

Re-visioning a Marshall Gallery* for the Present and Future: Marshall Gallery Task Force Report

Submitted by Siobhan McKissic and Paula Carns, March 2022

*Please note that in fall 2023 the Marshall Gallery was renamed the Library Gallery in a decision that was long in the works before the Task Force began its work. The space will henceforth be referred to as the Library Gallery.

Background Past Space Design and Use

This section of the report was written and presented as a proposal to the Library Executive Committee on May 20, 2022 by Sara Holder, Head, Reference and Information Services; Victor Jones, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA); John Laskowski, User Experience and Web Strategy Coordinator; Chris Prom, Associate Dean for Digital Strategies; and David Ward, Head, Undergraduate Library.

The Library Gallery has long served as an introduction to the Main Library building, with a formal aesthetic that reflects the time it was built. The space speaks to some elements of the University's history through a prominent set of oil paintings depicting the first six presidents of the University.¹ The formal aesthetic and the sparse furnishings do little to reveal the collections, services, and expertise available to Library visitors. The Gallery tends to function primarily as a pass-through space to other locations in the building.

As background for this proposal, we examined a few documents related to the construction, uses, and furnishing of the space since Phase One of the Main Library was completed in 1924-26. The building has been granted "Local" significance in the National Register of Historic Places for its Architectural, and Community Planning and Development significance.² The interior elements of the Marshall Gallery are passingly described in the National Register Filing Document that the University submitted in

¹ The history and provenance of the six oil paintings are described in Muriel Schienman's PhD thesis, but unmentioned in her book. In the thesis, she notes that numerous paintings of campus leaders were commissioned from UI Art Department Faculty, including this series, and that generally the portraits came in either as gifts or through university funds, wryly noting that "[t]he belief that they can preserve history, that they are appropriate tokens of esteem, that they can encourage and inspire no longer prevails." Muriel Scheinman, "Art Collecting at the University of Illinois: A History and Catalogue," Thesis Ph.D.--University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign., 1981, vol 1, p. 157.

² Department of the Interior. National Park Service. (3/2/1934 -). Illinois MPS Library-University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. File Unit: National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records: Illinois, 1964 - 2013, 2013.
<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/28890735>

2000 (page 6). Except for the addition of acoustic tiles and furniture, the space has not been altered since the time of construction. In March 2021, focus groups were conducted as part of the Main/Undergraduate Library integration. As part of those focus groups participants were asked to describe the ways in which the two spaces differ and encouraged to consider the “vibe.” Students consistently commented on the unwelcoming nature of the Marshall Gallery, specifically commenting on the “echoiness” of the space which discourages social interaction and encourages students to retrieve materials and leave as soon as possible. Lack of comfortable seating and adequate signage were underscored as ways in which the Library generally and the Library Gallery specifically create an unwelcoming environment.

We envision the Marshall Gallery as a welcoming, active space that signals the rich collections and expertise available in the building, and provides a landing point for students, faculty, and visitors to get oriented to the building. The message that the space implicitly conveys with its current furnishings stands in stark visual contrast to the University and Library values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and welcoming; goals that complement our role as stewards of information, records, and recorded knowledge. The current design aesthetic exclusively reflects the dominant culture of the time it was constructed, with commensurate implications of exclusivity and the Library in the role of gatekeeper and protector of authoritative knowledge.

While the Library represents the shared human values of intellect, reason, and wisdom, these are just one element of our service mission to campus. As a majestic entrance to the heart of campus, the gallery should serve as a welcoming space to all users, which recognizes the diversity of the campus and the local community, while acknowledging the intellectual heritage of the University in general and the Library in particular, as a place of knowledge, discovery, and exchange.

The space has significant potential to be a showcase for what the Main Library has to offer, orienting visitors to the building through clear, accessible wayfinding tools and signage, and helping visitors quickly identify key features of the building, such as specialized collections, study spaces, service points, and restrooms. The open spaces in the Gallery also present opportunities to build community with users through pop-up collections and exhibits, and programming supporting the teaching and research mission of the Library and the University.

