

Program Summary:

A new digital library for a North Louisiana HBCU that unifies campus life through collaborative learning environments, technology-driven spaces, and architecture celebrating culture and connection.

Program Statement:

A new digital library and learning commons redefines the academic and social heart of campus through a bold, technology-driven environment that bridges the university's residential and academic districts. Positioned prominently on one of the highest points on campus, the 50,000-square-foot facility serves as both a repository of knowledge and a vibrant center for collaboration, innovation, and community engagement.

Organized around a glazed north-south entry spine, the two-story library maximizes daylight, visual connectivity, and intuitive circulation while creating a strong civic presence. The program includes more than 500 computer stations, flexible study environments, digital labs, maker and gaming spaces, archives, galleries, conference facilities, and multipurpose event areas designed to support evolving modes of learning and interaction. An expansive exterior plaza and lawn extend activity outdoors, strengthening campus connectivity and creating new gathering spaces for students and the surrounding community.

The architecture blends brick, steel, high-performance glazing, and sculpted perforated metal screens that celebrate the institution's cultural legacy while establishing a new beacon for education, accessibility, and innovation at this North Louisiana HBCU.

A-235.01

Building Area: (sf)
51,212 sf

Cost per Square Foot:
\$256

Construction Cost
\$13,111,000

Date of Completion:
July 21, 2024

A-235.02

During the design process, university leadership referred to the library as a “beacon on the hill,” recognizing its prominent glazed prow and visible presence across campus. The building was envisioned not only as a center for digital learning, but as a symbol of institutional ambition, innovation, and student opportunity.

The transparent entry spine and illuminated public spaces establish the library as a welcoming academic landmark, reinforcing its role as a hub for research, collaboration, and community engagement. The incorporation of brick that matches the rest of the campus, blended with high-performance metal façade elements, creates visual connection while giving the building a contemporary academic presence. Through technology-rich environments, flexible gathering spaces, and strong visual connectivity, the project creates a learning environment that supports both academic achievement and campus identity.



A-235.03

Perched at the high point of campus, the library's glazed entry spine acts as a beacon, visually and physically connecting the campus through the building.

Oriented along an east-west axis, the design maximizes north-facing glazing to bring natural light deep into the interior learning environments.

