

Gaylord Hall:

Just the Right Look

By KATHRYN JENSON WHITE
Photos by Robert Taylor



Journalism's new home is a happy blend of campus-compatible architecture and the latest technological tools of the trade.

Every time a student walks past a really urgent, expressive piece of architecture that belongs to his college, it can help reassure him that he does have that mind, does have that soul.

Louis Kahn

All who pass Gaylord Hall know exactly what master-architect Kahn was trying to convey. A Cherokee Gothic brick and cast stone exterior grounds the building in tradition by connecting it with the dominant campus style, while ever-changing headlines on the news ticker wrapped around two sides of the building telegraph to all who pass that this is the exciting domain of what is happening now.

The 60,000-plus-square-foot building—home since August 2004 to the University of Oklahoma's Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication—has a wow quotient at the genius level.

continued



"In selecting the design, we wanted to produce a building that would reflect its modern mission and the latest in technology while also reinforcing the traditional gothic architecture of the older part of the campus," President David L. Boren says.

The "we" Boren references is a large community of organizations and people who conceptualized, designed, built and equipped Gaylord Hall. At the forefront was the architectural firm of Rees Associates, two of whose project team are graduates of OU's College of Architecture: senior associate Lisa Matthews, lead designer, and senior associate Farook Karim, project designer. Vice President Patrick Bumpas served as project manager.

"Designing for my alma mater made this exciting and challenging, and since the building is next door to the College of Architecture, there was even more pressure to get it right," Matthews says. "It meant a lot to me to create a building that fit in with the campus but gave the Gaylord College what it needed."

"We" also included Manhattan Construction, OU's Architectural and Engineering Services, broadcast and educational technology consultants, a technology integrator and the deans, faculty and staff of the college.

That group came together because of Edward L. Gaylord's 2000 gift of \$22 million, with \$14 million for a building and \$8 million for endowed chairs and professorships, equipment, scholarship and internship funding and the creation of more student support services. The money and all it made possible elevated the H.H. Herbert School of Journalism to the Gaylord College of Journalism. Edith Kinney Gaylord's Ethics and Excellence in Journalism and Inasmuch foundations gave an additional \$3 million to complete the building funding.

"Gaylord Hall obviously would not have been possible without the generosity of the late Edward Gaylord," Boren says. "He truly shared the vision of building one of the strongest journalism programs in the nation at the University of Oklahoma. He wanted to



Rees Associates architects Patrick Bumpas (left), Lisa Matthews and Farook Karim look down on Gaylord Hall's central rotunda from the sweeping staircase rising three stories to the imposing glass dome that distinguishes the building from its campus neighbors.

make sure that the building would symbolize our highest goals."

In any architecture, there is an equity between the pragmatic function and the symbolic function.

Michael Graves

As is true of all great architecture, Gaylord Hall functions practically but

resonates with its underlying concepts. One such concept, symbolically melding tradition and modernity in its design, was the cornerstone. A second involved the very essence of journalism and mass communication.

"This building is designed to immerse students in a media environment rapidly evolving in all the communications industries: print, broadcast, public relations and advertising," says Gaylord Chair and Professor Charles Self, immediate past



At the heart of journalism's new facility is a state-of-the-art multimedia lab, termed by the former dean, Charles Self, "a microcosm," where students have all the education and professional technologies to produce print, Internet, video and audio materials.

dean of the Gaylord College and the man who oversaw the building's design and construction. "It creates a laboratory in which our journalism community of scholars, students and professionals can work together to make sense of increasingly rapid transformations in the way we gather and disseminate information.

"This building is designed to educate students with and about the technology that will allow them to do what is already under way in commercial media. Gaylord

Hall is a beautiful means to an end, a facilitator for new ways of learning the new ways of media."

The means *is* beautiful, with its central rotunda, an atrium-like space reaching past the third floor to a glass dome that, at night, lights up with flashing lights in a myriad of colors. A central staircase of creamy Portuguese limestone rises powerfully toward the dome. The same limestone is interspersed with African black granite to create a high-contrast flooring.

