The Adaptation of a Chemistry Library: The University of Chicago Experience

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Planning for the Future: Chemistry Libraries in 2015
Overview

Background on departmental libraries at University of Chicago

Centralization/decentralization issues

History of the Chemistry Library /
Factors that drove centralization

Sweetening the bitter pill
Departmental reading rooms have a long history at the University of Chicago.

- Ryerson (astronomy)
- Rosenwald (geology)
- Billings (medicine)
- Zoology
Kent Chemical Laboratory reading room

Chemistry Library from 1894(?) - 1934
Chemistry Library Reading Room

Chemistry Library in George Herbert Jones Laboratory 1934-2003
Pro: Departmental (Chemistry) Libraries

- Proximity to research laboratories and offices
- Familiarity with librarian
- Special facilities for access
- Professional independence for librarian
- Customized services for primary users
- Flexibility
- Convenient, small, easy to navigate
**Pro: Centralized Science Library**

- Conversion of card catalog
- Comprehensive, unified collections
- Increased availability of electronic resources
- Collegial atmosphere for librarian
- Economies of scale/no duplication of collections
- Space, space, space
- Interdisciplinary research
- Staffing resources
- More hours of access
- Environment
- Security
What factors favored centralization?

Space, Space, Space, Space
“Our shelves are becoming filled rapidly”
1937 Chemistry Library Annual Report

“Room, more room is always our chief need”
1949 Chemistry Library Annual Report

“The piano was removed from the Reading Room, thus making room for two tables and eight chairs”
1967 Chemistry Library Annual Report
Serials cancellations and collection storage and transfers:

- **1986** cancelled duplicate subscriptions between Crerar and Chemistry
- **1991** inactive Russian journals transferred to Crerar
- **1995** volumes stored in “ladies lounge”, under reader tables, in old kitchen/closet and at the end of stacks rows
- **1995** 13 current journal titles cancelled
- **1996** 9000 volumes transferred from Chemistry
- **1997** print Beilstein cancelled
- **1999** all pre-1970 monographs transferred
What factors favored centralization?

Decreasing use of the physical facilities of Chemistry Library
Use of Circulating Titles

Checkouts and renewals in Chemistry Library

- Total first time checkouts and renewals
- Years: 1965-66 to 2001-02

Graph shows the trend of checkouts and renewals over the years, with a peak in the early 1980s and a decline thereafter.
Use of Journals

Impact of electronic journals

- In house use
- ACS online use

# uses

- 1st online journal
- ACS RSC
- Academic, Springer, ScienceDirect
- Wiley-VCH, Kluwer
- Online backfiles

academic year

93-94 94-95 95-96 96-97 97-98 98-99 99-00 00-01 01-02 02-03

0 10000 20000 30000 40000 50000 60000 70000
What factors favored centralization?

- Preservation
- Collection security
- Physical facilities
Since 1934, the Chemistry Library has been victim to 14 floods, both minor and major.

Environmental controls for lighting, heat, humidity, and pollutants were more or less nonexistent.
“Some rascal had gone through … and cut out all articles published by Professor W. G. Brown”
1946 Chemistry Library Annual Report

“[T]he use of the Attic store-room has major drawbacks: the heat and the presence of fumes tend to deteriorate rapidly the volumes…”
1960 Chemistry Library Annual Report

“The students bring in ice cream, lunches, and snacks into the reading room and are amazed when asked to leave. Some are even belligerent.”
1969 Chemistry Library Annual Report
Pigeons have been nesting in the bookstacks. Please do not open the windows. USE the AIR CONDITIONERS instead!!!
FOR HIM THAT STEALETH A BOOK FROM THIS LIBRARY, LET IT CHANGE INTO A SERPENT IN HIS HAND & REND HIM. LET HIM BE STRUCK WITH PALSY & ALL HIS MEMBERS BLASTED. LET HIM LANGUISH IN PAIN CRYING ALOUD FOR MERCY & LET THERE BE NO SURREASE TO HIS AGONY TILL HE SINK TO DISSOLUTION. LET BOOKWORMS GNAW HIS ENTRAILS IN TOKEN OF THE WORM THAT DIETH NOT, & WHEN AT LAST HE GOETH TO HIS FINAL PUNISHMENT, LET THE FLAMES OF HELL CONSUME HIM FOREVER & AYE.

MONASTERY OF SAN PEDRO, BARCELONA

PLEASE DO NOT TAKE BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY WITHOUT CHECKING THEM OUT FIRST. THE BOOKS CAN BE CHECKED OUT VIA MANUAL CHARGE FORMS OR IN THE CHEMISTRY LIBRARY OFFICE.
What factors favored centralization?

Centralization of other sciences into one library
$S$ crunch prompts Crerar to move to University of Chicago

The John Crerar Library at the Illinois Institute of Technology will be merged with the science collections at the University of Chicago's in 1984, when UC's new science library building is completed, thus creating "the most distinguished science and technology collections in the Midwest," reports M.I.T. Library Notes. The merged collection will contain almost one million books, magazines, and journals. The new facility at UC will be known as the John Crerar Library and will continue services to the local, national, and international public and to institutional users.

What factors favored centralization?

Growing interdisciplinarity of research and new buildings on campus

Increased availability of information resources from lab and office
New Interdisciplinary Research Building
New and Improved Electronic Resources

- SciFinder Scholar covers all years of print CA
- Web of Science increased years of coverage
- More backfiles (RSC, Wiley, ScienceDirect)
- Knovel
- SpecInfo
- VPN for better remote access to client databases
Closing the Chemistry Library

The Chemistry Library is closed (effective September 2, 2003). The collection of materials formerly located in the Chemistry Library in George Herbert Jones Laboratory are now located in the John Crerar Library. A very small collection of journals and reference books will remain behind in the former Chemistry Library. Any library users who need access to these materials, or to locate chemistry materials in the John Crerar Library should contact the circulation department (email: crerar-circulation@lib.uchicago.edu or phone: 773-702-7409) for assistance.

For additional information on using the John Crerar Library, visit http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/crerarusing

For information on chemistry resources, including online journals, databases, and subject guides, visit http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/sul/chem or contact the John Crerar Library Reference desk (email: crerar-ref@lib.uchicago.edu or phone: 773-702-7715).
Closing the Chemistry Library

Staggered transfers from Chemistry to Crerar:

• **September 2003**
  12 core journal titles plus reference collection, revert to original 1934 space

• **December 2003**
  All remaining journals transferred to Crerar Library, move reference collection to smaller room

• **September 2005**
  All remaining Chemistry materials (reference collection) moves to Crerar Library
Closing the Chemistry Library
Closing the Chemistry Library

- Terminate phone service (voice and fax)
- Web site changes (redirects, rewrites)
- ILS changes (circulation, cataloging)
- Computer workstation setups (network addressing, electrical wiring)
- Materials remarking
- Materials interfiling into the new location
- Telephone tree changed
- Notices in campus newspapers
- Schedule freight elevator for availability
- Changes in central technical processing workflows
Interdisciplinary research, new buildings and the Library
Sweetening the bitter pill:

- Aggressive acquisition of electronic journals (current subscriptions and backfiles)
- SciFinder Scholar and Beilstein/Gmelin desktop availability
- Staged relocation of materials
- Chemistry reference available via email, phone, office visits
- New research building closer to John Crerar Library
- Physical Sciences Division need for space/support of Dean
- Improved catalog serial records and holdings
- Regular communications


