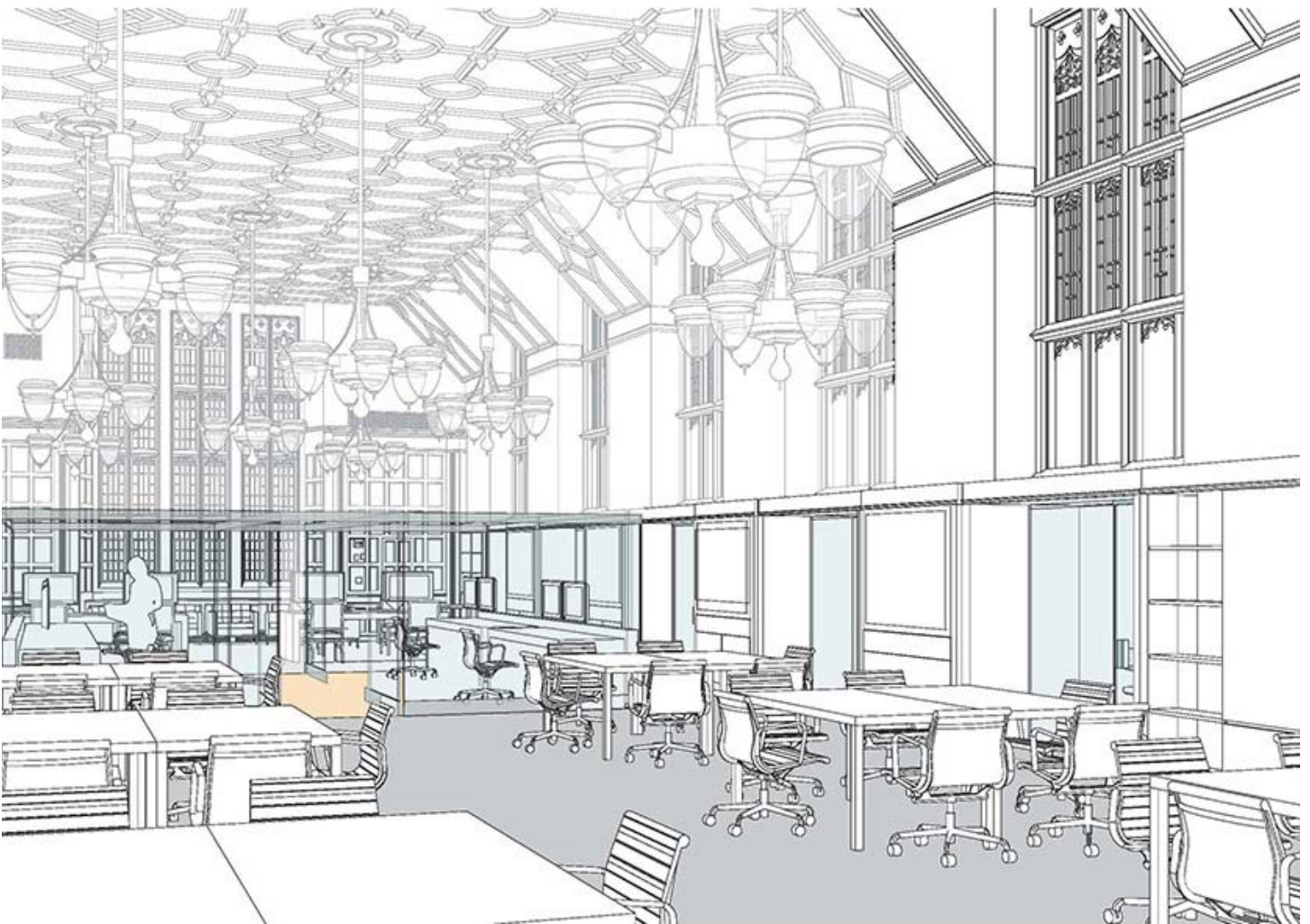# YaleNews

Renovation creating new home for Yale Library's Digital Humanities Lab

By Mike Cummings | MARCH 19, 2018

The Franke Family Digital Humanities Laboratory in Sterling Memorial Library will support work at the intersection of technology and the humanities. It will integrate the lab's high-tech needs with the architecture of the Franke Family Reading Room. A glass cube at the center of the lab will provide a secure space for projects involving specialized equipment.

