

The John Stewart Memorial Library:

Yesterday & Today

By Emma Lewis



One of Wilson's most unique features is the historical and beautiful look of the campus buildings and architecture. The physical structures create an atmosphere identifiable to the Wilson community, and almost every day, people gather inside to expand their knowledge and share ideas. The John Stewart Memorial Library is one such example of a campus building that has become synonymous with Wilson's campus.

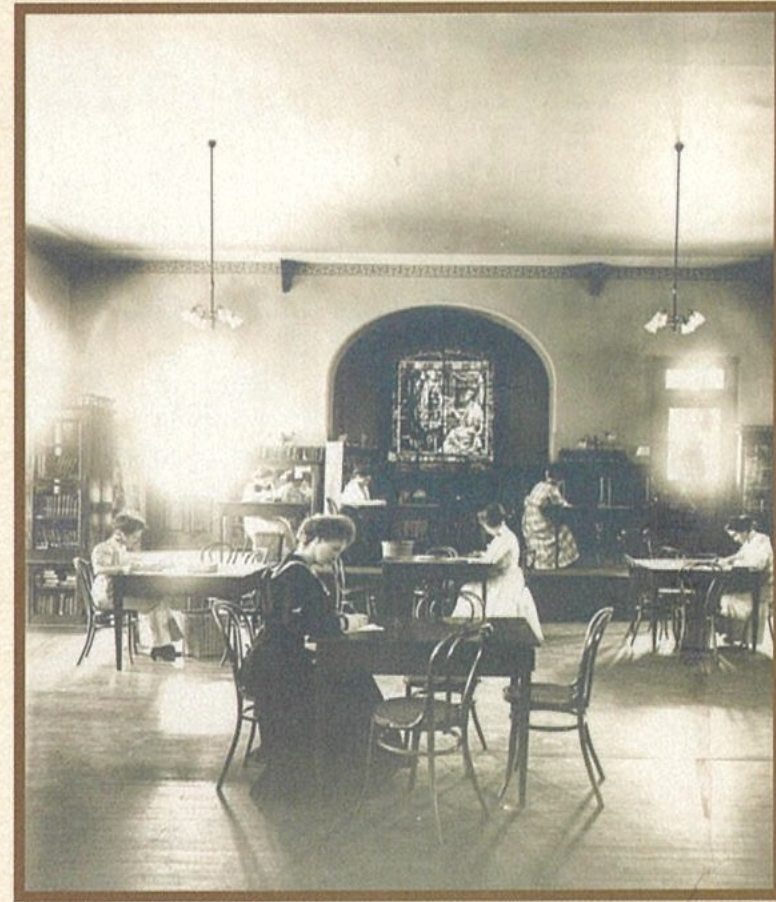
Along with the beauty and historical significance of an older building, there also is the good possibility of it needing extensive upkeep and repair. Unfortunately, such a situation has happened at Wilson. In spring 2011, there was a heating system failure in which steam pipes cracked and caused major damage to the walls, the women's

bathroom and the technology room. Large portions of the pipes in the heating system are located beneath the original section of the library, making it difficult to repair.

After an assessment by College officials, the decision was made to close the library and temporarily relocate it to Sarah's Coffeehouse. The Board of Trustees voted



Wilson College Business Manager George Bartle, George H. Stewart, President Warfield and U.S. Senator George Wharton Pepper, who gave the dedication address



Students are seen studying in the “library” of Edgar Hall. The Tiffany window, now located in Lenfest Commons, is in the background.

earlier this year to move forward with a capital project to renovate the library. Through this project, the College is looking to preserve the history of the library, and at the same time, progress into the future with a library that will support Wilson’s mission for a rigorous liberal arts education.

Before looking to the future of what the new library should and could be, understanding the history of the library will help to preserve its heritage. At one time, students used Edgar Hall as their place of study. Then in 1922, an announcement at a Board of Trustees meeting was made that George H. Stewart, the College’s oldest Trustee, had given the College \$75,000, the largest donation to date. George wanted a building of natural limestone to be erected in memory of his brother, Justice John Stewart. Both Stewart brothers were prominent figures at Wilson College and in the surrounding counties.

