Written up in architecture journals, magazines, and newspapers both at the time of its construction and during its renovations, the “new” Law School building has been hailed as an innovation in school architecture. At its dedication in 1960, dignitaries from around the country and around the world gathered to praise Saarinen’s accomplishment, while scholars and professors came to gaze enviously on the new research environment. Since then, the building has come to be a symbol of the Law School’s excellence, its strong, modern simplicity standing companionably beside the gothic ambience of the university’s campus.
Old Gothic Style

Of course, the “old” building, Stuart Hall, also had its distinguishing architectural details. But as the Law School grew, the structure met fewer and fewer of the school’s needs. Abner J. Mikva, ’51, wrote in the University of Chicago Law Review that:

“The old Law School building had great charm and was incapable of functioning in any of the ways that a law school should. The faculty offices were a joke, the library had a spectacularly high ceiling that made sure as little light as possible was available for reading purposes. The teaching rooms consisted of two cavernous lecture halls with awful acoustics and two smaller rooms where standing room was frequently the order of the day.”

And, unsurprisingly, books were also a problem. Professor Jo Desha Lucas, who arrived at the Law School in 1952, recalls that because of space problems in the library, students normally did not go down to the second-floor stacks to get books. Instead, they ordered the desired volumes on slips of paper and the books arrived at the third-floor reading room by dumbwaiter. Books stored in the basement took longer to access.

From the time of his assumption of the deanship of the Law School in 1950, it is clear that one of Edward Levi’s goals was to find a new, more accommodating home for the Law School. By March of 1953, the library was already at 87 percent capacity. In a letter to Herman H. Fussler, the library’s director, Levi wrote, “It is a commonly accepted practice to assume that a library reaches its practical working capacity when 80 percent of available shelf space is occupied. Beyond that point, operation becomes uneconomical because of the need for frequent shifting to take care of expansion.” The school required four new offices, which were going to further encroach upon library space. The addition of these new offices would have removed 240 shelves from the second floor.

Further, the school itself was growing. In 1950 the Law School received 180 applications. By 1956 that number had nearly tripled.

In 1954, Levi continued his campaign for a new building in a letter to Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton and the University trustees in which he wrote that “our enrollment problems are on the way to a resolution. We have 137
applications for admission … The present facilities cannot really accommodate an entering class of 135 … ” Levi went to point out the inadequate office space of Stuart Hall and explained that the “School will decline if we do not solve our facilities problem.”

The dean continued his campaign for a new building in a series of letters to the chancellor that included complaints directly from students. William Halley, a 2L, wrote in October 1954 that “the situation has reached outrageous proportions . . . All in all it adds up to a situation which is not conducive for the best results in a professional training.” At the same time, Marilyn-June Beyerle Blawie, another 2L, wrote, “Noise at the Library has become quite intolerable during the weekend and at night. It has gotten to the point where, even with the utmost concentration, I find study there impossible.”

Various solutions were put forth, most of them requiring the loss of library shelving and space. “There were rumors that the university was going to offer us Rosenwald Hall, but I am not sure there were actual discussions about that,” Lucas explains. “There were discussions about adding on to the back of the building—which would have destroyed the green in front of Beecher Hall—but that would have been very expensive. Also, at the time, there was only one gargoyle maker in the country, and making an addition to match the rest of Stuart Hall would have been tricky.”

Finally, Levi was triumphant, when the Chancellor, the Law School, and the University preliminarily agreed that a new building was in order. Noted Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen and his firm were hired in 1955 to create preliminary drawings for the new building. Unsurprisingly, right from the beginning of the planning stages, the library and its needs were central to the discussion.
Planning a Modern Gothic Building

It was universally agreed upon that the library of the new facility—which was to be large enough to hold the necessary book expansion of the next two decades—should be created along the lines of the library in Stuart Hall: Faculty offices should be situated in the library so that an easy relationship could be developed between students and teachers.

“The old building had the faculty offices around the stacks,” notes Kenneth Dam, ’57. “But it was tricky to get to them—there was this awkward circular staircase you had to go down. But in the new building, they all keep their doors open and it is really easy to get to them because they ring the stacks and there is an elevator.”

