

UPEI Recieves New Science Building

by Amy Gallan

One of the most important aspects of a university is the Science Department. The University of Prince Edward Island is no different. Including part-time students, UPEI has a student population of 2904, 638 of which are science students. So it seems that the Science Department, Chemistry in particular, is being "rewarded" with a new, modern facility which will be better equipped to handle both professors and students needs.

This new facility, which is to be completed in 1996, has been causing much excitement for all who are interested in science. This is because of a variety of reasons, including its safety features, its many modern aspects, and its convenient features.

An important part of safety for any science building is the quality of air. This new science building will have air quality appropriate to a working environment through fume hood and air exchange systems. It will also have humidity control to maintain instruments in a safe and non-corrosive environment. This is particularly important for the chemistry department because the building now being used by the Chemistry Department, Cass Chemistry, was built in 1939, and thus has very poor air quality.

High-humidity causing instruments to malfunction has been a major problem in Cass Chemistry. One such instrument that is very important to chemists is the NMR (Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectrometer). It must be kept in very exact conditions to function properly, so a special room was designed for a modern high-field NMR in the new building. Unfortunately, this piece of equipment costs approximately \$100,000, so a new model will remain only in the dream of the Chemistry Department. The instrument rooms with controlled temperature and humidity will facilitate access conveniently from associated laboratory and research space.

The new building will have much more operating space for both students and professors. One of the main features will be a 120-seat lecture theatre equipped with a computer, TV, and slide projection. This will accommodate the larger classes of first year Organic and Biochemistry courses as well as courses of other departments.

Other important teaching/learning facilities will be a first-year laboratory to accommodate sixty students which will permit weekly instead of biweekly lab experience. A joint Organic/Biochemistry laboratory will be used by 40 students every day (Organic laboratory will henceforth use

only "microscale" preparation. A joint Inorganic/Physical/Analytical laboratory will provide improved space and facilities and will hold approximately 24 students.

A dedicated research laboratory in six three-person modular units will provide professors and advanced students with much improved space and equipment. Each module will be identical in area with slightly different features in each. These will be shared by six professors.

Perhaps one of the most important features of the new science building will be a dedicated room for computers which will provide for teaching and learning in a convenient and modern facility. This is

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designed to hold 12 personal computers.

Two smaller lecture rooms of 50 and 28 seats respectively will be used by the Chemistry Department as well as other Departments for lower enrolment courses and for tutorials or lectures associated with the laboratory presentations. Dr. Leon Loucks, Chair of the Department of Chemistry, says they have had great success with small lecture rooms in the past, "It's a really nice relationship between prof and student because it's so intimate," says Dr. Loucks, who also says that he wishes to maintain this relationship.

Preparation facilities for the technical staff will be much more conveniently located and will have the spaces appropriate to the tasks involved. Also, this new building will have an elevator which will be a very important change for Cass Chemistry natives who have to carry everything from heavy instruments to gasses up flights of stairs. This is not only inconvenient but dangerous also. The elevator will also allow accessibility to the physically challenged.

The fact that the entire second floor of the new science building is being dedicated entirely to the chemistry department has been causing much excitement. For chemistry students and professors it means, "better laboratory facilities, safety and environment to work in -- better computer facilities especially," says Dr. Loucks. For others it means the opening of new space for other purposes. In particular, Biology may have first dibs on the Cass Chemistry building.

The L-shaped, two-storey building will be made partly of red brick and partly of off-white artificial stone which will break any plainness which might have otherwise occurred. Located across from the cafeteria this building completes the quadrangle enclosed feeling of the campus.

The architects, Bergmark and Hammarland, are held in great confidence and have spent much time detailing the plans for the building. Also assisting in the planning and offering tips was Bill Greg, a consultant from the University of Ottawa, where a new science building was also recently erected. Dr. Pineau, the Dean of Science, Dr. Louks, and other department heads, many of whom will move their offices to the new building, also participated in its planning.

One person in particular who deserves recognition for his part in acquiring a new science building for UPEI is the former president of the university, CWJ Elliot, who for years proceeded to work for the establishment of this new building. Although it was not completed before his retirement last year, the cornerstone of the building was unveiled before he left in reverence to him.

Seven million dollars was raised for the completion of this and several other projects. \$5.3 million has been set aside from this money for the new science buildings overall budget. The rest must be divided between renovations for the Cass Chemistry Building and the Alumni Gymnasium.

One million dollars of this seven million was donated by the Irving family. The new building therefore will be christened the K.C. Irving Chemistry Building.

The planning of this K.C. Irving Chemistry Building took one year of planning, and the actual construction is now under-way. It is to be completed in July or August of 1996, and moving in will begin in July or August. Dr. Loucks believes that this is a very positive thing for the University, for the Science Department, and Chemistry in particular, and is very thankful that they are finally getting what they have long struggled for.



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