

Construction finally nears end

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gies and we would like to thank everyone again. It is almost finished."

The \$13.5 million renovation and construction project began in fall 1996 with the goal to construct a new and improved union by Aug. 18, 1998.

Construction will continue through May on the west side of the building, finishing a ramp and the west entrance, Swanson said.

"Most of the delay is because we have had insufficient materials," Swanson said. "When we have to send things back, things become delayed."

Swanson said once the west entrance is completed, the temporary west entrance will be removed and replaced with windows and additional lounge space.

But insufficient materials have not been the only reason for the delay.

Swanson said an unforeseen excess of asbestos within the union structure last year was the main reason for construction delays.

Preliminary asbestos removal began in November 1996 and major asbestos abatement continued in May 1998.

"We needed to make sure all of it was gone before we continued with the project," Swanson said.

The union project added 55,000 square feet of new space and renovated 66,000 square feet of the existing union structure.

In 1995, students voted in an ASUN election to support funding the union expansion through a \$20-per-semester additional charge to tuition and fee bills. The \$20-per-semester charge began last fall and will continue for the next 20 years.

"We didn't want to have students pay until they were able to fully use it," Swanson said. "The students who pay for the remodeled union will be the sole beneficiaries of the union."

Michael Williamson, a senior biology and psychology major, was one of 1,822 students who supported additional union funding in the 1995 election.

"I voted yes because it was something for future students," Williamson said. "Plus, at the time, it was something we weren't going to have to pay for."

But despite having to pay for an incomplete union, Williamson said he was pleased with the renovation.

"The union is considerably better than it was," he said. "I spend more time there than I did before."

One of the most noticeable features is the new north entrance, which opened late November. It features an open rotunda, where a wide staircase winds from the basement to the first second floor.

Starting from the ground up, the basement is home to NU Market, a new convenience store run by the University Bookstore.

Also in the basement is a relocated big-screen TV lounge and expanded recreation area and arcade. The project also increased the Daily Nebraskan's office space, which was partially completed in January 1998 and finished in August 1998.

On the first floor, the copy center relocated in January 1999 from the basement to the first floor, next to the new and expanded 24-hour computer lab, which opened in February.

Construction is nearing completion for a new west entrance, which will allow students to access the computer lab after the main building closes.

First-floor restrooms were expanded and upgraded in November 1997, and a unisex restroom will be added for after-hours computer lab users this fall.

An expanded lounge and additional food court dining space were completed August 1998, along with the Caffina Cafe and a student art lounge.

The union information desk moved and opened in January in an area west of the new north entrance.

On the second floor, the Student Involvement Office relocated in January and was expanded to serve UNL students involved in more than 300 student organizations.

Rebuilding the union

Fall 1996 - Beginning of \$13.5 million construction project

November 1997 - First-floor restrooms finished

January 1998 - Daily Nebraskan staff moves into partially completed office

August 1998 - Daily Nebraskan offices finished; NU Market convenience store opens; Rotunda Gallery renovated; food court, first floor main lounge, Caffina Cafe finished

January 1999 - Video arcade, information desk, Student Involvement and union administrative offices, auditorium, Heritage and Regency rooms finished

February 1999 - Recreation room, TV and leisure lounge, computer lab and copy center finished

May 1999 - West entrance area finished including 24-hour computer lab access, unisex restroom and community service officer office

JON FRANK/DN

Meeting rooms, such as the Regency Room and Heritage Room, were renovated, and a 320-seat auditorium was also built.

The second floor's center feature is a balcony overlooking the plaza. The new plaza, outside of the north entrance, was redesigned and now includes a stage and a new Broyhill Fountain.

Swanson said the expansion was needed to accommodate the approximately 22,400 UNL students, and he hopes it will last well into the future.

Many students are pleased with the union's expansion renovation project.

"It's aesthetically pleasing to the eye," said Angel Webb, a junior art history major. "I'm not going to get uptight about \$20. I can chip in that much to make our college look nicer. No big deal."

Student unity brought plans for union together

BY VERONICA DAEHN
Staff writer

More than 60 years ago, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was lacking one element that has since become a staple of university life.

