

Elgin Community College Renner Academic Library



Standing in the beautiful Renner Academic Library and Learning Resources at Elgin Community College (ECC), it's hard to imagine that the college's old library was so small that three of them would fit inside the new facility. But that was something ECC officials became all too aware of after the former library was cited as "unsatisfactory for students' needs" during a 2006 accreditation visit by the Higher Learning Commission. That library, which opened in 1970 as part of the then new Elgin Community College campus, was designed to serve several thousand students, not the more than eleven thousand that were using the undersized facility more than thirty-five years later.

"While our students were receiving high quality service from our librarians and staff, our library space wasn't providing an appropriate learning environment," says ECC President David Sam. "It was time for a change, and that's why we made a new library a top priority."

Voters agreed, approving the \$178 million referendum in April 2009, which included \$26 million for the new library. Construction began in March 2010 and the new facility opened in January 2012. The overall project cost \$21.5 million, coming in \$4.5 million under budget. Named for the college's first president, Gilbert I. Renner, the Renner Academic Library and Learning Resources is a 57,000-square-foot marvel of practical, convenient learning spaces, tasteful architecture, and thoughtful sustainable elements.



“We are so excited by this facility and the new opportunities we can offer our students,” says Brian Beecher, associate dean of library at ECC. “In addition to the traditional features, we have private and group study spaces and many computers for students and the community.” In addition to the 120 public computers and 14 private study rooms, the library also has three large classrooms, a café, and a two-story quiet study area. It is also home to the college’s Tutoring Center, Distance Learning, Intensive English Program, and Center for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

Throughout the space are signs of the college’s commitment to sustainability from the clerestory building technique, which brings in additional natural light, to the bi-directional lighting throughout that reduces eye strain. Also a variety of wood paneling is used to absorb noise. The library is energy efficient, and the college has applied for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certification. Recently the Association of Licensed Architects recognized the Renner Academic Library and Learning Resources with a merit award in the institutional category.

“The things I look for in a construction project are whether it’s under budget, on time, and is aesthetically pleasing,” says Paul Dawson, managing director of construction projects at ECC. “This one knocks all three out of the ballpark.”

Fast Facts

Project Costs:	\$21.5 million
Collections:	79,000 items
Computers:	120
Hours:	60 per week
Staff:	Full-time: 15
Architect:	Dewberry
Engineers:	MEP/FP-KJWW Engineering
Interiors:	Dewberry
Construction:	IHC Construction
Web site:	www.library.elgin.edu