At one point in his life, George owned more than 100 farms in the Cumberland Valley. He was the president and chairman of the board of directors for the Valley National Bank and was involved in the sale of the Cumberland Valley Railroad to the Pennsylvania Railroad. From 1892 to 1929, George served as the treasurer for the Board and he served as a College Trustee from 1879 until his death in 1931. After announcing his gift, George was appointed to the committee that would decide what building would be erected and monitor the progress of the building.

The building’s namesake, John, also served on the Board of Trustees from 1895 until his death in 1920. Many of these years were spent as vice president of the board. His education included Princeton University and Franklin & Marshall College. John then applied his degrees to practice law in Cumberland and Franklin counties until the outbreak of the Civil War. John was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army and served until 1863. Upon return-

ing to civil life, John’s first law partnership was with Col. A.K. McClure, owner of the original mansion of Norland Hall, which was burned during the war by the Confederate Army. He later went on to practice law with Col. Thomas B. Kennedy for more than 20 years.

John had much success in his political career. He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention, which nominated Abraham Lincoln to his second term for presidency. John was also a representative to the State Constitutional Convention, a presidential elector and a state senator for Franklin and Huntingdon counties. He was elected Presidential Judge of the 39th district in 1888 and re-elected in 1898. Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker appointed him to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, where John served until his death.

Justice Stewart died in a trolley accident on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 20, 1920. After a holiday meal at his daughter’s home, he was struck crossing Philadelphia Avenue. At the Board of Trustees meeting that announced the \$75,000 gift, the Rev. John B. Laird noted, “Every member of the Board rejoices that by this generous provision, the name Stewart will ever be associated in a helpful and happy way with the College and that the future classes and friends of the College will have before them the name of this distinguished man.”

The Stewart family’s involvement with the College does not end there. George H. Stewart’s granddaughter, Jane Rambo Stewart, was a 1944 graduate of Wilson and a former trustee. Jane was also involved in the “Save Wilson” campaign in 1979. Before her death on Oct. 5, 2011, she was an active member of her community in Philadelphia. Jane also served on the Alexander Stewart M.D. Foundation, which has supported organizations throughout the Cumberland Valley, including Wilson College. Dr.

Alexander Stewart was the son of George H. Stewart and the foundation supports several initiatives, including historic preservation.

The library's cornerstone was laid on Oct. 15, 1923, as part of Founder's Day celebrations. The building was completed on Nov. 6, 1925. The architect was Furness, Evans and Company of Philadelphia, who designed the building in the Collegiate Gothic style, and the landscape architect was Dreher and Churchman. Before it was completely finished, on May 9, 1925, it was officially dedicated as the John Stewart Memorial Library. Along with the natural limestone material, slate was used for the roof, and its book capacity was 42,000 volumes. George H. Stewart was the sole contributor, having given a total of \$102,000.

The library soon outgrew its capacity. In 1954, its collection reached 44,000 volumes. The College hired Charles B. Shaw, librarian of Swarthmore College, to conduct a thorough study of the library and its use. He suggested adding stacks throughout the building to manage the overflowing volumes. However, he also noted that the overcrowding was interfering with the students' ability to use the space adequately.

The library's collection continued to grow. By 1961, there were 72,000 volumes. An addition was completed in 1962 at a total cost of \$322,000. The first gift for the addition was a sum of \$15,000 from the Hollywood actor Jimmy Stewart. Ties between the two Stewart families have not been found, but according to the Jimmy Stewart Museum's website, his family left Franklin County and moved to Indiana, Pa., in 1772. His mother, Elizabeth Jackson Stewart, was an 1894 alumna. Jimmy's gift was in memory of his mother, who passed away in 1953. Additional donors included the U.S. Steel Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Microfilm and microcard materials and equipment were included with the addition, along with 70 study carrels, a listening library, stacks and other study areas. The addition connects to the existing building by an enclosed bridge and is made of reinforced concrete with a stone facing, portraying the architectural style of the 1960s. No further renovations have been made to the library since, and total capacity has now reached 180,000 volumes.