Largely because of the efforts of then-student body president and Daily Nebraskan editor Jack Fischer, the first Nebraska Union opened in the spring of 1938.

Since then, three additions have been added to the building — one in 1959, one in 1969 and this year's most recent renovation, which is celebrated in a grand opening today.

Daryl Swanson, Nebraska Unions director, said the first two expansions were the result of increased enrollment.

University numbers rose from 8,500 students in 1959 to 19,500 students 10 years later. In comparison, the number of students enrolled in 1969 only increased by 3,000 in 1999, 30 years later.

This year's expansion, then, is not the direct result of increased enrollment, Swanson said, but the result of necessity.

The importance of having a union is defined by the word itself, Swanson said.

"Union means coming together. We are a community center extraordinaire because of all the services we have."

It is a gathering place on campus, Swanson said, and important services are provided for students.

Fischer adopted the addition of a student union as his project in 1935 when he became president of the stu-

dent council.

A committee composed of campus leaders, congressmen, senators and the Alumni Association was created to support the new union.

Under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal initiatives, the group was granted federal aid from the Public Works Administration funds.

PWA, however, would pay only 45 percent of the \$400,000 cost. To pay for the remaining 55 percent, students agreed to tax themselves through fees.

According to "Prairie University," by Robert E. Knoll, the students did not even have the support of the chancellor or his cabinet.

NU Regents, however, did agree to review the students' proposal, although they were reluctant to accept federal money.

Upon returning to school in September, Fischer found his proposal had been rejected.

As editor of the Daily Nebraskan, he reopened his campaign.

By January 1936, students had collected pledges totaling more than \$10,000. That same month the board of regents passed the students' request for PWA funds.

In November of that year, the regents voted to accept a bond for nearly \$200,000 to fund the new union.

Fischer's goal was finally realized.

Throughout all its changes, Swanson said, the Nebraska Union still serves the same purpose.

"We call ourselves the living room," he said. "It is a significant gathering place on campus."



RYAN SODERLIN/DN

MICHELLE SCHLEICHER, a senior elementary education major, cranes her neck for a better look at the art work in the new gallery in the Nebraska Union. Schleicher was at the gallery to admire art work by her brother-in-law, Jason Schleicher.

Art gallery lends culture to union

BY BRAD DAVIS
Senior editor

Without it, Nebraska Unions Director Daryl Swanson said, the union would be a "cultural wasteland."

The Rotunda Gallery, which showcases student art in the union, is important to one of the most popular buildings on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's campus, Swanson said.

It brings a bit of sophistication to students who might otherwise just eat a hamburger or buy some books.

And since Richards Hall's renovation began this year and its student gallery closed, the Rotunda Gallery has provided a space for displaced student artists to showcase their work.

For two years, Swanson said, UNL's art department will control the exhibition space in the gallery, which will serve as a replacement for gallery space

lost during Richards Hall renovations.

After two years, Student Involvement likely will supervise gallery exhibitions, he said. He expects Student Involvement to showcase a variety of student and traveling exhibits.

The gallery's prominent location in the Nebraska Union — next to the food court and the main entrance — provides the exhibits with maximum exposure to busy students who might not otherwise seek out the art, he said.

Susan Arthur, a graduate art student, said the Rotunda Gallery was a learning experience for the students involved in the exhibitions and those viewing them.

In the Richards Hall Gallery, where Arthur was an assistant, it was a rare occasion when she'd notice a face she didn't recognize perusing the art.

Now, Arthur said, she's noticed faces she doesn't recognize in the Rotunda Gallery. It's location is ideal for catching the eyes of busy students or

faculty and staff members, she said.

"Most artists want an audience, so it's great to see that people are seeing (the art)," she said.

The artwork of Arthur, a painter, and graduate student Jason Briggs, a ceramist, are currently on display in the Rotunda Gallery. A closing reception for their show will be held Friday from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The Rotunda Gallery is usually open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, with hours varying during heavy- or low-traffic times, or with discretion of the artist, Swanson said.

Union patron interest in the gallery has been keen, Swanson said, and he expects interest in the gallery to grow as word spreads about its existence.

"You have to be careful not to stand at an entrance to an art gallery with a clicker (counting people)," Swanson said, "but I see somebody in there almost all the time."