

[Dimond
Library](#)

UNH Dimond Architects Win Design Award

By [Tracy Manforte](#)
Elizabeth Keane
UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- Graham Gund Architects, designers of the new Dimond Library at the University of New Hampshire, recently won an award of merit from the New York Council Society of American Registered Architects. The award recognizes the Cambridge, Mass. firm's "superior achievement and professional design excellence" for the massive \$19-million renovation and expansion project completed in the fall of 1998.

UNH President Joan Leitzel says the library is the most important building on a campus, and this award supports its status. Gund wanted to maintain the original location of the library because the view it holds from Main Street helps promote its important place and function on campus. "A great university needs a library with dignity and symbolism, and we gave these to Dimond," says Gund.

Gund says his vision in designing buildings is based on "the incredible power of spaces to move people and create supportive environments." He adds that the team of architects tried to "reinforce the best of what was on the UNH campus." They capitalized on the red brick and white trim as well as the New England-style building, which Gund says displays a restrained exterior with subtle details. They designed Dimond to fit into the courtyard community of nearby Thompson and Murkland halls.

After 18 months of construction, the building had expanded from 165,000 to 207,000 square feet. Gund and his architects located aisles, copy machines, bathrooms, elevators, etc., at the same place on each floor to make it easier for patrons to find their way around.

Librarian Claudia Morner has worked at UNH for the past four years and previously at the Boston College Library. She says Gund's work stood out among other architects she has worked with through past library renovations. "He was a wonderful listener while never straying too far from his original vision," she says. Morner remembers the old library as a stark contrast to the new structure. She says, "It was completely outdated, dark, cramped and disorganized. Gund and

his architects design with a classic look that will withstand changing styles over time."

The library now has five floors with three large reading rooms surrounding the center of the library, where books, computers, shelves, reference material and help desks are located. The reading rooms are large, wide open areas with high ceilings and windows that span the length and width of the walls. Morner describes Gund as a "genius with his use of long windows that bring natural lighting in and a sense of actually being outside to the people inside."

Beyond the beauty, students also report feeling inspired to study. They like the fact that so many of them can study together or separately, in a supportive, almost religious manner.

Morner's favorite aspect of the library is how someone walking outside the library can see into the reading rooms and find the scene inviting. To her, Gund's design award is a bonus. "The true success of the design lies in the students' overwhelmingly wonderful reactions."

August 10, 1999

[Back to unh.edu.](#)