"We want our students to know that what goes on *inside* this building is part of something larger that goes on *outside* it."

Bringing a warmer, more traditional note to the harmonious design are African sapele wood on the trim, paneling and doors and Brazilian mahogany as flooring in some areas. On the first floor, furniture is Mission style, which connects the space with other campus interiors. In the second- and third-floor classrooms, faculty offices and administrative areas sits more modern furniture that sets Gaylord Hall apart. Sleeker pieces upholstered in micro fibers and cool blues and grays play counterpoint to the leather and warm earth tones of the Mission pieces below.

Walls of windows—some two stories high—bathe the building in sunlight. Illumination is both functional and, again, conceptual.

"I wanted the building to reflect the transparency of journalism, so I asked for lots of glass," Self says. "I wanted to establish a strong sense of openness to the community. The building communicates what goes on here and that we want to interact with the community.

"Journalism is a field engaged with the world. We want our students to know that what goes on *inside* this building is part of something larger that goes on *outside* it."

Inside, yet another concept dictated spatial design: convergence, which is the merging of print, broadcast and Internet delivery systems into one interwoven, multimedia unit. This idea began developing in the mass media in the late '90s. Rees Associates specializes in designing converged media facilities. In 1999, the firm designed a professional facility that brought together Florida's *Tampa Tribune* newspaper, West Bank Production, Tampa Bay Online and WFLA-TV. Rees also has prepared plans for multimedia educational facilities at Grambling State University and the University of Alabama. *continued*

"With the push from the industry, mass communication departments began to understand the importance of not just teaching all the media under one roof but also integrating their efforts," Bumpas says. "The Gaylord College realized it could use this building to advance that ideal."

In Gaylord Hall, the two-story high multimedia lab just inside the building's main entrance is the functional and symbolic space for convergence.

"The multimedia lab is at the heart of what the building is about," Self says. "In this space, students can work on state-of-the-art Dell and Macintosh computers to create Internet and print products. They can produce video and audio products or air a live newscast from the lab's news set. This lab is a microcosm, containing all the educational and professional technologies spread throughout the building."

All architecture is shelter; all great architecture is the design of space that contains, cuddles, exalts, or stimulates the persons in that space.

Phillip Johnson

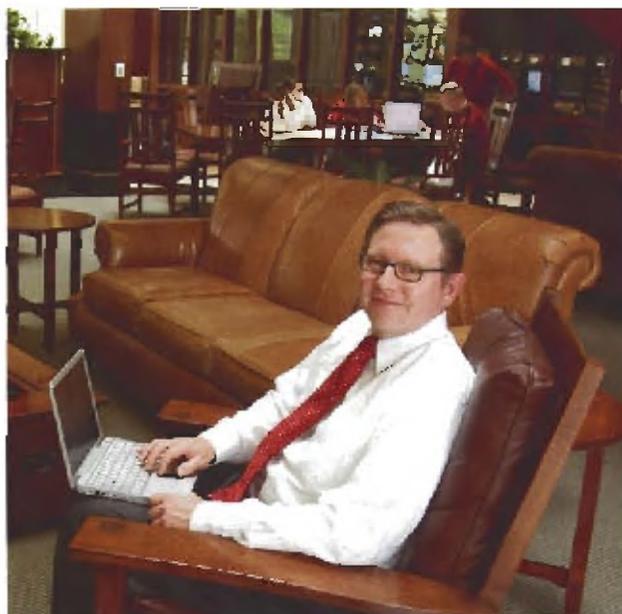
Architects, faculty, students and administrators agree that the best part of the building is, somewhat ironically, the least high tech: the student commons area at the base of the central staircase. This natural-light-filled space contains and cuddles students with comfortable couches and chairs in which to read or rest and large tables around which to meet, work and eat. The space brings students together just as the convergence lab brings media together.