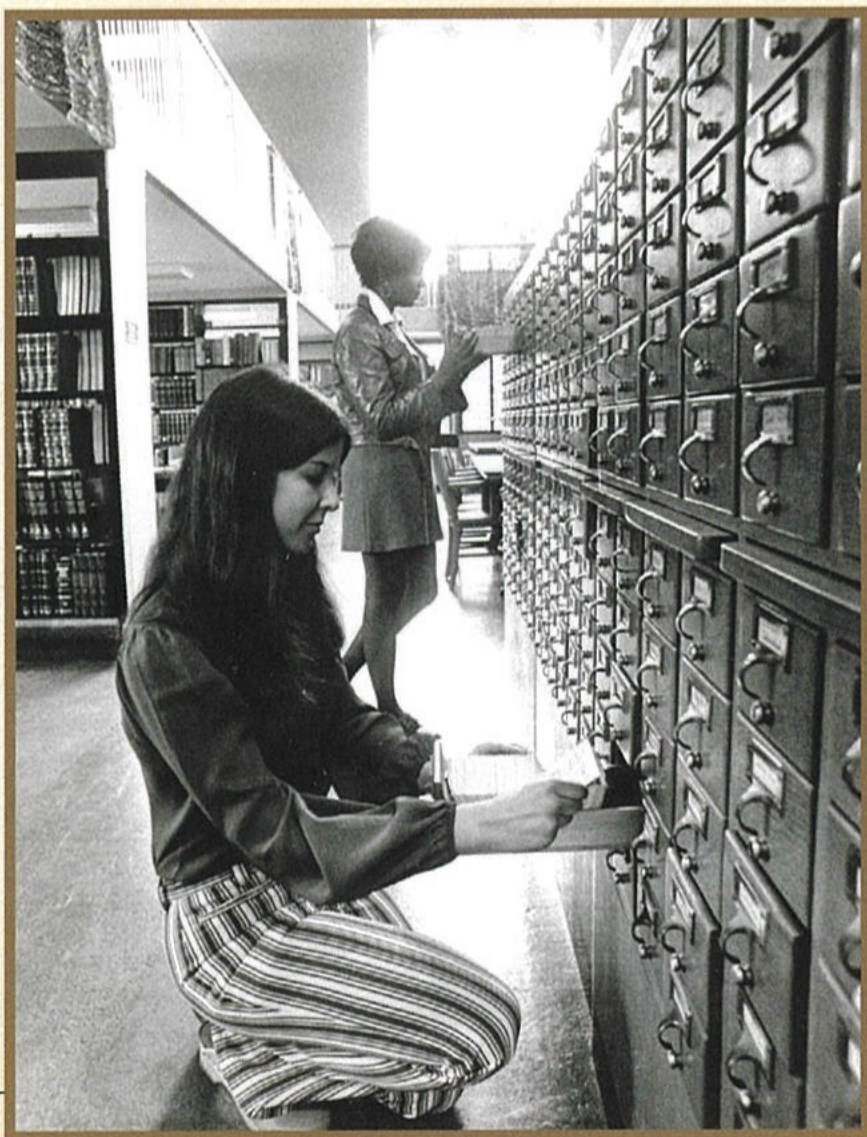
The students and the library staff are meeting a number of challenges related to their relocation in Sarah's Coffeehouse. The library staff has offices in three separate buildings. The stacks can only be accessed by staff, meaning students must request books for the library staff to retrieve. Sarah's Coffeehouse, the primary location for students to gather, has been redesigned to include a circulation desk, cubicles and shelves for a select number of books, taking away spaces for group discussion.

Although challenging, the heating malfunction has created new opportunities for the campus community, including the incorporation of a new computer lab with 24/7 access, a schedule that was not available when located in the John Stewart Memorial Library. Additionally, the College has acquired multiple electronic databases and collections like *Credo Reference*, a collection of 551 reference volumes, and *ebrary*, a collection of more than 77,000 online books which cover all academic topics. Students have already participated in a survey, and will have the opportunity to partake in focus groups, to provide their feedback and opinions on exactly what they want in the new library. They also will be able to use "design charrettes" which is a concept for bringing together a group of people from different backgrounds to collaborate on a project and in this case, choosing everything for the new library, from the layout to the furniture.

