
Sterling Memorial Library nave to become a new exhibit destination at Yale

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by Amanda Patrick

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[1]

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Yale University - Sterling Memorial Library - Nave Exhibition Space
View from Sacristy

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[2]



SML EXHIBITS - 3D VIEWS
102 - SOUTH WEST

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SK-44.1

[3]



[4]

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Under the watchful gaze of Alma Mater, a section of the Sterling Memorial Library nave will be transformed into a museum-quality gallery that will showcase materials from Yale's vast and diverse special collections. Construction began April 5 and will finish in about eight months.

The new Hanke Exhibition Gallery will occupy the space between the Starr Reference Room and the entrance to the stack tower. Modern exhibit cases with state-of-the-art lighting and humidity controls and improved security will allow curators to display more unique, fragile, or rare primary-source materials than Sterling's older exhibit spaces can accommodate. A combination of flat table and upright vertical cases will provide more options for showing materials of different sizes and shapes. The space will also accommodate didactic panels and displays, such as touch screens.

Construction of the gallery has been funded by Lynn Hanke, a member of the University Library Council, and her husband, Robert Hanke '60. The Hanks made their gift in memory and honor of James Gamble Rogers, an 1889 Yale graduate, and the architect of many iconic Yale buildings, including Sterling Library.

In non-COVID times, the Sterling nave is one of Yale's busiest and most beloved public spaces. Students and faculty flow in and out of the stacks while visitors come from around the world to admire Rogers' soaring Gothic Revival architecture.

"Thanks to the generosity of the Hanks, the new gallery space will befit the glorious architecture of the nave," said Barbara Rockenbach, Stephen F. Gates '68 University Librarian. "When COVID restrictions are lifted and construction is finished, our patrons and visitors will be able to view themed exhibits that draw on special

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collections to represent and reflect the breadth of human experience.”

The gallery will enhance the University’s burgeoning focus on object-based learning and support expansion of Yale Library’s student-curated exhibit program in which library and faculty mentors guide students to translate their research in library collections into the unique narrative form created by selecting, sequencing, and arranging objects in an exhibit.

“The library’s exhibits continue to amaze and inspire us,” said Lynn Hanke. “This program allows Yale to be a seedbed for curation, teaching students the skills that will enable them to interpret collections, connect to audiences, and thrive as the next generation of leaders in cultural heritage institutions.”

The nave underwent an extensive restoration in 2013 when all the stone and woodwork was cleaned, windows repaired, and services relocated. Now, in their planning for the new gallery, Apicella + Bunton Architects of New Haven have painstakingly blended modern exhibit cases, lighting, and technology into the historic space.

“We are pleased that this new gallery will inspire generations of students to benefit from the library’s outstanding collections while honoring the unique contributions that James Gamble Rogers made to the architecture of Yale,” Robert Hanke said.

During construction of the Hanke Gallery, the stacks will remain fully accessible and the Starr Reference Room will remain open. However, with inevitable noise at certain points, library patrons may wish to use other nearby spaces such as the Periodical Reading Room, Gilmore Music Library, the Franke Family Digital Humanities Laboratory, Bass Library, or other [library study spaces](#) [5].

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Links

[1] https://web.library.yale.edu/sites/default/files/190808tweaked_ab_yalesml_09_cam1_b.jpg [2]

https://web.library.yale.edu/sites/default/files/190808_tweaked_ab_yalesml_09_cam2_b.jpg [3]

https://web.library.yale.edu/sites/default/files/sk-44.1 - 44.8 - 3d_views_page_1.jpg [4]

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