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A new chapter for NCSSM Library

BY ADDY LIU
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Over the past three years, NCSSM's library has gone through an astonishing yet largely unnoticed transformation due to the gradual step-by-step process through which these changes occurred.

The changes were overseen by library director Robin Boltz, who still remembers the moment she first entered the library in 2012. Greeted by rows of VHS tapes and cassettes, she recalls thinking, "This is a library from 1990."

She thus began an extensive three-year renovation that brought together the efforts and input of many, including the student body, the faculty, and the administration, as well as others outside of the NCSSM umbrella.

Surveys, both online and conducted through one-on-one interviews, revealed that the primary things students collectively wanted in their school library were more places for group work and more quiet places for individual work.

Space was made a priority. Things were rearranged to minimize clutter and maximize floor space. The collection of shelved books was condensed to free up more space as well.

Shelves were turned 90 degrees to provide a clear line of vision from the front of the library to the back, for both visual and safety purposes. The carpet was changed from a dull grey color to a blue. Certain areas of the walls were repainted a cream color to brighten up the space.

The circulation desk was

replaced.

"The old circulation desk was very tall," Boltz said. "It seemed like a barrier. I think the library should be inviting and friendly, because it's basically a student center."

Those working on the remodeling of the library focused especially on the opening up of space toward the front of the library. Today, there is a group of rocking chairs arranged in a circle there, as well as chair-and-table pods on wheels that are particularly conducive to collaborative work.

The format of the redesigned library is now designed so that the noise level decreases as one moves from the front of the library to the back. Past the smart bar and circulation desk are the areas for group work, after which come the conference rooms and glass paneled rooms.

Further down, there are egg chairs and the carrels – the desks with high sides – and finally, the student-monitored quiet space. This sound-tapering design is particularly effective in the evenings, when there is the highest concentration of students in the library. Most importantly, this design addresses both of the students' priorities – collaborative space and quiet space.

The goal was to create less of a library and more of a 'learning commons,' which Boltz explained is a library that is rich in technology that also has collaborative space. Accordingly, not only were white boards and new furniture

added to the conference rooms but also flat-panel monitors that students can hook their laptops and tablets to for presentation practice. Additionally, only in the last two years have students been able to reserve conference rooms through the online system.

More recent additions to the library include the already beloved egg chairs meant to replace the heavy wooden carrels which library staff

Tribble the guinea pig is another recent addition to the library, and exemplifies the thorough approach that was taken during the renovation process. When asked, an overwhelming majority of students said they missed their pets more than they missed their parents; they could always talk to their parents on the phone but had to actually go home to be with their pets.

For this reason, Boltz went

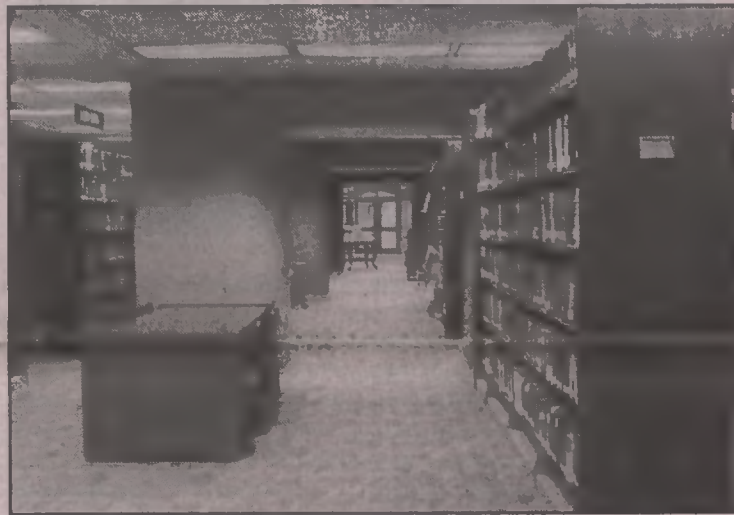
provoked, do not provoke allergies unless they are touched or if someone is cleaning their cages and are low-maintenance pets on the same sleep cycle as humans.

The sweeping changes made to the library in the last three years were funded from a variety of sources. "We are probably never going to have this much money again," Boltz commented.

Research and implementation of the comprehensive changes made to NCSSM's library was not an individual project by any means, Boltz was sure to add. Among the people she said it could not have been done without are Keith Beisner, who planned the shifting of shelves, Anthony Miles and Melissa Cox for making purchases, Gary Covington and his facilities crew for helping get the project off the ground, Mike Mitchell for installing new and brighter light fixtures in the beginning, Andrea Smythe for collecting student input and Roberts for his support.

At the end of it all, the NCSSM library has emerged an utterly new, infinitely more functional learning center through the efforts of a vast number of people. The degree to which the library has transformed has largely escaped the attention of the general NCSSM population, which became accustomed to the small, gradual changes as they came.

To be sure, no one entering NCSSM's library today would think of it as outdated.



The Borden-Mace Library's layout was changed last year to create an acoustically and aesthetically ideal environment for learning.

Photo courtesy of Chichi Zhu

noted were really only used during exams. There used to be forty of such carrels, which provide visual isolation; now there are four, freeing up even more floor space.

The egg chairs are an immensely popular improvement over the carrels, providing not only visual, but also sound isolation. For this reason, the egg chairs are spaced out in the back of the library and are meant to be used for quiet individual work.

on what a "one-person crusade" spanning about a year, during which she repeatedly asked Chancellor Todd Roberts for a library pet, even saying she would name it 'Chancellor.' Eventually named for its cute noises reminiscent of the creatures featured in vintage Star Trek, Tribble is a Durham County Animal Shelter rescue.

Boltz explained that she wanted a guinea pig for the library because guinea pigs do not bite unless seriously

Spirit Week draws less students; Pep Rally, Mixer cancelled

BY SIERRA DUNNE
Editor-in-Chief

The beginning of second trimester also brought about the beginning of Spirit Week at NCSSM. Spirit week is hosted by Student Government and consists of different themed days where students dress up in unusual ways. This year, the themes were Decades Day, School Spirit Day, Opposites Day and Icon day.

Spirit Week is meant to be a time for students to show of their school spirit at the start of the basket-

ball season and for students to celebrate this year, a pep rally was planned for Wednesday's meeting block and a two hour mixer was planned for Friday night during the week after first trimester break.

One significant change to Spirit Week was the removal of Gender Bender Day, when students would dress up as a different gender for the day. It was removed after concerns the day was insensitive to the issues of the transgender community.

However, this year's Spirit Week didn't seem to have the same impact as it has had in previous years. Only a fraction

of the student body participated at all and out of those that did an even smaller fraction participated in all four days.

Last year, this school-wide event took place much earlier during first trimester and it had significantly more participation. This year, students just did not seem interested.

"I didn't participate because the days last year just seemed more fun, and it was earlier last year too," said senior Kennedy Bridges.

Besides students' disinterest, other factors kept the week-long event from taking full effect. The pep rally, which was supposed to occur

that Wednesday during School Spirit Day in order to recognize the fall and winter sports teams, was moved to the following Wednesday. The next week it was called off altogether due to "too many cancellations from participants and other important people," according to SG. The mixer that planned for that Friday was also canceled.

There were several scheduling problems that affected the successful implementation of this year's Spirit Week. Many staff members and faculty did not even know it was happening, which was disappointing to those who wanted to partici-

pate. When asked about how he felt this Spirit Week went, Head of Programming Committee Erick Aguilar declined to comment.

While various factors caused this week to be a bit less spirited than usual, overall students still found it interesting and enjoyable.

"I thought the themes for each day were more creative than they ever were at my old school," said junior Juleo Amosah. This Spirit Week might not have lived up to expectations, but students who participated were still excited to get to experience an important part of NCSSM culture.

