

Library History

Timeline of Libraries at Santa Clara University

1777: Spanish padres create a library on the grounds of Mission Santa Clara.

1851: Father John Nobili, S.J. gains Mission Santa Clara and creates Santa Clara College. The mission library comes with the land, and it houses about 250 books.

A Fathers' Library was also established in the early years of the college and was housed in the faculty residence, located where St. Joseph's hall now stands. The original building burned down in 1909.

1912: Bergin Hall was built to replace the Father's Residence and was said to have housed the library of the university.

1925: Santa Clara College now contains three libraries:

1. Fathers' Library in Bergin Hall: classical, literary, philosophical, and ascetical subjects; additionally, it held volumes of rare books like the Mission Library books and the Mission Santa Clara manuscripts.
2. Students' library (second floor of refectory): reference and general subjects.
3. Law library (second floor of refectory): books on general and California law.

1931: Varsi Library opens (currently known as Varsi Hall).

All libraries on campus are consolidated in this building, and the law library is now on the second floor of Varsi.

1938: Edwin A. Heafey Law Library opens within Bergin Hall, which is the new law school building.

1963: Plans for Michel Orradre Library are released to the public.

1966: The Science Library opens in Daly Science Center. It is consolidated into Orradre in 1996.

1964: Michel Orradre Library opens.

2006: Michel Orradre Library is demolished. The library was open for 42 years.

2008: Joanne E. Harrington Learning Commons, Sobrato Family Technology Center, and Orradre Library opens.

2018: Charney Hall, the new law school building, opens, containing the new Mabie Law Library.

Joanne E. Harrington Learning Commons, Sobrato Family Technology Center, and Orradre Library

In March of 2008, the Joanne E. Harrington Learning Commons, Sobrato Family Technology Center, and Orradre Library (colloquially known as the Learning Commons, and/or University Library) opened its doors for the first time. The former Michel Orradre Library, which had been open for 42 years, was demolished in 2006 in order to be replaced by the new facility. The new Learning Commons was constructed to be a state-of-the-art learning facility boasting a structure spanning 194,000 square feet, four levels, 26 collaborative student workspaces, and a café. It brought together information technology, media services, computer learning labs, and library services and collections into one space. The technical specifications and design of the interior of the edifice emphasized access to the newest technological tools, as well as animating social experiences in service to student-staff collaborations. Finally, the new building was located at the center of the growing campus—with dorms on one side and the dining hall on the other, thus playing a vital role at the heart of the Santa Clara University student experience.

Ultimately costing 95 million dollars to complete, the Learning Commons was received extremely well by SCU students upon its grand opening. One student remarked, “It makes me excited to come to the library and work,” and others cited the LCD screens in the group study rooms and the café at the entrance as their favorite aspects of the building when interviewed by the [Santa Clara for the Sept. 21, 2008](#) issue. In the same article, the newspaper went on to clarify the name of the facility:

In addition to the Harrington Learning Commons, the building was given two more names — the Sobrato Technology Center and Orradre Library — to incorporate some of the biggest donors, as well as different uses for the space, [former Vice Provost for Information Services and Chief Information Officer Ron] Danielson said. Lorry Lokey, the largest single donor, named the learning commons after his longtime companion, Joanne Harrington. The Sobrato family demonstrated an interest in the technological aspects of the building, so they were given the naming rights to the technology center. And Locatelli promised that the Orradre name, also the title of the former library, would continue to be associated with the library to recognize the family's longtime support of the university, Danielson said.

Grandly rising among green lawns, trees that come to life with new buds each spring, and quintessential palm trees, the jagged facade of the Learning Commons traverses the south side of campus at ninety degree increments, providing excellent sunlight and views to the students inside and without, while the roof line emits a jaunty feeling sitting at forty-five degree angles. Highlights of the building include the Norman F. Martin Reading Room on the third floor, used for the consultation of the holdings of Archives & Special Collections; the Automated Retrieval System, where the majority of the library's holdings are stored; three information literacy instructional labs and one lab for Academic Technology instruction; two audio-visual viewing rooms; over seventy-five computer terminals for drop-in use; 26 reservable rooms for group study; one enclosed room for silent study; the stately wood-paneled St. Clare Room, ideal for hosting large events and conferences; and two open-air patios with flexible furniture that take

advantage of Santa Clara's favorable climate. In total, the Library and Learning Commons provides more than 1,188 seats for users across a variety of settings.

Michel Orradre Library

In the 1960s, Santa Clara University underwent a building boom to enhance the layout of the university. Along with a new women's dormitory and stadium, SCU administration released plans to build the new Michel Orradre Library. This facility replaced the old Varsi Library, which was far too small and had been under criticism for its outdated design and technology for some time. Construction of the library began in April 1963, and the building was planned to have 65,000 square feet, which was three and a half times bigger than the size of Varsi Library. Along with having more space for studying and book stacks, the Michel Orradre Library also contained a reading room, public typing room, small conference room, catalog room, rare book room, and a periodicals room, in addition to a government documents area. The entire construction cost \$1.8 million dollars, and the library was named after California rancher and University regent Michel Orradre, who was a top donor for the project. The Orradre Library opened in 1964, the sixth new building to be built in the "building boom" of the early 1960s, and had a capacity for nearly seven hundred thousand volumes.