

WELCOME TO A HISTORICAL AND AESTHETIC  
EXPLORATION OF THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF

# NORLIN LIBRARY TEXT & TEXTURE

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“I have realized that the inside is more important than the outside, that the soul is more important than the body, and to the best of my ability, I have stood for the things of the spirit. Yet, I have felt that the physical beauty of the campus - a campus worthy of the splendid setting with which nature has endowed it, a campus worthy to be the outward frame of the University’s soul, would be an educational place enhancing the morale and spirit of all who come and go forth from its halls. That is why I have had a great interest in the material development of the campus.”



From an address by President George Norlin  
at the dedication of new building, June 9, 1940.

When Norlin Library officially opened in 1940, it was "the largest library building between Chicago and the west coast" - "measuring 330 feet North to South and 152 East to West, with a footprint of 15,000 square feet. It had space for 1,500 seats and ultimate capacity for 800,000 volumes of books, although stacks for only 325,000 were provided at the library's opening." Internal attention to detail and contemporary technology made the facility user-friendly for its day, with a divisional arrangement, fluorescent lighting fixtures, accessible stacks, private alcoves for reading, and other innovative features of the time.

Ellsworth Mason. *The University of Colorado Library and its Makers, 1876-1972*. New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1994. (163)

<http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/about/history.htm>



The original plan for Norlin Library (and its surrounding areas) wholly embodied the 'spirit of design' set forth by the collaborations of Klauder and Norlin. The four basic principles listed below have been referred to continuously over the years to sustain excellence in the design of Boulder campus buildings, facilities and grounds. They are included in the two main Boulder planning documents, the Long-Range Facilities Master Plan and the Campus Open Space Development Plan.

As listed by William R. Deno, AIA, the four principals are:

1. Strive for a serendipitous mix of open space and building mass, with emphasis on architecture that is sympathetic to the surrounding built and natural environment.
2. Preserve existing architectural design themes and building materials, but bend the rules with care when need arises.
3. Pay attention to human scale in every way.
4. Satisfy, to the greatest extent possible, the functional needs of the user, the operational needs of the University, and the aesthetic needs of the designer.

William R. Deno. *Body & Soul: Architectural Style at the University of Colorado at Boulder, CO*: University of Colorado at Boulder Publications Services, 1994. (33)

<http://www.colorado.edu/facilitiesmanagement/pdc/architect/principles.html>

<http://www.colorado.edu/facilitiesmanagement/pdc/architect/landscape.html>

<http://www.colorado.edu/facilitiesmanagement/pdc/architect/guidelines.html>

<http://www.colorado.edu/facilitiesmanagement/pdc/construction/standards/index.html>



Charles Klauder designed the visual style so familiar to the campus today through much experimentation, research, and innovation. Now commonly referred to as 'Tuscan Vernacular,' Klauder's design captures the cascading red-tile rooftops and rough, warm stone commonly found in Tuscan hill towns, particularly Fiesole. The design for the new library, appropriate in both architectural content (purpose of the facility within the campus) and cultural context (its larger setting in a verdant, mountain town), fulfilled the increasing needs of the academy that had grown steadily since World War I. Both President Norlin and the Board of Regents were pleased with Klauder's proposal and quickly approved his innovative designs.

Klauder refined his Tuscan vernacular style from 1919 until his death in 1938. Norlin Library was one the last buildings he designed for the University; its design a reflections of the sophistication and maturity of the University's unique architectural style.



The Tuscan Vernacular style is embodied in the library's rough-cut stone of varying thickness, deep heavy mortar joints, and the jutting hard edges of the quarried stone, which create strong shadow patterns in the Colorado sunlight visually reminiscent of similar scenes in Tuscany. The construction incorporates sloping end (hip) roofs, small vertical chimney-esque constructions rising up from the ends of the symmetrical structure, and gabled and barrel-tiled roofs in a variety of planes, heights, and directions to create a 'cascading' effect echoing the mountain backdrop. Ample windows, offset by limestone frames, punctuate the rough stone walls to let in natural light. The long rectilinear window pattern is interspersed with arched openings for porticoes or balconies that relieve the visual 'weight' of an otherwise long stretch of heavy lines.

William R. Deno. *Body & Soul: Architectural Style at the University of Colorado at Boulder*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Publications Services, 1994. (13-18)

Ellsworth Mason. *The University of Colorado Library and its Makers, 1876-1972*. New Jersey: Scacrow Press, 1994. (99-109)

<http://www.colorado.edu/facilitiesmanagement/pdc/architect/heritage.html>

<http://cuheritage.org/exhibits/architecture/>

<http://www.colorado.edu/facilitiesmanagement/pdc/architect/vernacular.html>



Flanking the sandstone walls of the library are its neatly trimmed limestone highlights. Often found framing doors, windows, and porticoes, as well as other key areas of the building's facade such as arches and columns, the smooth limestone serves to emphasize textural differences in the masonry. Limestone trim was originally imported from Indiana and carved into a number of classical architectural details that Klauder came across during his Tuscan travels. Many of the forms seen on the library (such as columns, arches, cornices, cartouches, figures, benches, etc.) were incorporated again and again on other significant buildings campus wide and therefore serve to create visual cohesion between them. On more recent building renovations and additions, the creamy white limestone has often been replaced by architectural and precast concrete.



ENTER HERE THE TIMELESS  
FELLOWSHIP OF THE  
HUMAN SPIRIT...





In President Norlin's building dedication of 1940, he not only articulated the relationship between the University's Body & Soul, he also praised campus architect Charles Z. Klauder, who had died in 1938. The "University of Colorado style" reached an apex with the Library, one of Klauder's final structures. Since then the building has undergone two major renovations - in 1964 and 1977. Although the later renovation was heavily criticized for covering up the large bay window (the original east facade was considered an unofficial but popular university icon), present-day design strategies are attempting to rectify such earlier architectural insensitivities.

Since spring 2008, major renovation projects include a new space for research services on the second floor, a new graduate student study suite on the third floor, and the new Norlin Commons, as well as a new east entrance and major upgrades to the sundial plaza.

A joint project of the University Libraries and Information Technology Services, the Norlin Commons is an integrated, flexible space with "functional neighborhoods" that offer ready access to information sources and productivity tools.





NORLIN SEEN FROM THE AIR  
DURING CONSTRUCTION OF  
THE NORTH AND SOUTH WINGS  
CIRCA 1960

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ARCHITECTURAL  
ANTECEDENTS...



RESIDING ABOVE KNOWLEDGE...



LOFTY SPACES FOR DISCOURSE



**BRITISH STUDIES HALL:  
AESTHETIC DETAILS,  
ARCHITECTURAL METAPHOR...**



## EAST BAY WINDOW

Before and after 1970 renovation



According to William R. Deno, AIA, the original site plan (commonly referred to as Day and Klauder's 1919 Campus Development Plan) dictated that buildings relate to one another along connecting axes extending from a center point on the building or often from the building's principal entry. In this way, buildings create a dialog with one another along these axes or entrances. A good example of this principle in action can be seen by looking northwest from Norlin's west portico to Eaton Humanities. Despite the fact that Eaton was a much later addition to the structures surrounding Norlin quadrangle, the main entrances of both buildings are linked visually (and thus, aesthetically) by this design principal, and they showcase the axial relationship evident between many structures, both old and new, on campus today.



William R. Deno. *Body & Soul: Architectural Style at the University of Colorado at Boulder*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Publications Services, 1994. (13-18)



# TEXTURE

## GRAPHICS : ARTS : EXHIBIT DESIGN

### Where do all the images come from?

*Images in this display are both archival and contemporary photographs. The Libraries Design & Exhibits staff created an array of new images to showcase some of the well-known, but often overlooked, architectural elements unique to the campus style and embodied in the building itself. Some of these images are juxtaposed to other classic examples of architectural details on other campuses.*

### What was the inspiration for the exhibit and how did it manifest itself?

*This began as a re-imagining of the Norlin Library building - as featured in the photography display in the Commons corridor - in celebration of the new Learning Commons. The project became its own artistic representation of a distinguished, much lived-in and evolving architectural gem.*

### What are some of our favorite images and why?

*Favorites include the archival images included here as a kind of visual epilogue. All of the images, and many more, are available in the Libraries Archives Department (east basement) for future researchers. The blended images of archival and contemporary photography combined here with graphic elements are iconic of the evolution of the building and our in-depth appreciation for it.*



# TEXT

## RESEARCH : HISTORY : RESOURCES

### What resources were used?

- **Things in the Saddle** by George Norlin, President of the University, 1919-1939.
- **The University of Colorado Library And Its Makers** by Ellsworth Mason, Director of Libraries 1972 to 1976, Head of Special Collections 1976 to 1982, and Libraries consultant 1982 to 1987.
- **Body & Soul** by William R. Deno, Campus Architect, 1984-2002, and currently Campus Architect Emeritus.
- The University Libraries **website** at [ucblibraries.colorado.edu](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu).
- The institutional **memory** of Libraries staff.

### What were some of the more interesting discoveries?

- The visual evolution of the library and how its history manifested in its architecture.
- How the changing physical form of the building reflects cultural, political, and pedagogical trends.
- That the library reflects the spirit of the collaboration of two influential men (Norlin and Klauder) at the zeniths of their respective careers.

### Where do research/exhibit ideas come from?

#### Do students ever participate on exhibits or projects like this?

- Ideas come from a variety of internal and external sources, including students, staff, faculty, and historical or contemporary issues.
- **Yes**, we always encourage student, staff, and faculty research and participation in exhibits and displays at a number of levels.

For more information on this exhibit or to get involved with future displays, stop by the Design & Exhibits Office in Norlin (S380A) or give us a call at 303-492-1642 or 303-492-8302.

