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Work in progress

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WOOSTER -- There is no such thing as one tour too many for Barry Cochran, project manager for the new downtown Wayne County Public Library.

Cochran encourages visitors to don hard hats and step over wires and cables to traverse the library while he points out its architectural features.

The staff has been observing progress with tours on a regular basis.

"It's awesome," assistant Director Jennifer Shatzer said Thursday as she dropped off her hard hat in the construction office, and noted changes in the structure "just from 24 hours ago."

Cochran is "proud and pleased" to be part of the construction process.

A centerpiece of the building is the ground-floor circulation desk -- already prepared with "cut-outs" where self-check equipment will be implemented -- and the staircase architect Dan Meehan refers to as "the grand monumental staircase," Cochran said.

Meehan calls the area reaching to a "grand (radial) ceiling" the rotunda, Cochran said.

The main conference room is "loaded with technology," Cochran said, which led to discussion of a high-tech "telecommunications closet," ensuring up-to-date technology and a sophisticated security system.

Similarly, the mechanical room is the "heart and lungs" of the building, Cochran said.

Lighting and energy efficiency is part of the objective to "keep operating costs as low as possible," construction manager Ted Bogner said. "We tried to stretch public dollars as far as they would go."

In several areas, such as the teen room, Cochran pointed out how Meehan Architects' design "is breaking up the space, doing different things."

"It will look really neat," he said.

"The walls (in the teen room) aren't parallel with the soffits, and the carpet is going to be on a third line," Cochran said. "None of the three of them are going to align with each other."

"That's just the way the architect breaks up the area," Cochran said. "The ceiling does a 'snaky' thing with the floor," which follows the same pattern.

The children's story hour room, part of a spacious children's department, is circular-shaped, but incorporates two perpendicular walls.

The flooring will be laid in opposing concentric semi-circles.

Highlighting the large area devoted to children, Bogner said the library anticipates patronage in the department will grow faster than any other.

Windows scaled to a child's-eye view and a lighting track "blinking like a carousel" enhance the area, Cochran said.

Library personnel wanted to ensure it could "change with the seasons or tastes," Bogner said. "We didn't want to lock in anything that would be dated."

Another unique part of the building is the north tower, which features a multi-planed room and ceiling system, Cochran said.

It also offers an expansive view of the downtown business area and overlooks the main entrance in the northeast corner of the building.

A drive-up window will have "a bank transaction-style window," Cochran said, and a group of exterior lockers will allow patrons who work second and third shifts to enjoy picking up books left there via a consistently reprogrammed code provided for them.

Bogner and Cochran pointed out donor recognition areas, public restrooms with two entrances -- one to be used when only the meeting area of the library is open after regular hours -- and display areas.

An expansion plan -- to add 35 feet to the east and 20 feet to the west, if necessary -- is available off genealogy and adult services, areas Bogner said are likely to grow.

Outside work -- site lighting, curbing and parking lot preparation -- is picking up.

"It is an exciting building," Bogner said. "It basically anchors the downtown. I think it's a trend-setter for the community.

"The landscaping and celebration of green space is what's really going to set it off," Bogner said.

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