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Bobst to receive summer spruce up

By: Laura de la Torre

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After 30 years, Bobst Library is finally getting a face-lift.

Bobst will be renovated in two parts, Phase I and Phase II, starting this summer with the 24-hour study areas on the A and B levels, Dean of Libraries Carol Mandel said.

Phase I, which includes refurbishments on the A and B levels, the first-floor Reference Center and the first-floor mezzanine, will cost approximately \$15.5 million, Mandel said. Though the renovation officially began in December 2002, with the opening of the Mamdouha S. Bobst Gallery, it will go into full swing after this year's commencement, Mandel said.

The A and B levels will be getting new furniture, paint and computers, in addition to 22 group study rooms, vending machines and a designated eating area, Mandel said.

Mandel said that renovating Bobst has been a high priority since she came to NYU five years ago.

"The furniture has not been replaced for 30 years, the surroundings are shabby, many chairs are missing and broken - it's not a physically comfortable place," Mandel said. "It works on the big level, but not on the where-you're-sitting level."

The renovation is being funded primarily through gifts from Mamdouha Bobst and from Madeline and Kevin R. Brine, as well as Friends of Bobst Library, an organization devoted to preserving libraries, according to its Web site.

After the December 2002 kickoff, library officials worked with students, faculty, advisory groups and architects about the planned upgrades. They used surveys to form a plan that would be user-friendly and accommodate everyone's wants and needs.

"A key element of our master plan was that we focus on reader spaces, not collection growth in this building," Mandel said.

In order to refurbish Bobst without reducing space or changing the library's structure, the university has rented an off-site storage space in Rockland County, just north of Manhattan, to hold rarely used books. With 80,000 to 100,000 new books coming in every year, the storage facility was critical to the renovation process, Mandel said.

Users will need to request a book in storage 24 hours in advance, and it will be delivered to Bobst for pick-up. The A and B levels will be closed while work is underway this summer, but the stacks will stay open until 2 a.m.

"I am really happy to hear about the renovation, because I spend most of my time in the A and B levels, and it's pretty depressing and dirty, not to mention old-fashioned," Steinhardt School of Education sophomore Kelly Delaney said.

Phase II, which has yet to be funded, will focus on the second through 10th floors, as well as the railings and the reference centers on the sixth and ninth floors. The renovation will not be as extensive as Phase I, but will instead focus on refurbishing furniture.

Alspector Anderson Architects, which has worked on projects for the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and the Harvard University Libraries, has been hired for the Bobst project. €

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