



CASE STUDY:
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Winston-Salem, NC

BRADFORD
SYSTEMS

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Storage Systems Work in Harmony

The 75,000-square-foot Semans Library is one of four new buildings on the University of North Carolina School of the Arts campus. In addition to typical stacks, collaboration areas, and study rooms, the building also houses the Benjamin F. Ward Music Library, a highly specialized “library within a library” that contains 50,000 sound recordings, 55,000 musical scores, and thousands of pages of sheet music.

These items are usually larger than books, and they require unique storage solutions in order to provide accessibility for patrons and staff, protect the materials, and make smart use of available space. Knowing that Spacesaver’s nationwide network of local design consultants specializes in creating library storage solutions, the librarians turned to their local Spacesaver representative to learn more about their options as they began planning the new space.





Journal of
Basic Theory
of
Medical Sciences



A Growing – And Overflowing – Collection

One of the librarians' main concerns was providing students and other patrons with convenient access to sheet music for practice and performance. The library's sheet music collection is its most heavily used collection due to several factors. Sheet music is usually copyrighted, so it generally isn't available online — at least not for free, and penny-pinching students typically don't want to pay for it. And even when sheet music is available digitally, it's too detailed to be legible on a screen; it must be printed on large paper in order for musicians to see it. "Paper is not going away anytime soon, at least in Western classical music, which forms the core of this institution's curriculum," said Christia Thomason, who serves as the head of the library's technical services.

"There are still millions and millions of volumes that are simply not acceptable digitally."

The library also needed to store legacy media collections and accommodate items that were gifted to the institution. The collection eventually outgrew the storage areas in the former building, resulting in materials that were overflowing into staff offices, workrooms, and other areas. "Things were stacked all over the place, in offices, under tables," said Christia Thomason, head of the library's technical services. "We knew where everything was, but we had to get very creative about where we stored things."



Specialized Storage for Specialized Collections

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"This is heavy material, but even the smallest staff member can move it with ease."

-Leslie Kamtman,
Library Director

University of North Carolina School of the Arts





Space Planning Tips for Music Librarians

"To some people, shelves are shelves," Thomason said. "But they aren't. When your project is just starting out, get as many specific measurements as possible to the right person and keep checking the final documents to be sure they're correct."

Their primary words of wisdom: Advocate for the specialized needs of the items in your collection. Be clear. And then follow up to be sure that storage needs are being met as the design phase progresses.

Kamtman added that a liaison between staff and the project architect is often helpful. "Make sure you're working with a company that understands the specific, specialized needs of your materials," she said. "What works in the general collection doesn't work for us."

Leslie offered one final piece of advice: "Ask for more storage capacity than you think you'll need, because you never know what future gifts are right around the corner."



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