Additionally, seating and study areas were under heavy discussion. Roberta Evans, ’61, explains that the library in Stuart had beautiful long, wooden tables that students would sit at for hours to study. While these tables were eventually transferred to the new building, a memo to the Law School Building Committee expresses the notion that “students will be better served if many or most of them can be seated at individual study tables rather than at large tables.”

Where to put the new building was decided upon at the time that Saarinen and Associates was hired. On the south end of campus beside the new American Bar Association (ABA) building (now the Harris School of Public Policy) was the perfect location, as the Law School was already engaged in cooperative work with the Public Administration Clearing House at the Bar Center.

Money for the new building was another challenge. On January 18, 1956, Chancellor Kimpton announced that the Ford Foundation had granted $800 thousand to the University of Chicago to aid in the construction of a new law school. Dean Levi also embarked on an innovative and energetic fund-raising campaign amongst alumni of the Law School to raise the remaining $2.7 million needed to complete the project.

In 1956 the dean helped to create a building committee headed by Glen A. Lloyd, ’23. The 32-member committee was comprised of a wide assortment of alumni, the oldest of whom was Laird Bell, ’07, after whom the Law School Quadrangle was eventually named. Eventually, more than 1,400 alumni contributed funds for the new building. “The impressive thing about Ed,” Lucas says, “is that he got the building planned, and then he got the alumni to pay for it.”

The glass, stone, and steel building was planned with four wings. The first was the Auditorium-Courtroom
Inside the cornerstone were laid two boxes. The first contained the items present in the cornerstone of the original Law School building. These included photographs of President Theodore Roosevelt and of the Law Faculty of 1902, a copy of the minutes of the first meeting of that faculty, the first catalog of the Law School, and a large variety of University publications.

Wing, which included a courtroom that was to seat 250—something desired but missing from the old building—and an auditorium that was to seat 600. Next was the Classroom–Seminar Room Wing, a low, long wing running one full length of the building, holding four classrooms and five seminar rooms. The Library-Office Wing, which was to be central to the building, was a seven-story structure that included both stacks and study areas. Finally, the Administration–Legal Aid Wing was to be comprised of a suite of offices for administration that was to leave enough room for the Clinic. The original reflecting pool was planned outside the building, facing the Midway and surrounded on three sides.

Altogether, the original building was designed to accommodate a senior teaching faculty of forty or more and sixty research associates, fellows, graduate students, and visiting scholars as well as a student body of 450. The library was to have stack space for 300 thousand books and was made with the ability to expand stack space for minimum expense. At the time of the new constructions, thousands of the Law School's books were in storage at Harper Library as there was insufficient room for them in the school's library. But in addition to a new library, other parts of the new building interested students.

“Really, as a student, one of the most exciting parts of the new building were the plans for a dining hall,” notes Roberta Evans, '61. “In the old building, the only place you could get anything was a coffee shop in the basement, where basically, you could get coffee.”

Constructing a New Law Building
On December 5, 1957, ground was broken for construction of the new Law School building. Dean Walter Harrelson of the University of Chicago Divinity School opened the ceremonies with an invocation, after which Chancellor Kimpton asked everyone present to turn a spadeful of earth.

The construction of the building was followed with great interest by the members of the Law School, the University, and the law community at large. Stories about the new building appeared in The Record, in every major university publication, and in national newspapers as well. Pictures of the model and reproductions of the floor plan were plentiful as the innovative school design was coming to fruition.

Five-and-a-half months later, on May 28, 1958, a grander ceremony took place when Chief Justice of the United States Earl Warren and his British counterpart, Viscount Kilmuir of Creich, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, laid the cornerstone.
Celebrations and Dedications

The plan to have the building ready for the 1959–1960 academic year was a success, and the first students entered the building in October 1959. The entire year was declared the Dedicatory Year, and a series of public lectures and conferences to commemorate the dedication and occupation of the building were held. Then Vice President of the United States Richard M. Nixon formally opened the new building with a dedicatory lecture on Monday, October 5. He spoke to 500 guests in the Green Lounge. Nixon stated:

“I know this great law school will continue to send out from its campus graduates who are superb legal technicians with all the qualities that will assure success … May I urge, too, that they may also be men with a mission, motivated by a flaming idealism based on the recognition of the fact that this last half of the twentieth century can be the brightest or the darkest page in the history of civilization.”

