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## Multnomah county central library: Oregon's largest Carnegie library restored, renewed, and improved

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# Multnomah County Central Library:

*Oregon's largest Carnegie Library  
Restored, Renewed, and Improved*

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**W**hat will Multnomah County residents see when they walk into Portland's "new" Central Library early next year?

They'll walk into a new lobby with state-of-the-art lighting and an elegant terrazzo floor instead of 1950s linoleum. They'll see a striking, etched granite grand stairway that replaces the worn, cracked one. The stair's "Garden of Knowledge" theme will be repeated throughout the library in carpets designed for the building, the softly glowing ellipse on the ceiling at the entryway, and the special art in the Children's Library. Patrons will find handsome, sturdy new chairs for readers in every reading room. They'll also find information desks and reader's tables that accommodate personal computers rather than dumb terminals in all public areas. (Electrical cords and data cables will be carefully hidden from public view.) Reading room walls will be painted in soft colors that enhance the Georgian design of the building.

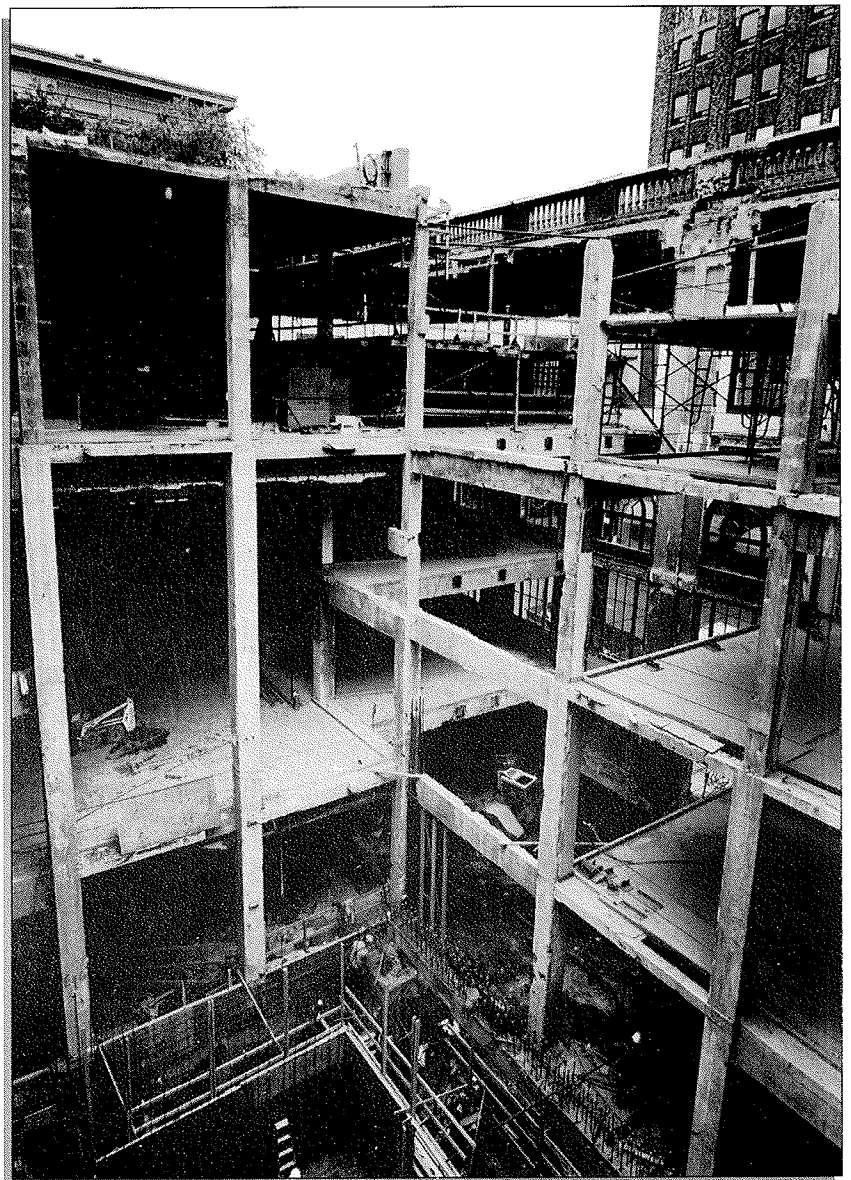
The largest part of the Central Library renovation, however, will go mostly unseen. Almost every interior wall in the building has been removed at some time during the renovation to perform seismic, mechanical, electrical, and telecommunications upgrades. When Central reopens, it will not only conform to current building codes, but it will also house the infrastructure necessary to support new and emerging technologies. In addition, eliminating seven floors of closed stacks and adding two floors for staff work areas will mean more space for public use—and fewer books hidden away in closed stacks.

The challenge throughout the project has been to accommodate current and future information delivery needs while retaining and renewing the building's most striking and beloved historic features. In addition to serving five times as many registered borrowers as when the building opened in 1913, housing seven times as many books, and circulating six times as many materials, the reno-

vated library must support the technology that helps deliver information in the manner that library users have grown to expect. It must also be able to accommodate as-yet-unknown ways of providing information in the future. It must do all of this in the same amount of space the library occupied when it opened in 1913.

Construction work on the \$24.5 million project is on schedule and is expected to be completed in early 1997. Planning for the move back from TransCentral Library, Central's temporary home since December 1994, has begun.

Portland and Multnomah County residents are fond of the "real" Central Library and are anxious to have it open again. TransCentral Library staff are gearing up for the move back and for what is certain to be an onslaught of new business as people rediscover their historic "new" library. **Q**



Multnomah County's Central Library gets more than a facelift. The building's skeleton is exposed during a \$24.5 million renovation project.