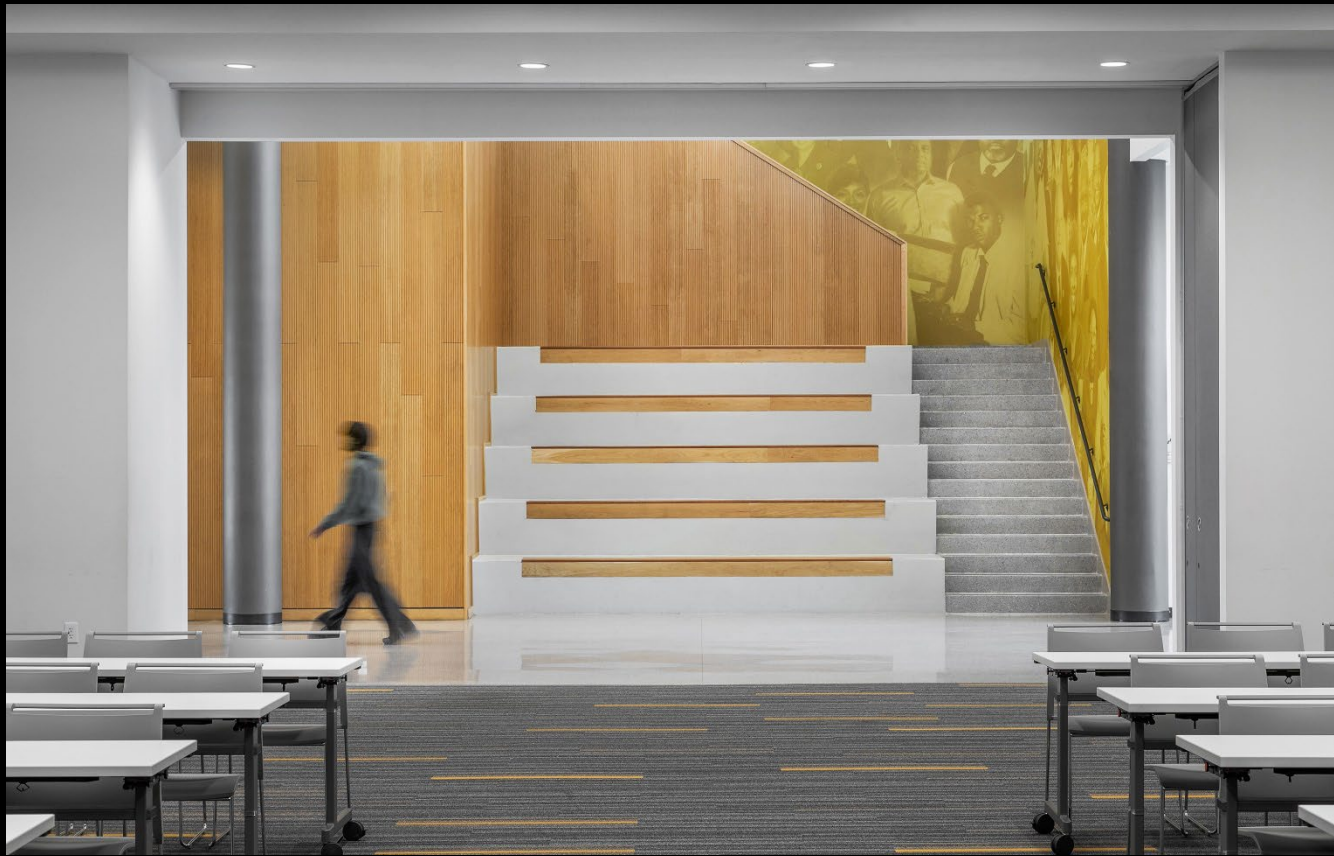


A-235.04

The library creates a physical and social connection between two previously divided areas of campus separated by RWE Jones Drive. While the primary building site remained level, the sloping terrain to the north was transformed into an expansive outdoor lawn and gathering space, extending campus activity beyond the building footprint and strengthening connections to the surrounding campus.

An elevated entry plaza transitions gradually into the landscape, drawing students toward the building and reinforcing the library's role as a campus destination. The glazed north-south entry spine extends through the building and is anchored by a central auditorium and opposing stadium seating wrapped by an open stair, creating a dynamic two-story gathering space that encourages visibility, interaction, and collaboration.

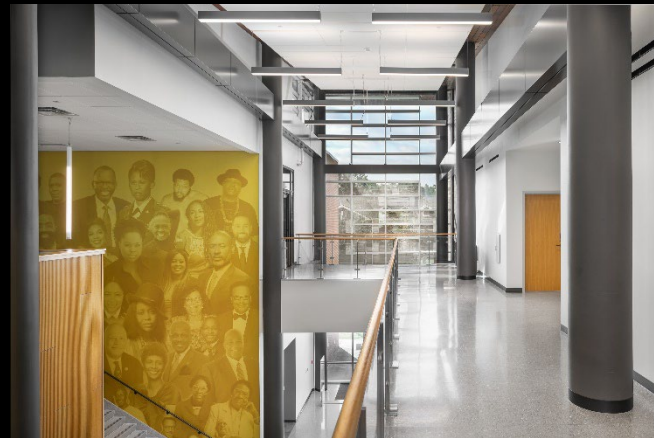




A-235.05

A collaborative programming charrette shaped the library's central concept: an auditorium extending through the entry spine to create an open visual and physical connection between floors. Opposing stadium seating, wrapped by an open stair and feature mural, activates the central atrium as a dynamic gathering space for learning, events, and informal interaction.

A full digital media wall within the auditorium is reinforced by integrated monitors at the stadium seating, expanding opportunities for engagement and shared experiences. Large-scale wallcoverings celebrate prominent university alumni whose achievements and leadership continue to inspire future generations, embedding the institution's cultural legacy within the everyday student experience.





A-235.06

The building's east-west orientation allows primary public spaces to extend along the north façade, maximizing natural daylight and views across campus. The Learning and Coffee Commons anchor the ground floor, while the Quiet Reading Room and central entry spine are framed by student and event balconies on the second level, reinforcing visual connectivity throughout the building.

Generous glazing and open interior volumes create bright, collaborative environments, while indirect lighting supplements daylighting within larger gathering and study spaces.





A-235.07

The Quiet Reading Room has become one of the most sought-after spaces on campus, offering a flexible environment that supports both focused study and informal collaboration. Perimeter seating can be easily rearranged by students to create varying levels of privacy and interaction, allowing the space to continuously adapt to individual and group needs.

The evolving nature of the room reflects the building's broader emphasis on student ownership, flexibility, and user-driven learning environments.



A-235.08

The glazed entry spine welcomes students and visitors while extending fully through the building to create a strong visual and physical connection across campus. Sculpted perforated metal panels along the west façade filter direct sunlight and animate the interior with shifting light and shadow throughout the day.

The Ipe wall and soffit cladding transition seamlessly from exterior to interior, reinforcing continuity between the building and its surrounding landscape. Curtainwall glazing at both the north and south ends of the spine fills the central gathering space with natural light and establishes the library as a transparent, inviting campus landmark.



