

# Library Showcase: Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind – Interview with Margaret Robison

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## **LOCATION ADDRESS**

Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind  
514 East Beverley Street  
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## **PROJECT INTRODUCTION**

The 4400 square foot library at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind is now housed, along with a student center, in the Stuart Building, built in 1914. The building once held classrooms, workshops and a pool but was later used as a storage facility for many years. The newly renovated library features a more accessible and flexible space, a new elevator, and exposed ceiling beams. The following are excerpts from an interview with Margaret Robison, librarian at their media center, highlighting some of the improvements and information technologies employed in the project.

**Please describe the library renovation or new construction project to be featured in the American Libraries 2011 Library Design Showcase.**

The renovation of the Stuart building on the campus of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind was part of a \$70 million capital improvement plan that includes 4 components:

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- Renovation of the Stuart building placing a Student Center on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and a Library Media Center on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and locating it adjacent to the new education building.
- Construction of 2 new dormitories – one for blind students and one for deaf students.
- Construction of a new educational building for middle school, high school, and special needs students.

Renovation of a former education building to house the elementary programs for both deaf and blind students and to house audiology services.

The Stuart building renovation was the first phase in the project. It was completed May 5, 2010 and a combination Stuart Building Dedication and Groundbreaking for the new educational building was held May 19, 2010. We moved into the new library at the beginning of this school year.

Cost of renovating the Library Media Center portion of the Stuart building was \$1,617,500.

The total square footage of our new library is 4400 square feet and the collection is estimated to be in the order of 25,000 volumes.

## **A Bit of History Leading up to the Project**

The Stuart Building, the third vocational building on campus, built in 1914, once provided spaces for classrooms, workshops, and a swimming pool. Children from Staunton, enjoyed swimming in the pool, located in the basement. Mr. Irvin T. Rosen, a vocational teacher at VSDB and clock repairman, taught classes in the area that is now the library and media center. His students worked on clocks and furniture, which can be found in the Main Hall on campus. For many years the Stuart Building was used for storage of surplus items, tools and equipment until it was renovated. The second floor became the library and media center. The first floor became the vibrant student center with modern lounge, game areas and fully stocked snack bar. The basement became the luggage storage area. The library was included in the dedication of the student center, May 19, 2011.

## **Stuart Building's Library Media Center**

(description that follows is from the architectural firm)

The second floor, renovated as a state-of-the-art library and media center, features beautiful, exposed ceiling beam architecture, reading and lounge areas, classroom with Smart Board technology, library office space, and computer access and research areas. The interior reflects modern comfort, flexibility, and serviceability for deaf, blind, and multi-disabled students within the historical building framework.

Designed by the locally prominent firm, T.J. Collins and Sons, and constructed in 1914, this two-story, five-bay, brick structure was built on a stone block basement and capped with a standing-seam-metal, cross-gabled roof. The central front gable, pedimented gable ends, brick quoins, modillioned cornice and small paned sash windows combine to create a classically inspired composition that repeats many of the Greek Revival details of the earlier campus buildings.

The 3-floor, 12,800 sq. ft. Stuart Building included renovations and repairs to enable the building to become the state-of-the-art library and media center as well as the campus student center. The scope of work for this building included site work, water-proofing, replacement windows, masonry restoration, hazardous materials abatement, selective demolition, wood framing, metal studs and drywall, finishes, passenger elevator, casework, furnishings & accessories, fire suppression, M/E/P and included under-

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