Six celebratory seminars were held during the academic year, with guest speakers including Sir Patrick Devlin, Lord Justice of the Court of Appeal of Great Britain; Jacob Viner, Professor of Economics at Princeton University; former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stanley Reed; British Jurist Lord Alfred Thompson Denning; and University of Chicago Professor Bruno Bettelheim.

But the biggest celebration was held in connection to the 287th Convocation in May 1960, which was also declared Law Day by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Convocation Speaker was Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York. Guests included Earl Warren, Viscount Kilmuir (the Queen was invited, as she and Prince Philip were in Canada at the time of the convocation, but she was unable to attend), and Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the United Nations.
that was completed in 1959 called *Construction in Space in the Third and Fourth Dimensions*. Phil Neal, who became Dean of the Law School in 1961, was stymied about where to place the Pevsner in the fountain. When the University architect was consulted, he suggested the northwest corner, but Neal wanted an explanation as to why it was not in the middle. Saarinen could not be consulted as he had died of a brain tumor in 1961. So Neal called in German-American architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe for a consultation. “The three of us, Mies van der Rohe, the University architect, and I, all stood in front of the pool,” Neal explains. “I asked him where the Pevsner should go, and he pointed to the same spot as the University architect had. And I wonder if that means that there is more science to this stuff than I had originally thought.”

The Pevsner was dedicated on June 10, 1964.

Changes to the lives of the students and faculty came up because of the move to the south campus. Professors who habitually ate at the Quadrangle Club had to take more time to get to and from lunch, and those students who enjoyed cultural activities on the main campus had to make more of an effort to get to them.

“I don’t think a lot of law students actually attended cultural activities,” says Dam. “We were all really busy with school and with our own activities, so I don’t think that was really much of a problem.”

Additional modifications during construction had changed the building from the original designs. The auditorium was reworked to seat only 475, and the seating in the courtroom was dropped to 190. The final Library-Office building included a lounge that occupied the entire first floor that could double as an exhibit and conference area. Saarinen, in fact, designed furniture to be used in the lounge, consisting of large sofas of connected seats that faced outward in circles or octagons.

“No one liked the furniture, particularly the students,”
called for radiant heat to be used over ordinary concrete. But instead, insulated concrete was laid on the outside of the pipes, rather than the inside, so the heat was reversed and we heated the outside of the building. But we got that fixed.”

Other problems, unsurprisingly, involved the Law Library. In 1964, Professor Walter Blum, ’41, wrote to Leon M. Liddell, who was a professor and a librarian at the Law School, about a proposed program for enlarging the foreign law book collection. “I estimate about 87 thousand volumes will be added to the Library during the next ten years, after adjustments have been made for withdrawals and lost books … it is unlikely space would be available after 2.7 more years.”

By November 1972 Blum was again writing to Liddell about transferring 100 thousand volumes from the stacks into storage to make room for new books. By 1975 discussion for an addition to the new building were already underway. Several ideas were considered, including shifting a large segment of the law collection to the Regenstein Library, building an underground addition to the south of the building, building a simple and inexpensive “book box,” or adding an additional two stories onto the Law School building.

“Saarinen was very clever and designed the building so that two more floors could be added onto the top of the library,” Neal notes. “The seats were really big—two students could sit in them at a time, but no one could really have a conversation. Also, the building did not really have a place for students to congregate and talk, every place was a study space. But the Green Lounge was nice, even with the furniture, because it overlooked the reflecting pool. It was elegant.”

“The lounge was really just an extension of the library,” notes Richard Badger, ’68, who has worked at the Law School for more than 35 years. “The giant furniture was really uncomfortable. The faculty was really happy with the building, but I am not sure the students loved it so much. I found the atmosphere to be really cold.”

And parts of the building were also actually cold, or really hot. The south side of the cube was particularly sensitive to the elements, so much so that the faculty offices on that side were practically uninhabitable. In the winter, because the glass used for the cube was not the thermal glass Saarinen had planned, the curtain wall let in the cold. And in the summer, it retained the heat. Unfortunately, the air conditioning system was not altered to handle the extra sunlight.

“The first winter was very cold,” Lucas says. “The work tables on the south side of the building weren’t even being used by the students. It turned out that the architects had
The notion of simply expanding into the former ABA building, before it became the Harris School, was also considered. But the city would not approve an underground passage between the two structures as it would interfere with a sewer line, and the floors were not strong enough to support the number of books necessary. In all, more than 10 architects were considered and rejected between 1982 and 1983.