Task Force Executive Summary

The Task Force recommends making short-term and long-term improvements to the Library Gallery. Many of the short-term suggestions which could be achieved without great expense and planning, were implemented in fall 2022. There is no timeline set for the long-term suggestions but we hope they can be implemented in the near future. We arrived at our conclusions through conversations with each other and with library colleagues, observing patron reactions to the short-term changes, and an online survey posted on the Library Gateway Oct 19 -Dec 16, 2022.

Short-term Efforts

1. Clusters of comfortable chairs, side tables, and standing lamps were added on the north and south sides. Existing long benches were left on the western and eastern walls, as they provide additional capacity and cater to patrons preferring this type of seating. This configuration allows patrons to easily move through the space.
2. Large banners with the Library's DEIA statement and the University land statements (see Appendix 2) were hung on the west wall next to the doors.

Long-term Recommendations

1. Updates to Lighting. The Library Gallery relies heavily on natural light which works well on sunny days but makes the space dim for almost half of the academic year. Although we added additional floor lamps in Fall 2022, we also recommend adding aesthetically non-disruptive ceiling lights to the space.
2. Directory and Wayfinding. Multiple patrons requested additional wayfinding at the Library Gallery entrance in the form of traditional and digital signage. Adding a directory to the Library Gallery would help patrons navigate the building and the many libraries that call the Main Library home.
3. Artwork. When we began meeting, we had several discussions about removing the paintings of former administrators from the space. Though there are some campus-level and logistical hurdles to such a change, the paintings were noted by multiple survey respondents as unwelcoming. The task force recommends removing the portraits of former administrators from the Library Gallery. These portraits would benefit from better storage for long-term preservation, and in place of these portraits, we recommend rotating exhibitions of work by local artists. We point to the [lobby installations](#) by Adriane "Binky" Donley at Champaign Public Library as a possible model for vibrant, welcoming art in the space.
4. Noise Dampening. The grandiose high ceilings of the Library Gallery draw people in but they also create an echo as people constantly move through the space. We discussed some options for noise dampening such as rugs and sound proofing panels on the walls. However, several survey respondents suggested adding

plants, which would both brighten the room and improve sound quality. There are some logistical and maintenance procedures required to make this solution work, but it is worth noting.

Conclusion

The Library Gallery (formerly known as the Marshall Gallery) serves as the first point of entry into our library's halls for so many. Making it a space that is inviting and able to address a diverse set of user needs encourages visitors to explore the many specialized libraries and services available within the library at-large. By making updates to wayfinding, furniture, lighting, and exhibits, this thoroughway can become a place for people to pause and soak in the grandeur of not only the room but of the vast work happening throughout our library spaces. We have an opportunity to make this space better and we hope our recommendations will be taken into consideration.

Task Force Membership:

Paula Carns (co-chair)
Siobhan McKissic (co-chair)
Sara Holder
Victor Jones, Jr.
John Laskowski
Heather Murphy
Tim Newman
Nancy O'Brien
Mara Thacker

Appendix One

Marshall Gallery Task Force Charge

The Marshall Gallery Task Force is charged with:

1) implementing short-term, non-permanent improvements to the space in time for fall 2022 semester. For short term adjustments, it is important for the group to confer as much as possible with stakeholders, especially in units within the Main Library that may be affected, and ensure adjustments do not interfere with other library operations.