Yale's Digital Humanities Lab, a space where Shakespeare meets Silicon Valley, will have a new home in Sterling Memorial Library.

A renovation of the library's Franke Family Reading Room now under way will create a cutting-edge campus hub for applying advanced computing to humanities-related data. The project, designed by New Haven-based Apicella + Bunton Architects, will integrate the reading room's Tudor-style architecture with the lab's high-tech mission. Patrons will use laptops and high-powered gear underneath vaulted ceilings and chandeliers.

"In planning the renovation, we sought to respect the room — not try to turn it into something that it isn't — while incorporating more technology and making it more functional by dividing the space in interesting ways," said Peter Leonard, the lab's director.

The revamped room, which will be named the Franke Family Digital Humanities Laboratory, will house the lab's staff and equipment, accommodate a broad range of digital projects, and be a resource for scholars.

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>
> —RICHARD FRANKE

"We want it to be a point where people can get access to services that go beyond the digital humanities to other facets of digital scholarship," he said, adding that expertise and advice from the library's larger Digital Scholarship unit will be accessible through the new space.

Established in the fall of 2015 through a grant from the Goizueta Foundation, the lab is currently housed in temporary offices on the library's third floor. It helps humanities scholars engage with digital tools and quantitative methods in the pursuit of

humanistic questions, and serves as a collaborative space for work combining STEM fields with the arts and humanities, efforts known as "STEAM."

Projects include "Photogrammar (http://dhlab.yale.edu/projects/photogrammar.html)," a web-based platform for exploring 170,000 photographs by the United States Farm Security Administration and Office of War Information from 1935 to 1945; " John Ashbery's Nest (http://dhlab.yale.edu/projects/nest.html)," a virtual tour of the celebrated late poet's home; and "Gathering a Building (http://gatheringabuilding.yale.edu/)," which analyzes social, physical, historical, and artistic aspects of the new residential colleges. In addition, the lab supports the integration of digital methods into undergraduate classes through its "Digital Humanities Teaching Fellow (http://dhlab.yale.edu/about/teaching_fellows.html)" program for graduate students.

The Goizueta Foundation together with Richard Franke '53 and his wife, Barbara Franke, are supporting the construction of the new lab space. The Frankes previously supported a major renovation of the reading room in 1998.

"The creation of the Digital Humanities Lab at Sterling Library confirms Yale's commitment to bringing the humanities and the sciences together," Richard Franke said. "It is a reflection both of what Yale stands for and the architectural center of this great university. Through recent appointments, new programs and renovations, the library has redefined its mission for the 21st century. It is an honor to be associated with this effort."

Visitors will enter the new lab through the reading room's low-ceilinged anteroom. The room's original reference desk, which features ornate carvings, will function as a welcome and orientation point.

The primary lab space will be divided into three sections. The first will be a flexible workspace equipped with wheeled furniture to enable multiple layouts. Featuring a large, high-definition monitor mounted to the wall, the area will accommodate workshops, presentations, and other events. It will also provide workspace for small groups.

Scholars will be able to connect their laptops to 10 large, high-definition monitors arrayed along the lab's walls to present their work and facilitate discussion. The monitors could showcase completed digital projects and serve as a large virtual canvas for a single project, Leonard said.

An open-ceilinged glass cube at the room's center will house a workspace for specialized projects.
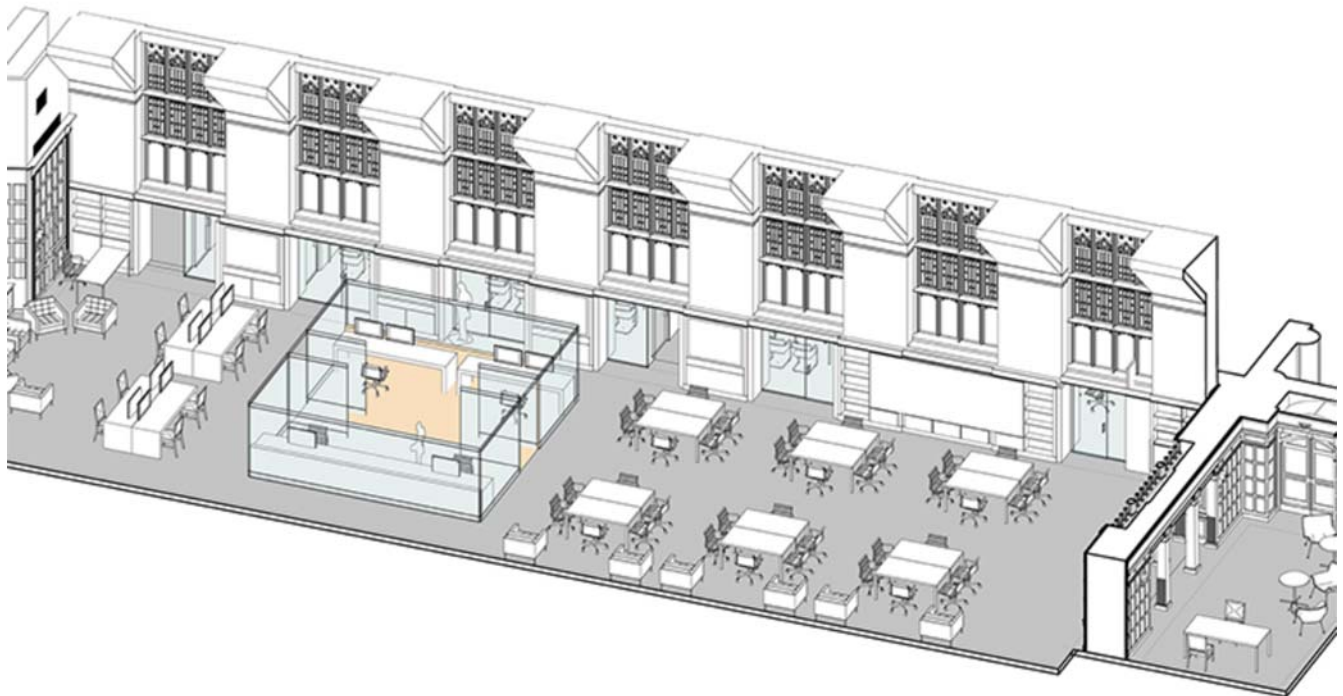
"There's an awful lot of work in the digital humanities that happens on a MacBook Air, but there is some work that still requires very high-powered computation that must be done on a desktop," he said.

For instance, a scholar might be using virtual reality equipment to create a tour of a famous writer's home or working with a historic map of New Haven on a monitor with ultra-high definition, Leonard said.

"The cube will provide a safe and secure space for those kinds of projects," he said. "The exciting thing about it is that you can stop your work, close a glass door — sections of the cube will close off separately — go get a coffee and know that nobody

will disturb your linear algebra calculations happening millions of times per second on a video card."

Individual workstations will be located in an area behind the glass cube.

An adjoining annex space will house offices for the lab's staff and a conference room. The offices will open onto the lab and have glass doors to allow patrons to see if a staff member is available for consultation.

The reading room opened in 1931 as a reserve book room lined with shelves containing books from the university's various academic departments. Books will line the walls of the renovated space as well. The lab's collection of hundreds of volumes on the digital humanities will be displayed on the shelves.

"The room will have a curated print collection of books on digital humanities to support the many theoretical and practical problems people engage with in the lab," Leonard said.

The shelves will be modified so that the books are displayed with their covers, as opposed to their spines, facing out, he said. The collection will be cataloged as non-circulating reference materials.

[Visit the Digital Humanities Lab's website to learn more about the lab's services and explore a selection of its projects.](http://dhlab.yale.edu/) (http://dhlab.yale.edu/)

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