Look for more information on the library project in future issues.

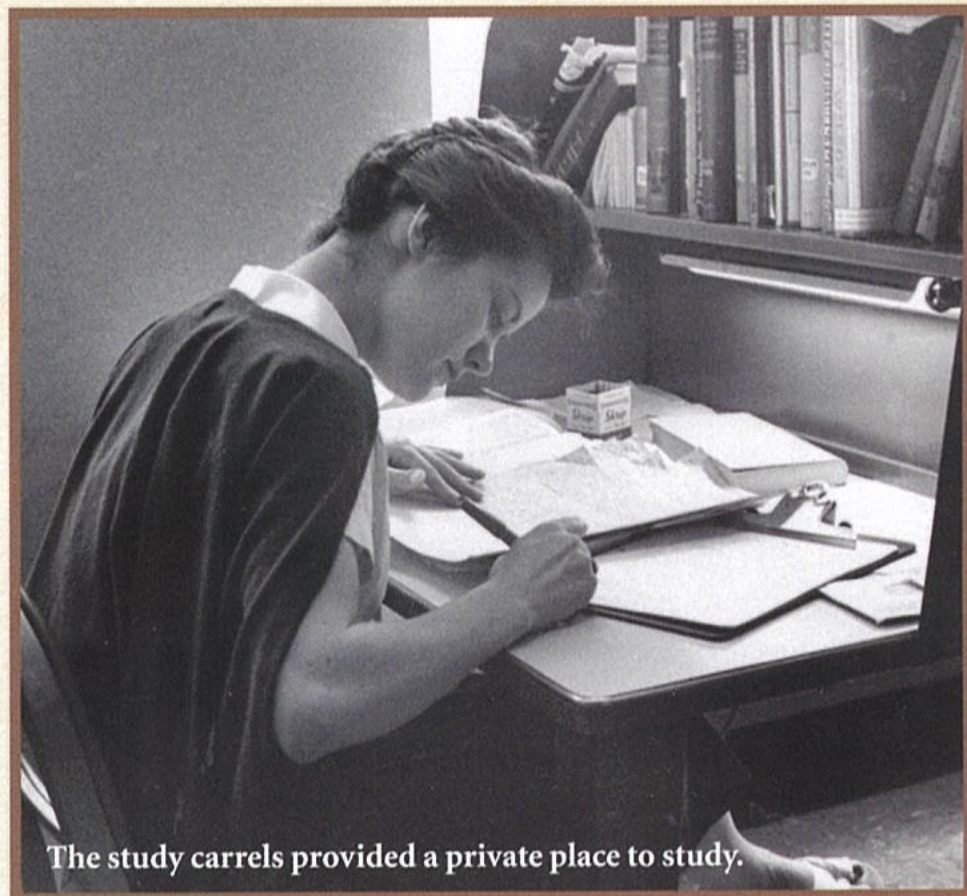


Construction for the new addition completed in 1962.



Wilson has a number of advantages to make the best of the situation. Library Director Kathleen Murphy '67 has a vested interest in the success of the library as the director and an alumna of Wilson. She's been in this position since 1999, but has worked in various libraries before coming back to her alma mater. Murphy was the director of the library at Mount Aloysius College, when a new library was constructed in 1996. She is joined on the library renovation committee by Dean of Academic Affairs Mary Hendrickson and President Barbara K. Mistick. Before coming to Wilson, President Mistick was president of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and spent the past few years overseeing neighborhood library locations and providing operational oversight.

Another advantage of remodeling the library is timing, according to Murphy. "Many other institutions of higher education renovated or built their libraries in the 1990s, before the most important recent trends in academic libraries took place, trends that radically impact the way libraries will be used in the future. Those trends will inform our decisions." She will be visiting other college's libraries to see what they are offering as well.