"So often, architects overlook that students need a space to settle in, to talk about things they care about," says Joe Foote, who became the college's interim dean in August 2005. "A building should invite students to come in any time of the day and make them feel they have a place in the college. In most academic buildings, that isn't so. I don't recall as a student having an academic building that said, 'You belong here. Stay awhile. Sit and talk with us.' It was a passing-through environment for the most part."

Student stimulation comes from

Gaylord Hall's hands-on technology. The wireless building allows students to use laptops anywhere. In addition to the multimedia lab, the building houses three teaching labs, one with Dell computers and two providing Apple Macintoshes. The library contains a wireless lab of 15 Macintosh laptops for student checkout.

Some Gaylord College offices, classroom space and two computer labs remain



TOP: With his laptop at the ready, administrator Buddy Wiedemann can monitor the Gaylord College's computer network from wherever he happens to be.

BOTTOM: As operations manager for the 24-hour TV4OU, junior Keaton Fuchs works in broadcast facilities that are more cutting edge than those of most professional stations.

in Copeland Hall, which became journalism's home in 1958. With the four new lab spaces in Gaylord, the college now can schedule more lab classes and, for the first time, offer an open lab students may use until 10 p.m. Monday through Friday and until 6 p.m. Sunday.

Gaylord Hall also has three "smart classrooms."

"In this building, our technology resides in the classrooms," Computer Network Administrator Buddy Wiedemann

says. "Teachers don't have to check out a projector or a television and wheel it into the classroom. The classrooms have cable television; network connections for Internet or access to file servers on which professors have placed instructional materials; DVD, VHS and CD players; document cameras; and an interactive white board."

Also quite smart is a video conferencing room in which editors, advertising executives and public relations practitioners



Broadcast engineer Monty Roberts is on hand to offer technical support to Gaylord College students, who produced award-winning productions in just their first year in the new studio.

from New York to Los Angeles can visit virtually with OU classes. Wiedemann and Self say an inaugural 90-minute teleconference with faculty members at a German university was an excellent experience.

“One group was on screen and the other in the room as we planned a major research project to help understand how the U.S. image is being created in Europe by foreign correspondents reporting from here, and how the European image is being created by American correspondents reporting from Europe,” Self says. “It took place in real time as if we were in the same place, but we had no transportation time or costs.”

The most student-stimulating aspect, though, may well be the building’s broadcast facilities, which occupy the first floor’s south wing. Junior Keaton Fuchs, operations manager for TV4OU, the University’s 24-hour television station carried on Cox Cable in Norman, co-produced a program that won first prize in the magazine/talk show category of the Oklahoma Broadcast Education Association 2004 competition. That, his excitement suggests, was exalting.

“The professionalism that we can achieve is so high that it begs, ‘What can you do with me?’ ” he says. “The facilities ask us to produce incredible products. As long as we are dedicated to living up to that challenge, there is nothing we can’t do.”

Students in their first year in the new studio generated not only the award-winning “Wired Entertainment Weekly,” but also two other half-hour shows: “Point of View,” a *point/counterpoint* political talkshow, and “The Sports Package,” a sports analysis program with featured guests. Facilities manager Lynn Franklin, also a visiting assistant professor of broadcast, guides students in their productions, and broadcast engineer Monty Roberts supports them technically. McMahon Centennial Professor Dana

Rosengard, who joined the faculty in August 2005, advises the student-run newscast, “OU Nightly,” which airs live Monday through Friday at 5 p.m. and reruns at 10 p.m.

Franklin and Roberts helped select, order, install, integrate and, finally, troubleshoot the equipment in a broadcast facility they say surpasses many professional sites. In addition to a large studio space for producing shows, the facility has 10 video-editing suites equipped with Avid systems—the industry standard—a special graphics suite, a fully operational production control room and an audio control room. The studio has state-of-the-art cameras and a green screen for projecting generated images. Franklin says the equipment cost more than \$2 million.

“We’re one of 10 universities across the nation with this level of facility,” he says. “I’m most excited about the student opportunities the facility provides. That we have had prize-winning productions in our first year suggests that as students learn better to use these tools, they’ll be bringing their ideas to life on screen or on

the airwaves even more successfully.”

