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Emory chemistry library renovation showcases flexible design

After a seven-month renovation, the James Samuel Guy Chemistry Library in the Atwood Chemistry Building at Emory University reopened in a beautiful, and very retro-looking, brushed aluminum and glass modern library that's moving into the 21st century with electronic access for most of its material. During the next three years, the library will test the long-term viability of providing electronic and remote daily access to a major collection of scientific resources in a heavily literature-dependent discipline.



The James Samuel Guy Chemistry Library at Emory University (Photo by Dwight Raby)

The renovation presented a significant challenge for the library: It was reduced to less than one-third its previous size. The library responded by maximizing its use of electronic resources. Approximately 90 percent of the former library collection now resides in storage. Journals that were brought back include only the last several years of bound volumes that are not accessible electronically.

The bound reference collection remains in the library except for *Chemical Abstracts*, which is fully accessible electronically. Current periodicals cover a group of chemistry-specific titles; *Science*, *Nature*, and *Scientific American*; current issues of titles not accessible online; and current issues of six- or 12- month embargoed electronic titles that are not yet available electronically.

Monographs selected to return to the collection include those circulated three or more times in the last three years. Staff realized, however, after identifying the core collection described above, that space remained for bringing back some volumes in monographic series — not just those that had circulated three or more times. As a result, a large percentage of these items were returned to the

collection as well. Finally, new books are prominently displayed in the new library and will remain in the in-house circulating collection.

The library is equipped for 24-hour card access, a self-check book system and three-camera security coverage. These amenities enhance the library's availability after staff depart at 10 p.m. weekdays and before noon Saturdays and Sundays.

Three brushed aluminum and glass-walled staff office/work spaces occupy a position of prominence and welcoming accessibility down the center of the library. This central area also houses two plasma-screen-equipped conference rooms that can be separated by an overhead garage door or opened for one larger room.

"Expanded hours are coming this fall," noted chemistry librarian Donna Hudson. "We've had increased use after the renovation in the spring, and our users requested longer hours. And, we're going to offer a coffee service as well so our users will feel very comfortable here."

The Chemistry Library previously had not had study rooms for students,

but now offers three small spaces, two with doors. They are constantly in use, Hudson said, with the two door-equipped studies filling first.

An electronic bulletin board is used for marketing communications, and the library is equipped with wireless Internet connections throughout.

Part of the former library space is now a large departmental research laboratory space. Glass walls between the library and the laboratory allow both library staff and chemistry researchers to visually share one another's work environment, as well as the out-of-doors on both sides of the building.

The new, downsized Chemistry Library is a living, breathing experiment in progress, with more changes still to come. Within the next three years, there's another move on the horizon. The library is already in discussions with departmental and campus planners, and outside architects, to apply the "lessons learned" in the Chemistry Library to a new, expanded Science Library in a proposed new Chemistry Building addition. ►►