The study carrels provided a private place to study.



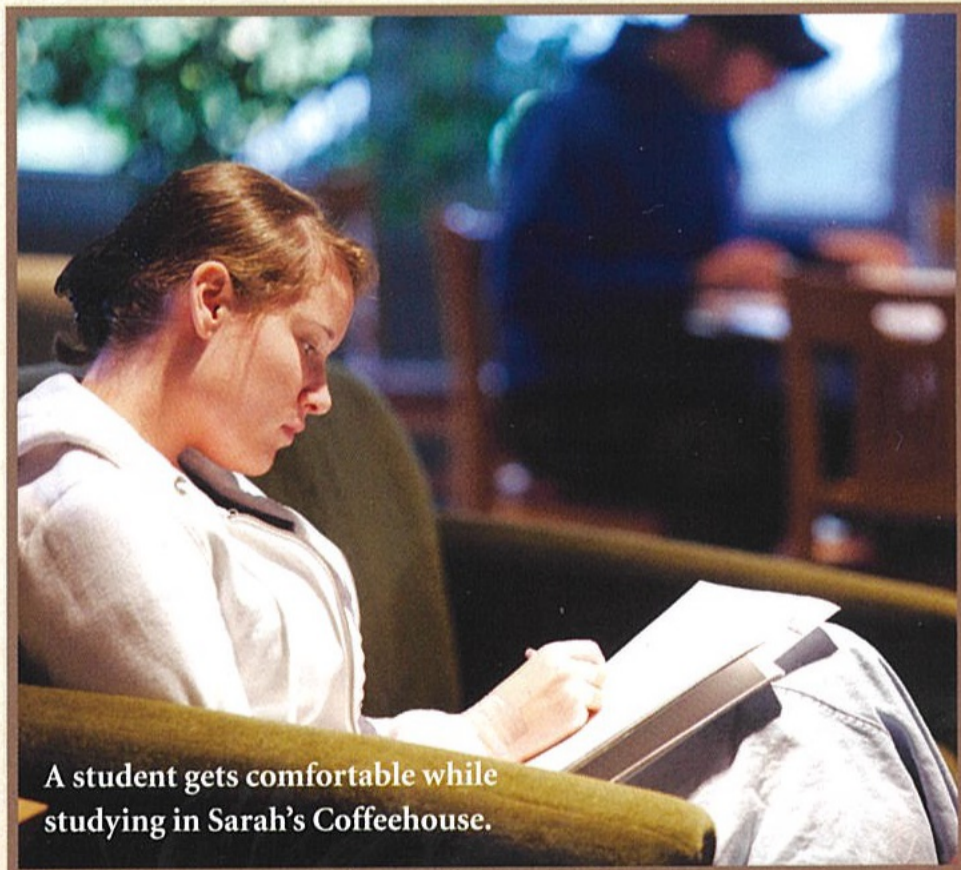
As a tribute to the library, look throughout this issue to see what alumnae and students have on their bookshelves.

This article was completed with the help of College Archivist Amy Lucadamo, Director of Advancement Services Emily Helman '04, Media Relations Manager Cathy Mentzer and Library Director Kathleen Murphy '67.

Archival photos are courtesy of the C. Elizabeth Boyd '33 archives.

Murphy envisions a combination of modern and traditional library features. Ideally, there would be space which provides students quiet study space and another that would provide students with the latest technologies to support their education. The new library will have an area dedicated to information technology, academic support, tutoring and group study. With the vast array of electronic collections already acquired by Wilson, the shelf space for books will be downsized, allowing more room for a learning commons model. All academia-related materials and support would be under one roof. Traditional students, along with commuters, will have an area to gather and collaborate; serving the many needs of Wilson's varied student body.

With the new technology of books, including textbooks, available on e-readers like the iPad, Kindle and Nook, the way students learn is evolving. The renovated library will usher in this new age of learning while continuing to serve the campus needs. Wilson is poised to be in line with the new cutting-edge learning and support technologies of the 21st century.



A student gets comfortable while studying in Sarah's Coffeehouse.