2) making preliminary recommendations for longer-term changes in a report to be submitted by December 15 th , 2022³. In developing this report, the group should investigate options for updating the Marshall Gallery space to address the needs articulated in the bullets below, in consultation with colleagues in the Main Library and other Library Units, with feedback from Library users. The team should constitute and consult with an advisory group, and incorporate other Library-wide feedback mechanisms. The group's final report should include outcomes which speak to the following:

- Articulation of a vision and purpose for the space which is inclusive of the diversity of individuals who have participated in and contributed to University and Library history, as well as reflective of the rich cultures, backgrounds, and identities of individuals who are part of today's campus and community;
- Recommendations for how the space can contribute towards improved wayfinding for the Main Library building;
- Articulation of a broad list of activities the space could support, which are in alignment with the vision for the space;
- Identification of any environmental or logistical issues with the space which impair or could impair use, such as acoustics, temperature control, etc.
- Recommendations for a longer-term management plan for the space, including identifying a unit or team to manage, book, and keep the space updated to meet day-to-day needs;
- Finally, the task force should consider how strategic decisions about the space will be collaboratively designed and updated over subsequent years, to ensure that both the vision itself and its application remain relevant to the Library and campus life.

³ When the committee voted to keep the survey live until Dec 16, 2022, We got permission from the Executive Committee to extend the deadline of the report.

Appendix Two

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Statement

The University of Illinois Library is an integral component of the public university system in the state of Illinois, as well as the broader national and global research community. All library employees are expected to be committed to creating an environment – with each other as well as our patrons – that cultivates and values diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all forms. We also recognize that the Library is part of a deeply flawed society with many systemic inequities.

Our collective goals include offering resources and services that are both inclusive and accessible, as well as providing equitable opportunities for our diverse community to create, curate, and illuminate all forms of information and artifacts. We recognize this work has no end and accept responsibility for promoting these values through our interactions with each other and our patrons.

Land Acknowledgement Statement

We would like to recognize and acknowledge that we are on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands were the traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal; these lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution for the past 150 years. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward for the next 150 years.



Banner Images (Banner design by Heather Murphy and photos courtesy of John Laskowski)

Appendix Three

Furniture Changes (Photos courtesy of John Laskowski)





Appendix Four

Marshall Gallery Survey Questions

Formerly known as the Marshall Gallery, the Library Gallery has long served as the main entryway into the Main Library building. With the closure of the Undergraduate Library, a task force was created to make changes to the gallery that might make better use of the current space. This survey will help us better understand the space needs and desires of students, staff, faculty, and our local community. Please let us know your thoughts.

1. Have you spent time in the Marshall Gallery in the Main Library? (Follow link to photos of the Marshall Gallery)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. What do you like best about the Marshall Gallery? (Choose all that apply)
 - a. Study space
 - b. Seating options (comfortable chairs and wooden benches)
 - c. Open hours
 - d. Lighting
 - e. Noise level
 - f. Location
 - g. Other:

3. What kind of furniture would you prefer in this open lobby space? (Rank top 3 choices)
 - a. Wooden benches
 - b. Soft furniture
 - c. Side tables
 - d. Exhibit cases
 - e. Other:

4. What would improve the space (Rank top 3 choices)?
 - a. More study area
 - b. Comfortable seating
 - c. More lighting
 - d. Updated artwork
 - e. Map/directions of Main Library
 - f. Noise control/sound dampening
 - g. On-site food/beverage options (coffee vendor)
 - h. Other:

5. Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix Five

Survey Analysis (compiled by John Laskowski)

Have you spent time in the Library Gallery in the Main Library?

Yes: 61 (94%)

No: 4 (6%)

What do you like best about the Library Gallery?

Study space: 7 (11%)

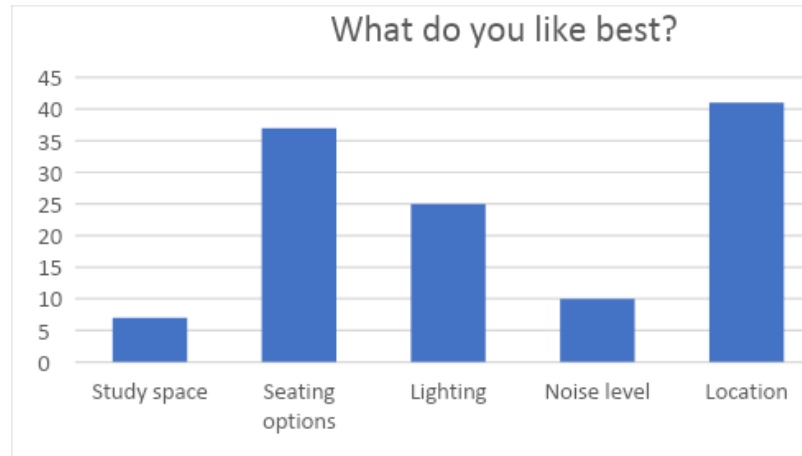
Seating options: 37 (57%)

