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Old Haunts, New Life: Vintage Law School Building Becomes A Law Library

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Law School Report

Old haunts, new life

Vintage Law School building becomes a law library

In a project with special resonance for UB Law School graduates – especially those who attended classes at the school's old downtown Buffalo home – the law library of the State Supreme Court, Eighth District, is now in a new home.

The library's new address is 77 W. Eagle St., known to generations of UB Law graduates as the Law School's longtime home. The school moved to its current Amherst facility in 1973.

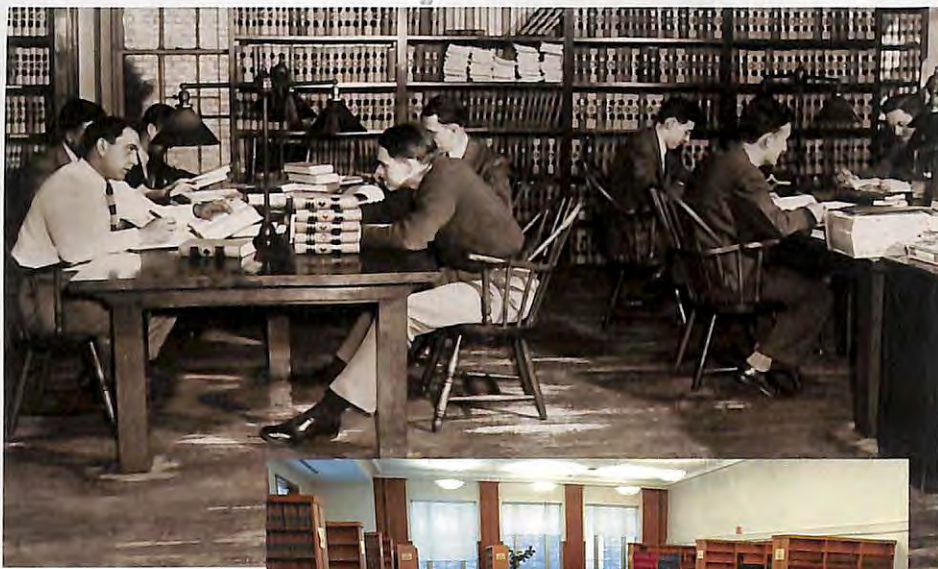
The state Unified Court System chose the four-story building at 77 W. Eagle for its new library facility, as part of an \$87 million court facilities improvement project. It is the first segment of that project to be completed after completion of the new Erie County Family Court building in 2001.

"We had been in old County Hall at 92 Franklin St. since the 1870s, so obviously it was time for things to be re-done," said Law Librarian Jim Sahlem. "We had 12,000 or 13,000 square feet there; here we have about 21,000 square feet. We no longer have to insert new out-of-state statutes with a shoe-horn."

Other highlights, he said: "The office area is improved. Our technology room now accommodates eight PCs instead of the three or four that we were using before. There is significantly more space for microforms. Literally every part of the facility is improved, including the atmospherics, with central air filtration and central air conditioning."

Most notable from a UB Law point of view is the library's new fourth-floor reading room – installed in the area that used to contain the UB Law School library. "It is an absolutely wonderful room," Sahlem said. "Everyone raves about it."

In large part, that is because the room was furnished and remodeled to be true to how it looked during its Law School days. "We were lucky enough to find microfilm that the facilities group at UB had on file that had all the original blueprints of the library," said



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architect Paul Battaglia of Hamilton Houston Lownie.

"When the county took it over, they put in a lot of partitions and suspended a ceiling, to make chambers for the judges. We took out all those partitions and the ceiling. There is a beautiful plaster cornice around the entire perimeter that we were able to restore. Also, we found most of the original white oak shelving units in various offices. We rebuilt the ones we were able to salvage."

In addition to the reading room, the building's main halls, entrance and stairway were restored to retain a lot of its original character, Battaglia said.

The library and its staff of nine pri-

marily serves members of the local bar and bench, but members of the general public also are allowed to use it. The law library occupies the top three floors of the building; the ground floor is a day care center for the children of county employees.

The UB Law connection is a strong one. Says Sahlem: "Practically every attorney who graduated from UB Law School when this was a Law School building asks one question in particular: 'Do you have an elevator?' They were never able to get one.

"Yes, we do."