The broadcast engineer, too, finds it hard not to, well, broadcast his pride.

“We are all digital, all cutting edge,” he says. “It just doesn’t get any better than this. Students won’t get experience at many other universities on all-digital equipment. The FCC has mandated that all television stations have to be digital by December 2006. We’re already there. Students can put on their résumés that they have experience on equipment many in the industry don’t have. Oklahoma City stations come for tours, and they drool.”

Foote, who graduated from OU in 1971 with a broadcast degree, had a slightly different experience.

“None of the equipment in my television production classes worked,” he recalls. “We pretended that we were making a television program with cameras that couldn’t be turned on. I was amazed when I saw that in the real world cameras actually ran. Our students face the challenge of trying to master just a small part of the equipment they have here.”

The station gets feeds from CNN, Annenberg/Corporation for Public Broadcasting and The Arts Network as well as syndicated material relevant to college-student viewers from several sources. Franklin schedules and programs it all, including the student-generated shows. He also advises “The Wire,” radio programming broadcast over the audio channels of the cable station. More than 30 students serve as DJs for two hours each week.

Franklin and Fuchs say they already have seen evidence of the truth behind the build-it-and-they-will-come concept as students transfer.

“We have a student, for example, who transferred from the University of Texas because he knew this facility was coming online, and he wanted to be in a position when it took hold to carve out a niche for himself,” Franklin says.

Fuchs has a similar story.

“Students see the building and contact us about being involved,” he says. “We’ve had students from engineering, art, film and communication. A business major saw the channel. He worked audio, then moved to production assistant and assistant producer. He worked cameras, too.



TOP: Representing the late benefactors Edward L. Gaylord and Edith Kinney Gaylord at the dedication are (from left) Tricia Everest, Bob Ross, Charles Self, Jim and Christy Everest, President David Boren, Bill Ross, Mary Gaylord McClean, and Clay and Louise Gaylord Bennett. BOTTOM: The Gaylord name adorns the journalism building, the nearby stadium and the endowed faculty positions held by Peter Gross (left), Interim Dean Joe Foote and Meta G. Carstarphen.



He's thinking about switching his major to broadcast."

It is not an individual act, architecture. You have to consider your client. Only out of that can you produce great architecture. You can't work in the abstract.

I.M. Pei

Far from being an individual act, creation of Gaylord Hall took many minds—as well as more than a decade—to go from

abstract concept to concrete and brick reality. David Dary, director of the School of Journalism from 1989 to 2000, says he first approached Gaylord about the idea of the endowment in 1992. Those who would take the idea to completion began to gather when Gaylord announced his gift in 2000. The University hired Rees Associates in that same year. With Self's summer 2001 arrival began what would become hundreds of meetings among all involved parties. Groundbreaking took place in April 2003, and the college moved into the building in August 2004.

Plans to add a second phase to the

building and fund raising to pay for it are under way. As that work advances, all involved with phase one savor what they have wrought.

Christy Everest, chairman of the OU Board of Regents and Gaylord's daughter, speaks for the man who stands behind Gaylord Hall both figuratively, in his gift, and literally, in a bronze statue by OU sculptor in residence Paul Moore. Gaylord died in April 2003, just days after the groundbreaking ceremonies.

"Dad envisioned a challenging and vibrant environment in the heart of the campus, not only a learning center but a gathering spot for students," she says. "Gaylord Hall is the realization of Dad's dream and has exceeded the expectations of our family. It provides every opportunity for students to learn and prepare for their future in the journalism profession as well as an exciting place to exchange ideas.

"I think Dad envisioned journalism education taken to a new level at OU, first with the elevation of the school to college status and then with the possibilities Gaylord Hall would provide."

And what possibilities they are, as those who worked together to build Gaylord Hall knew when they looked at the parking lot that used to occupy the southeast corner of the South Oval. They recognized the potential just as did the first president of OU when he looked at the empty plains that would become the University. 

Freelance writer Kathryn Jenson White is an assistant professor of journalism in the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication.