

Phase I of Central Library construction is on schedule

August 15, 1991

Media contact: Pat JaCoby, 534-7404

SPECIAL TO THE UNIVERSITY TIMES AND UCSD GUARDIAN (for use in the first back-to-school issue)

In contrast to the new multi-story buildings rising around campus, "the best kept construction secret at UCSD" is the 200,000 square foot addition to the Central Library, according to project architect John Sturla.

That, of course, is because the huge two-level addition is some 30-35 feet underground.

Work on the addition, known as Phase I of the \$38 million library expansion project, began in the spring of 1990 and is proceeding on schedule, said Sturla. The glass walls are started and the major concrete work has been completed, he noted, so that construction now centers on getting the floors finished and book stacks installed. The start of landscaping and pathway work also is slated to begin this fall.

Both Sturla and Dorothy Gregor, University Librarian, say they anticipate the library will be able to move into the new addition during the winter quarter break. Then at that point Phase II of the project--renovation of the present library to bring it up to current safety standards--will begin. And the front door to the library, shifted to the north during construction, will be restored to its original location facing the Price Center. Phase I is expected to be completed in early February, 1992, Sturla said, and the entire project in September, 1992.

Why double the size of the library by going underground? That was the solution finally agreed upon by officials who felt that the distinctive silhouette of the concrete and glass Central Library had to be preserved, since, more than any other structure, it had become UCSD's architectural landmark.

Gunnar Birkerts of the Michigan architectural firm that bears his name came up with the unusual design to preserve the library's commanding image: He created a largely underground library that wraps around the existing building on three sides. Between the building and the new addition he designed what he calls a "light canyon," extending the canyon to the north of the library to bring light into the addition. The walls of the addition are "glass curtains" to catch the light from this manmade canyon.

And it works well, according to Gregor. "Initially we worried that the underground structure would be dark and dreary," she said, "but the glass curtain walls and the skylight capture lots of light, and that no longer is a concern.

"Now that we've had an opportunity to tour the addition's interior," she added, "it's clear the library will not merely be getting new space, but grand new space."

The enormous mound of dirt which marked the project for so long has been graded as the first step before installation of the newest addition to the Stuart Collection--the acclaimed Snake Path to be constructed on the east (Warren Mall) side of the library.

Because it will be impossible to plant tall trees on top of the addition, the new landscaping to be added this fall at the south entrance will be more "parklike" than previously, with low plants, benches and paths. However, a

number of eucalyptus trees will be added on the perimeter of the new landscaping to replace a portion of those trees which had to be removed for the construction. On the north side, native canyon vegetation will be planted to blend with the canyon.

(August 15, 1991)