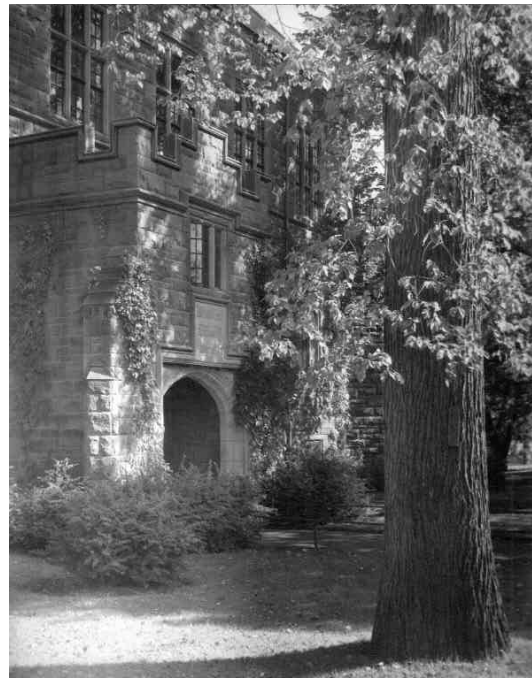


## Save the Mount Allison Memorial Library

After the Great War, the Alumni and Alumnae Societies resolved that “an effort should be made to erect a library as a memorial to the loyalty and heroism of Mount Allison men and women in the war. No greater service could be done for Mount Allison than to provide such a memorial building. The Mount Allison boys who are out there ‘in Flanders fields’ to stay deserve all the honors a grateful country can bestow on them.” It was a time of grief and financial difficulty, but finally in 1927, under the presidency of Dr George Trueman, the Memorial Library was completed. For forty years this bold edifice served as the library and heart of the University. For the last forty years the Memorial Library has been part of the student centre known as the University Centre.



There are several reasons why Mount Allison University should repurpose the Memorial Library to be part of a contemporary Fine and Performing Arts Centre.

- 1 The Memorial Library is its legacy, one of only six heritage buildings that remain on the main campus, and one which writes in physical form a heroic chapter in the history of Mount Allison.
- 2 The Memorial Library is the keystone of the campus that Sir Charles G D Roberts referred to as “the most beautiful campus that I know in Canada. It is the most picturesque, varied and well-treed campus I have seen in Canada.”
- 3 The Memorial Library was conceived and constructed as a memorial to the 73 members of the Allisonian family who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Great War. It has stood proudly on the campus for over eighty years in honour of its brave heroes.
- 4 The Memorial Library is an architectural treasure, designed by “one of Canada’s great architects”, Andrew Randall Cobb. Its Tudor Revival exterior envelops a grand reading room, the most impressive interior space on campus.
- 5 Conservation of the Memorial Library reflects the necessity in this age to be good stewards of our planet. Mount Allison has an environmental responsibility to recycle and repurpose its older buildings to provide sound functional use. Sustainability includes a social and cultural consideration.
- 6 The residents of Sackville have a degree of ownership in the Memorial Library. For several generations it has been a significant object in the streetscape of the town, standing firmly on the campus edge as a reliable marker on the well-travelled Main Street.
- 7 The Memorial Library would bring a lyrical air to the composition of a contemporary Fine and Performing Arts Complex. It would enrich the educational experiences of future generations of students and enhance the imagery of a gateway building desired to be the reflection of a progressive educational institution.

- 8 The Memorial Library is the only building on campus that is entrenched in the memories of all Mount Allison Alumni living today. For its 80 years, first as the library and later as part of the student centre, it has been the social heart of the campus, where many a Mount Allison friendship was fostered.
- 9 Mount Allison is known as a school that teaches respect and cherishes its traditions; surely Mount Allison does not knock down its history.
- 10 But the best reason for the conservation of the Memorial Library was related to me in a recent conversation with a delightful fourth year music student. During her stay at Mount Allison she has performed several times in Windsor Theatre and is very familiar with the Memorial Library. Her comment to me was “Mount A is special because there is so much history ...if you take down that old building it is like taking away some of the \*magic\*”. She said it perfectly.

In 2002 Mount Allison University retained the services of the preeminent architectural firm Diamond & Schmitt from Toronto to prepare a master plan to guide the future development of the campus. The third phase of that plan proposed that the Memorial Library be conserved to become part of a contemporary Fine and Performing Arts Centre. Then in 2009 Mount Allison retained the services of another architectural firm from Toronto, the Zeidler Partnership, to implement that third phase. They have unfortunately taken a divergent approach to the design of the Arts Centre that compromises the Memorial Library. They advised that it would be imprudent to retain the old building, and assigned a price tag of an additional \$5 million if it were to be retained. It was this information that was presented to the Board of Regents in October that formed the basis of the decision to proceed with planning of the Arts Centre based on the demolition of the Memorial Library. In other words the Board of Regents made the decision to demolish the Memorial Library because it was informed by the administration that it would cost \$5 million to keep it.

I am critical of that information. I believe that the \$5 million price tag is an exaggeration. Not only is the Zeidler plan unsympathetic to the old library building but, quite separate from the issue of the Memorial Library, it is my architectural opinion that it is a bad plan for Mount Allison. It is insensitive to the existing campus, ignores the potential for a wonderful entry courtyard, isolates the theater on a noisy and dangerous intersection, and creates an unpleasant gateway to Mount Allison. It simply lacks an understanding of this place we love and know as Mount Allison.



Surely Mount Allison should do better; in the very least it should get best value for its dollar. It is my thesis that by applying an appropriate planning attitude a good plan can be achieved, the Memorial Library can be repurposed to bring additional delight to a truly contemporary Fine and Performing Arts Complex, and to do so will not cost an additional 5 million dollars. In my opinion Mount Allison should suspend all work on developing the present plan and seek a second opinion. This is a very significant project for Mount Allison and it should be done well. Mount Allison must do better.

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December 2010