the finishes and developed a lighting plan. All of the librarians and staff participated in the planning process, which went on for months. Everyone listed the features they thought were needed in the new desk. It was challenging for people to think about creating an entirely new service point and the possibilities it opened up for eliminating dated processes.

Another challenge for the staff was planning the move to our temporary circulation and reference quarters. We found it helpful to draw a physical plan of the temporary area's layout, to avoid the miscommunications that are inherent in implementing such a complex project. Though crude, the plan functioned much like the plans that professional contractors draw, in that it was easily understood and gave us all a common frame of reference. For two months the librarians and staff worked from a cramped temporary service area, relying on office desks and plenty of

extension cords and cables. Extra telephone and data connections had to be temporarily installed for the equipment that was moved.

Once started, the construction progressed seamlessly. It helped that we did not have a firm deadline for completion. With the help of local movers, we moved into the new desk on March 21, 2007. No single source of funds made this possible; instead, funds were shaved from various revenue sources, including legislative appropriations and vacant salary lines, in order to cobble together what would be required. The total project cost was approximately \$125,000.

As part of an overall remodeling initiative, the UNM Law Library also increased its group study rooms from three to four, and all study rooms received new furniture and carpeting in the latter half of 2007. A new legal research classroom with built-in projection equipment was also installed inside the library. It is completely under the control of the library for scheduling, making it easy for us to provide the seven sections of advanced legal research that the librarians teach each year.

During the 2006-2007 winter break while the library was closed, we also carpeted the upper level of the library, using carpet tiles. We left the stacks in place, removing only the bottom shelves, and cut the carpet tiles to fit. If we need to relocate the stacks in the future we have plenty of carpet tiles on hand for patching the floor. The lower level of the library is scheduled for carpeting during the 2008-2009 winter break.

The carpeting was contributed by the university from its facilities funds, and installation went well, despite two rare record snowstorms that made it hard for the installers to make it to work and for us to open the library for them. In total, 36 inches of snow fell at my house within a week while the installation occurred. This simply proves once again that remodeling is always an adventure, and you must expect the unexpected. ■

*Carol A. Parker (cparker@law.unm.edu) is the law library director and associate professor of law at the University of New Mexico School of Law. She also teaches wills and trusts, advanced legal research, and international legal research at the UNM School of Law.*

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*To see more photos of the renovated University of New Mexico School of Law Library, visit [www.aallnet.org/products/pub\\_sp0805.asp](http://www.aallnet.org/products/pub_sp0805.asp).*