In 1983, the University wanted to hire Kevin Roach, who had worked on the original design with Saarinen, but he could not fit the redesign into his schedule. Instead, the University engaged the firm of Cooper Lecky for the renovation and expansion of the Law School, while Roach served as a design consultant. Their scheme involved the extension of the south façade of the library building by adding 45 feet to all seven levels of the library building. While this was the most expensive option, it was also the most practical.

While making more room for books, the plans for expanding the library included accommodations for the expected information revolution. Space was created for an online catalog, and on the balcony level an acoustically isolated and humidity-controlled environment for microform materials was readied.

Although doubling the space for the library was the main goal of the expansion, other issues were dealt with as well. For example, the administrative staff of the Law School had expanded to the point that they were occupying the judge’s chambers and other areas around the courtroom. Also, at the time, the Green Lounge, with its stark lines, linoleum floors, and exposed lighting, was considered to be noisy and austere (although the furniture had been replaced). Further, a small food service had been added to the lounge, but it was tricky to use the space for both eating and quiet study.

To solve these problems, the Placement, Development, and Alumni Relations offices would move from the lower lobby and side rooms of the auditorium wing to new space in the lower level of the building. As for the lounge, it was to be expanded along with the floors above it. To solve the multiple-use nature of the room, a portion of the lounge was subdivided by glass doors to become an informal study area, while the rest of the lounge could still be used for group study and socializing.

But the expansions cost more than had been originally estimated as flaws in the building were uncovered during construction.
“The offices were positioned on overhangs built in a cantilever form,” Baird explains. “The concrete floor extended out and was beginning to bow out, so the glass on the curtain wall was bending. The whole curtain wall had to be replaced. It was like living inside a TV dinner.”

Squaring the rectangle, as the renovation came to be called, proved to be a nightmare of logistics. The construction, which began in 1985, was not completed for two years. During that time the building was wrapped in a metal and plastic sheet that mediated the temperature and kept out the elements. The glass on the outside of the cube was replaced with thermal, insulated glass with alternating tinted and untinted panes, just as Saarinen had originally intended. But the form, with its folded Gothic appearance, remained untouched.

“Not everyone, but most everyone, moved office at least twice,” notes Judith Wright, Associate Dean for Library and Information Services at the Law School. “Materials were moved, books were moved, computers were moved. It wasn’t any fun at all. But all the temperature problems were solved once we replaced the curtain wall. And the expansion really did give us the space we needed for the collection.”

But other issues came to the fore. On March 31, 1987, construction came to a halt when a process server served Dean Gerhard Casper with a complaint demanding that the Law School “cease, desist, refrain, abstain, stop and otherwise discontinue any and all constructions to 1111 East 60th Street also known as the Laird Bell Quadrangle.” The complaint asked that the Law School “return said Laird Bell Quadrangle to the dimensions and architectural spirit expounded by Eero Saarinen.”

The suit was filed by the Saarinen estate, who filed under the Artistic Proprietary Rights Preservation Act of 1987. The Law School retained Kirkland & Ellis to represent their interests in the case. Fortunately, the Saarinen trustees had violated Section 66(a)(2)(iv) of the Act, which requires the artist or his representative to reasonably and seasonably inform the alleged violator of the intent to sue so as to mitigate possible rehabilitation costs.” Construction resumed in a matter of days.

Altogether, the expansion added an additional 46,750 square feet, 17 research offices, 57 new study carrels, a new microform room, an enlarged special collections room, a new reserve reading room, a photocopy room, and a computer terminal room. The space for books doubled to 650 thousand volumes. Staff space for the library increased by 50 percent. And most importantly, Saarinen’s original intent—to keep the faculty in offices around the library—remained intact.

On June 12, 1987, a dedication for the expanded building was held. In recognition of the $4.5 million donated for the library expansion by Dino D’Angelo, ’44, and his wife Georgette, the library was christened the D’Angelo Law Library. The administration building also received a new name in recognition of the $1 million pledge of the late Benjamin Z. Gould, ’37. Finally, the Green Lounge was rededicated to Harold J. Green, ’28. A longtime supporter of the Law School, he and his wife Marion had made a number of significant gifts to the school, including the Harold J. and Marion F. Green Professorship in International Legal Studies. The Greens made an additional $400 thousand donation to expand the lounge.