Lighting: 25 (38%)

Noise level: 10 (15%)

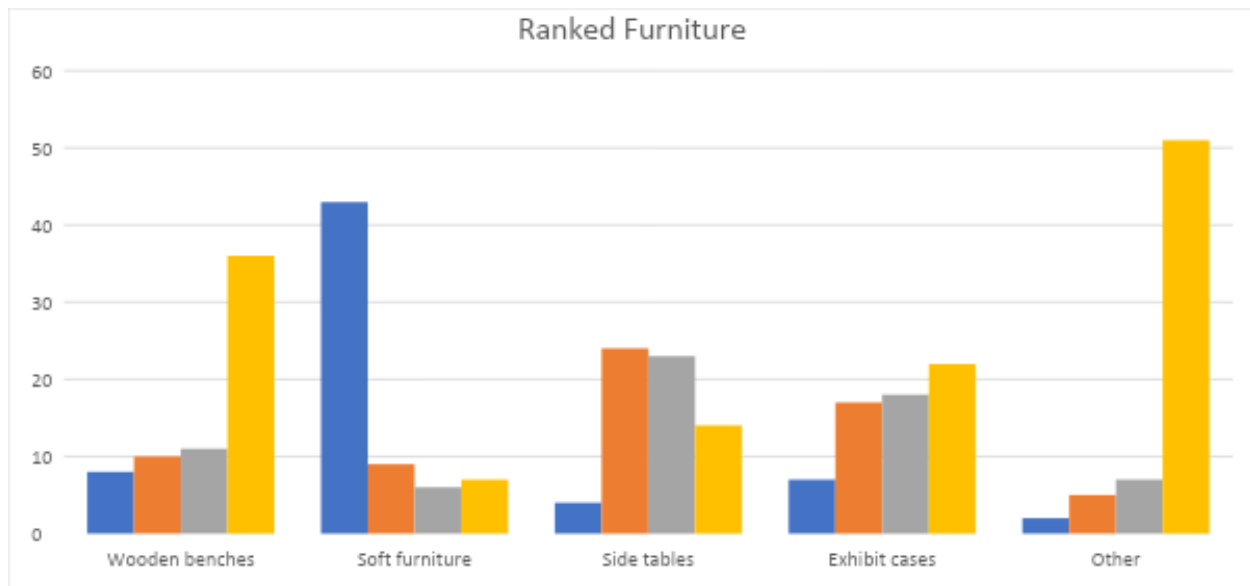
Location: 41 (63%)

Other: 11 (17%)



- As an entrance way
- It portrays a level of prestige.
- attractive entrance to Library, exhibit space, sets the tone for the kind of building it is
- The "classy" atmosphere is very important to me. I like the academic feel it creates as it is the first impression many people have of the library upon entering. It is important that it reflects the high quality our institution.
- feel of the space -- the stonework, etc.
- It's an appropriately grand entrance to the Library.
- I like the grand entrance and space for exhibits and other events. I also appreciate most of the paintings but wish there was more explanation around who those individuals are.
- It is a beautiful, open space
- Overall, this is a gateway space. It should be welcoming and either provide people a place to meet or study in an active space, or help guide them to other parts of the building.
- It's potentially a nice space for events and such! It's pretty dim right now, so I think that better lighting would be good. On the other hand, the sun does stream in there during certain times of the day and it's nice to have a space without florescent lights.
- I feel like the library gallery is very cold and uninviting. It feels like a sad unwelcoming museum. It is extremely unwelcoming. At least it gets some nice light.

