

We're here to celebrate this groundbreaking as the start of a two-year project to expand the library. However, for many of us in Randall, this is also the culmination of a four-year planning process to envision a library that will serve the next generations of students, faculty, and staff here at UNCW and the growing Wilmington community.

I still vividly remember my interview for the position of University Librarian in April 2018. As I visited spaces throughout the library, I observed students everywhere – sitting and lying on the floor and crowded together around computer screens. I realized that in my 20 years in academic libraries, I had never seen a library as popular and as crowded as Randall. In my world, a library ideally serves as a “third space,” as in third only to one’s home and one’s work as a place to gather, share ideas, and find community. I thought to myself at the time – how wonderful to see a library in such demand by students; it truly is a “third space.” That sense of place was one of the reasons I was excited to come to UNCW.

We began planning for the expansion before I even started my new position at Randall; that summer of 2018, we met constantly with the architects and ran focus groups and planning sessions with faculty, library faculty and staff, students, and other stakeholders to identify needs and priorities for a new building.

Our guiding principles have remained in place through many vastly different designs and iterations. We are building a transformative, learner-centered, technology-enabled space that fosters collaboration. We have a vision of being a strong community resource, showcasing our unique materials, adapting to the evolving role of library collections, and putting “learning on display.” We are embarking on an expansion that will be an anchor for the campus, the intellectual heart of the university, with a front door opening onto South College Road that will be emblematic of our commitment, not only to the campus, but also to the greater Wilmington and SE NC community. Randall is and will continue to be a “town square” for the UNCW and Wilmington communities to share ideas and teach one another for the growth of all.

The new building will feature many of the hallmarks of a 21st century academic library. Visitors will enter the building from the west into a light, airy and spacious entryway with a large event and programming space, an area for physical and digital exhibits and a new data visualization lab. A new tech hub will offer students expanded computing with an enlarged digital makerspace, an enhanced multimedia studio and expanded editing area.

The second floor of the expansion will allow our new Center for Southeast North Carolina Archives and History, which includes University Archives, Special Collections and Government Information, to better serve its campus and community patrons with a unified Research Room conveniently adjacent to all its collections. This space also will offer classrooms for library instruction and smaller seminars and programs. The third floor will be entirely devoted to public spaces, offering students a wide variety of individual and group, public and private, quiet and technology-enhanced study spaces to meet varied students' needs.

The Link, which will connect the new expansion with the existing Randall will offer a coffee kiosk and will open to a garden on the south and an outdoor patio on the north to extend the library experience beyond our four walls, connecting with nature in a way the library never has before.

Throughout the new spaces will be the library's enduring values of Learning, Service, Access, Integrity, and Diversity. The new and improved Randall Library will focus on the continued pursuit of our mission to provide information resources and learner-centered services and cultivate a rich physical and virtual environment dedicated to the open exchange of ideas and an information-literate community. We will be a larger, more modern version of what Randall Library always has been: a warm and welcoming "third space" for UNCW and the community we proudly serve.

At this time, I want to thank Chancellor Sartarelli for his vision and passionate advocacy for the library, Chair Kidd and the Board of Trustees for their support, Provost Winebrake for his support of all things library. I also wish to thank our architects LS3P of Wilmington and Shepley Bulfinch of Boston, who have been tremendous partners in this project, the UNCW Office of Facilities Architectural and Construction Services, particularly Stephanie McArthur and Rachel Patrick, who have led this effort; Nic Troutman, University Space Planner, Balfour Beatty Construction, R. J. Leeper Construction, and most especially for me, the Randall Library Renovation and Expansion team of Jeanne Cross, Laura McBrayer, Christopher Rhodes and Nathan Saunders.

Now, I would like to invite Trustee Kidd, Chancellor Sartarelli, Provost Winebrake, and the Library Team to join me at the teal sand to break ground for the future of Randall Library. Following this ceremony, invited guests are welcome to visit the library for a brief reception and where you may learn more about the project, the history of Randall Library and services that will be located in the expansion. Thank you for joining us for this milestone event.