The dedication celebrations included a symposium titled, “The Idea of the Constitution,” which was moderated by Edward Levi. The participants included U.S. Supreme Court Justice and former Law School Professor Antonin Scalia; Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia; and Lord Goff of Chieveley, Lord of Appeals-in-Ordinary, who heard cases appealed to the House of Lords.
Changes in Modern Times

Some minor changes occurred in the building following the renovation. In 1988 the men’s monopoly on shower facilities in the building changed when showers were added to the women’s basement restroom. Also, a computer lab was added to the third floor of the D’Angelo Law Library, complete with 19 terminals.

Still, more space was needed, and for once, it was not for books. The Mandel Clinic had been shoehorned into tiny offices that were completely inadequate for its needs for 20 years. In 1996, Esther and Arthur Kane, ’39, contributed a naming gift to build the Arthur Kane Center for Clinical Legal Education. Simultaneously, and as part of the same project, four additional classrooms were added to the Law School. On October 11, 1998, the 10 thousand square foot center opened to the west of the Law School building with offices and conference and meeting spaces as well as a library.

But while the Clinic now had well-appointed space, the Law Building itself still lacked a certain grandeur.

“The building still had this frontier, pioneering atmosphere,” notes Baird. “The school was still adhering to the notion of genteel poverty—that linoleum and bare fluorescent bulbs are just a sign of an academic atmosphere—just doesn’t work anymore. It was gray and uninviting. Also, because the building itself is so minimal, a lot of people think that clean lines and simple finishes are cheaper. But they’re not. To do them correctly, they are expensive. So the building, in my opinion, was not living up to Saarinen’s ideas. And these days, law schools have to look like law offices if we want to make a good impression.”

Fortunately, Dean Saul Levmore began to make changes in the school atmosphere soon after assuming his position in 2001. More sunlight is now found within the library space, and linoleum floors are gone. More glass, more wood, and more finishes have been added. Improved lighting and wooden end panels on the book stacks coexist with upgraded electricity and campus network access. Student services, which had been scattered throughout the building, were brought together in a suite on the third floor of the Library. Space for the three student journals was made in the basement of the library. The walls separating the entryways to the seminar rooms have been removed and the lockers nearby are no longer metal, but are instead made of wood.

New finishes and a new staircase were added to the reading room. The renovation of the library again keeps Saarinen’s plans in mind and successfully maintains a modern Gothic atmosphere that blends well with the rest of the campus.

Further, the D’Angelo Law Library needed to become a modern library. By 2006, most students were using laptops and could not find outlets to plug in their computers. With more information and resources now available in digital form, the actual use of the library had changed. The library renovation was completed in the fall of 2008.

First, stacks were lowered and more space was created around the library by removing and storing 40 percent of the books, or 270 thousand volumes. Only the more frequently used books remain on the open shelves. Historically significant collections are in compact storage in the library basement and less popular volumes are slated to be stored in the Joe...
Another successful renovation took place last year, this time on the reflecting pool. The old pool was removed and a zero-depth pool over black granite was installed. The old fountain was requiring nearly constant maintenance in the warmer months, so it could only be used for a few weeks during the past few years. Further, when it was off during the colder months, it was more of an eyesore than an attraction. The Pevsner, which was renovated in 1997, still stands in the fountain, just as Saarinen intended, and the new fountain design allows water to flow elegantly in warmer months and becomes a simple plaza in colder months.

The University of Chicago Law School is now housed in a modern, exciting building that is beloved by faculty, staff, students, and potential students. It is a tribute to Law School’s desire to be a major research center, and it brings beauty to the south side of the University campus.

“The building was always magnificent in principle,” Baird says. “But it wasn’t until we added the finishes and opened it up that we really made it what Saarinen had in mind. It is elegant and it is a wonderful selling point for the Law School.”

and Rika Mansueto Library, which is set to open in 2010. “We are a research school; we are not getting rid of our books as so many other universities are,” explains Wright. “The Mansueto Library is a high-density library with a fully automated shelving system that is being built next to Regenstein. It will house 3.5 million books and allow the University to keep its entire collection on campus. The top of it will be a glass dome where students can sit, but the six floors underground will be run by robot.”