What kind of furniture would you prefer in this open lobby space?

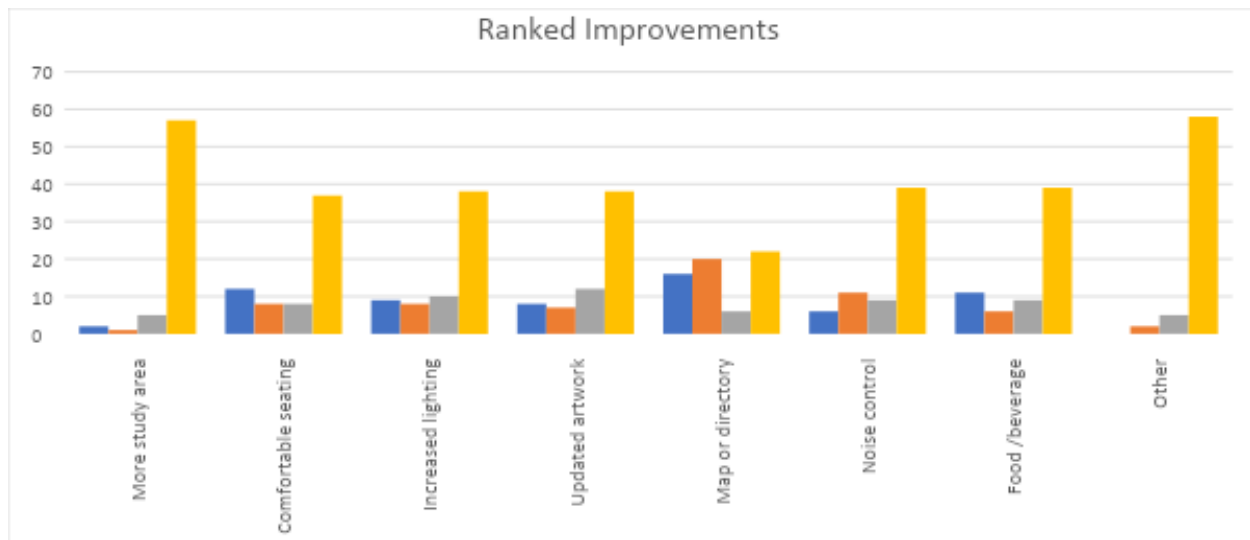


	#1	#2	#3	Not ranked
Wooden benches	8	10	11	36
Soft furniture	43	9	6	7
Side tables	4	24	23	14
Exhibit cases	7	17	18	22
Other	2	5	7	51

If you ranked “Other” in the previous question, please elaborate here.

- I would like to see the Magis Spun Chair that is carried by Herman Miller: <https://www.hermanmiller.com/products/seating/lounge-seating/magis-spun-chair/>.
- I did not mark other, but can add that I like the gallery space fancy, i.e. like portions of the union that express an aesthetic commitment to high standards, erudition, world-class commitment to beauty/form and function.
- Resale desk for the books being withdrawn
- cafe height tables
- More tables and chairs. not necessarily soft seating
- Plants
- ways to create smaller space within this large (and kind of cold) space, through potted plants and taller furniture. Also removing the portraits of historical university leaders and putting in warmer and more uplifting and interesting art
- a directory of some sort, like you'd find in a mall, would be helpful. or a touchscreen. also a giant bulletin board where people could hang fliers.

What would improve the space?



	#1	#2	#3	Not ranked
More study area	2	1	5	57
Comfortable seating	12	8	8	37
Increased lighting	9	8	10	38
Updated artwork	8	7	12	38
Main Library map or directory	16	20	6	22
Noise control / Sound dampening	6	11	9	39
Food / beverage options	11	6	9	39
Other	0	2	5	58

If you ranked “Other” in the previous question, please elaborate here.