A-235.09

Murals celebrating campus history and cultural identity are integrated throughout the project, reinforcing the library's role as both an academic and cultural landmark. The west corner of the building houses the Computer Lab at the ground level and a conference and event space above, both screened by a sublimated perforated metal façade developed through the Percent for Art program.

The perforated screen filters western sunlight, casting dappled light into the interior while creating a dynamic public artwork visible across campus. Additional murals are embedded throughout the building, including the service desk, central stair and stadium seating, and reading areas, creating moments of identity, storytelling, and connection within the everyday student experience.



A-235.10

The south façade houses the auditorium at the ground level with administration spaces above, while educational and support functions extend along the east side of the entry spine.

In contrast to the transparency of the north façade, the south elevation is more solid and carefully controlled to reduce direct solar exposure and protect interior learning environments and library resources from excessive heat and glare.



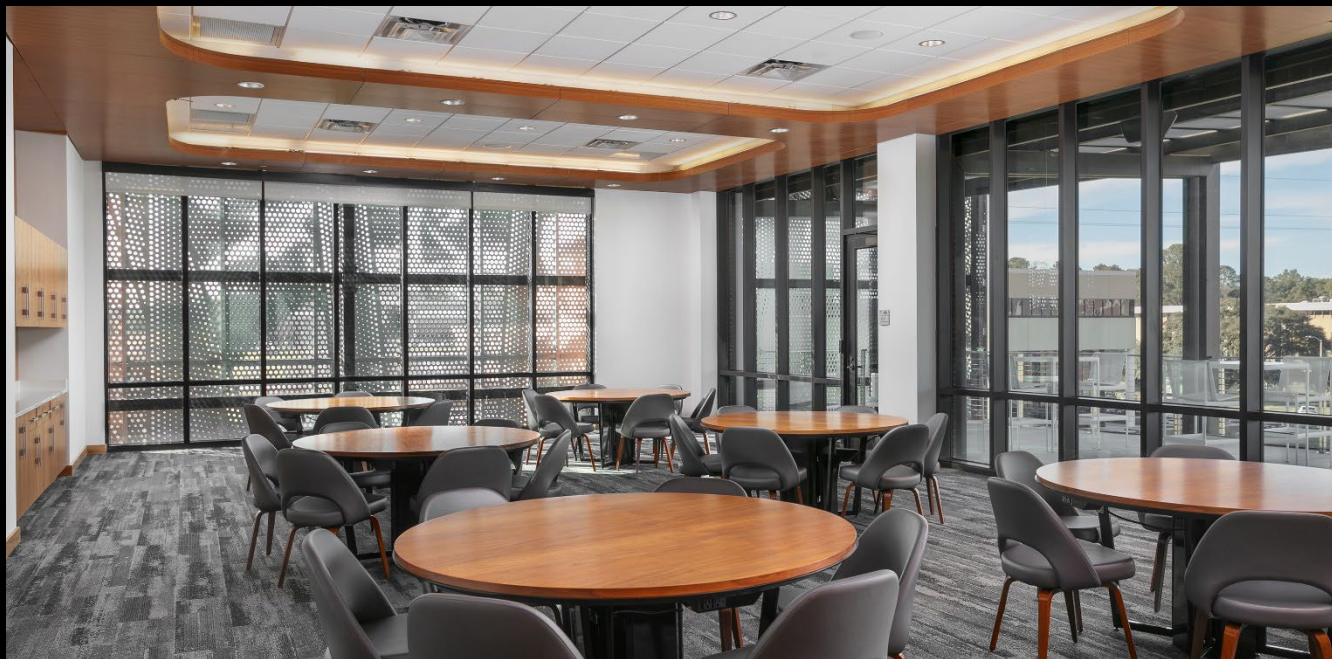


A-235.11

The library's collection includes high-density archival shelving alongside curated primitive and African art collections displayed within second-floor gallery spaces. While preserving physical collections, the building prioritizes flexible environments for gathering, collaboration, and individual study, reflecting the evolving role of the contemporary academic library.

Digital resources are integrated throughout the facility, with access provided in the Reading Commons, Computer Lab, and Quiet Reading Rooms. Technology-rich study environments, flexible seating arrangements, and on-demand laptop access support a wide range of learning styles while promoting accessibility, interaction, and student engagement.





A-235.12

Prior to this project, the campus lacked a dedicated reception and event space for university leadership, alumni, and distinguished visitors. Positioned at the upper level of the library, the G Room was conceived as a flexible gathering space that supports donor engagement, conferences, and campus events while offering panoramic views across the university.

The space accommodates multiple seating configurations and extends onto an outdoor balcony overlooking the entry plaza below. In addition to formal meetings and receptions, the room functions as a pre-event gathering space during football weekends, alumni events, and major university celebrations. This allows the space to support both formal university functions and campus social activity.