- More to elaborate on the seating, the furniture needs to be more suited to the space. Where the gallery has a very beautiful almost grand feel when you walk in, the weird hotel furniture in there now completely ruins it.
- I don't mind the former president portraits, but can see the "old white guys" sentiment that some describe, a rotating gallery of art: either local or in conjunction with Krannert / touring collections would be cool. Inobtrusive

wayfinding. The exhibit space should stay. The current furniture seems to be popular, but I think more - or anything akin to study space would cheapen the room.

- additional signage, both informational and directional
- The could be replaced with paintings that represent Illinois landscapes and/or fine artwork created by Illinois artists.
- I would like to see a welcome desk at this location.
- Had to have 3 so chose other
- I would be weary of overcrowding--so--"space"
- Actually, everything on the list should to be addressed . . . its hard to pick three choices
- Signage/Digital Signage

Do you have any additional comments?

- I am glad that updates are being made to the gallery. I am looking forward to seeing what the space will look like.
- Why is it no longer called the Marshall Gallery?
- Please get rid of the scary white men. They do not serve the space at all with how it's currently used
- I didn't even know it has a name. I thought it was just an entrance for the Library. It would be nice if we have a food/coffee shop to hang out/rest since the UGL is closed out. More direction/signage to direct the patrons. Pershaps, monitors that display Bus schedules.
- Needs to be warmer and inviting...updated
- I just really think more thought needs to be put into how this space can be useable and comfortable for students but still keep with the grand entrance this gallery is meant to provide. Right now, it is so incredibly disappointing to see.
- The gallery - why was Marshall removed from the name? - should be a point of pride for all and a destination for visitors to campus. It should reflect an older style of erudition with smooth updates that look ahead to a prosperous future. Please avoid soda machines, coffee shops and atms. When one enters there should be a sense of awe and belonging.
- Would have been appreciated to be told why the gallery was renamed. And it could use a bust of Lloyd Morrey.
- Addition of natural light and greenery would be awesome too. See the "green wall" at the UIC Surgical and Innovation Training Lab - <https://af4-california-production.imgix.net/files/H/Y/B/M/x/c/2GEu6lxqYr/file.jpg?auto=format&fit=max&ixlib=php-1.2.1&w=800&s=ba14442a59c9d2e3a6f5a58935c1631d>
- I would just like to emphasize that I really like the academic feel of the space, but do recognize that certain changes would be beneficial. However, I would prefer that the space retain much of its current feel and not become completely contemporary,

- In addition to the Library Gallery, more seating w/tables along the walls in the hallway. I see many students balancing their laptops on their laps, especially by the printers. Also, having a monitor with ETA for MTD buses at the Gregory entrance. This would help with those that are standing inside the library to know when to expect their bus. Ikenberry has something similar and it looked super helpful. It could also have a rotation of advertisements for the library or charge other colleges to put up their ad?
- Whatever you decided to do, PLEASE IMPROVE THE LIGHTING. It is really horrible.
- This space is best left as an entryway and not transformed into an overly crowded study space or hangout area. The sound dampening would be appreciated. It serves well as a display area and entry area. There are other spaces for studying and congregating.
- More study, less display
- I certainly understand encouraging students to use the space. I also hope the more traditional feel can be maintained (more like the main reading room), so all our spaces are not too comfy or modern. Nice to keep the feel of the building and so updates do not then become dated.
- I would again underscore if there is the ability to create more natural, "cozy" partitions through large potted plants and furniture and rugs, that would help. This was never an inviting space due to the cold hard marble everywhere so I know it is a challenge to try to change its tone and 'vibe' but there's potential.
- I think a coffee shop is a necessity
- I would love to see ALL of the items on Question 5 - so more light, noise reducing stuff (carpets, etc), food options, softer seating, tables, and better art.
- The space needs to be warm and welcoming to all. It's needs color and lighting and signage that invites all patrons to explore and enjoy the library. Artwork featuring more of the campus and fewer dead administrators would help greatly.
- Art from students or local artists could be a great addition to the gallery and make it feel much more welcoming.
- An interior designer should get involved in thinking of the whole space instead of adopting small changes over time that become a confusing mess. Get rid of everything and rethink every assumption.
- I understand the questions around new artwork but I wonder: 1. Where would the current artwork be stored? 2. Who gets to decide on the new artwork? 3. The painting of President James should remain in the space. He was responsible for the development of the library building and setting the stage for it to become the powerhouse in the field that it is today.
- Now that UGL is closed, we need to use our wide, empty corridors for more purposes. They are big and can be lively and enjoyable spaces instead of big dead hallways. Please don't do anything that detracts from the historic appeal of the building, though. The large windows, natural wood, and other architectural features should be enhanced and highlighted. I think we can make entire Main Library more beautiful and enticing.

- Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critical space. It has such great potential!
- No need to fill the space with too much furniture. Wood benches are great. Best features of the space are the architecture of the room, the floors/walls, the openness and natural light from the windows/doors and the stairs going up to 2nd floor. Try not to destroy the natural beauty of the space by putting a bunch of ugly soft furniture in it.
- In my experience, it's a pass-through space. I've met up with people there on occasion before going somewhere else. The small exhibits are a nice inclusion. What's happening to the Espresso Royale that was in the tunnel, again? It was nice to have a place to grab a drink in that area.
- The Library Gallery has a lot of unused potential. I think there are ways to still keep some of the aesthetic of it while making it much more welcoming. Taking down the paintings will be the first step--students don't know who the paintings are of, plus, it looks a little odd having those paintings right next to an land acknowledgement statement. Increased lighting could make the room much more cozy, and would make the marble walls softer. Increase seating options would encourage students to use it more, and could add some color to the gallery since it's basically all beige/dark green colors right now. I know there is some concern with heat during the winter since the gallery is next to doors leading outside, but with an increase of people in the space, it will be warmer, and people can also choose not to use the space if it's too cold. There has been questions on the Info Desk about vending machines, pop machines, and coffee options, so having food/drink options in this gallery would be more visible to users. A coffee cart would be really inviting, and something people miss a lot from the UGL. Lastly, digital signage with a library map/directory would help field a lot of questions students have. I'm not sure about the data/tech needed, but we could get a standing digital touch screen where students could interact with the map, and also see other upcoming events that would be easier to read than the monitors high up near the info desk.
- The Library Gallery has the potential to be a wonderful and inviting space for the university. It makes perfect sense to have a small coffee shop run by a local coffee place in one corner with cafe-style seating. There could be more comfortable seating like couches. The artwork needs to be updated. The library should be a meeting place on campus. Right now, is it intimidating and unwelcoming. It's not a place I would choose to come to.

We have also had suggestion boxes in the Library Gallery and forms with the following prompts:

- What do you like about the Library Gallery?
- What would you like to see improved about the Library Gallery?
- Other comments?

Here is the feedback we've received through this medium.

What do you like about the Library Gallery?

- Large, seating, display
- The green chairs, the display cases
- Good place to meet up with people
- I like the comfy chairs, the quiet lighting & natural light and the footstools.
- I would love to see them doing an activity while posing for the camera (John: I have no idea what this means.)

What would you like to see improved about the Library Gallery?

- Add some Picasso
- Demonstrate all dimensions of health: physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, and emotional
- I'd love more table surfaces of some sort, even just window tables/barstool style seats looking out toward the UGL where the benches are now.
- More lighting
- Benches replaced with something comfortable; more info (pamphlets, signs) (A directory?)
- Add plants, water feature

Other Comments:

- I want to know about the sustainability of this place and history. Add standing desks somewhere!!!
- This is a pretty common entrance, but it doesn't really seem like one. I would focus on that.
- RIP the UGL. She will be missed. Y'all are amazing though. I love the people here.
- More art of non-humans; for example, geometrical shapes that show nature.