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Interview with Charles W. Moore

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Willamette Hall helps repair its site in several ways. The south facade (right) contributes to a more uniform streetwall along 13th Avenue; the wings on either side of the forecourt have different heights and architectural detailing so they appear to be discrete buildings. The west facade (below) helps define a courtyard.

Photo below by Timothy Hursley.

Right photo by Donlyn Lyndon.

What did you, as architects, bring to a project heavily influenced by user participation?

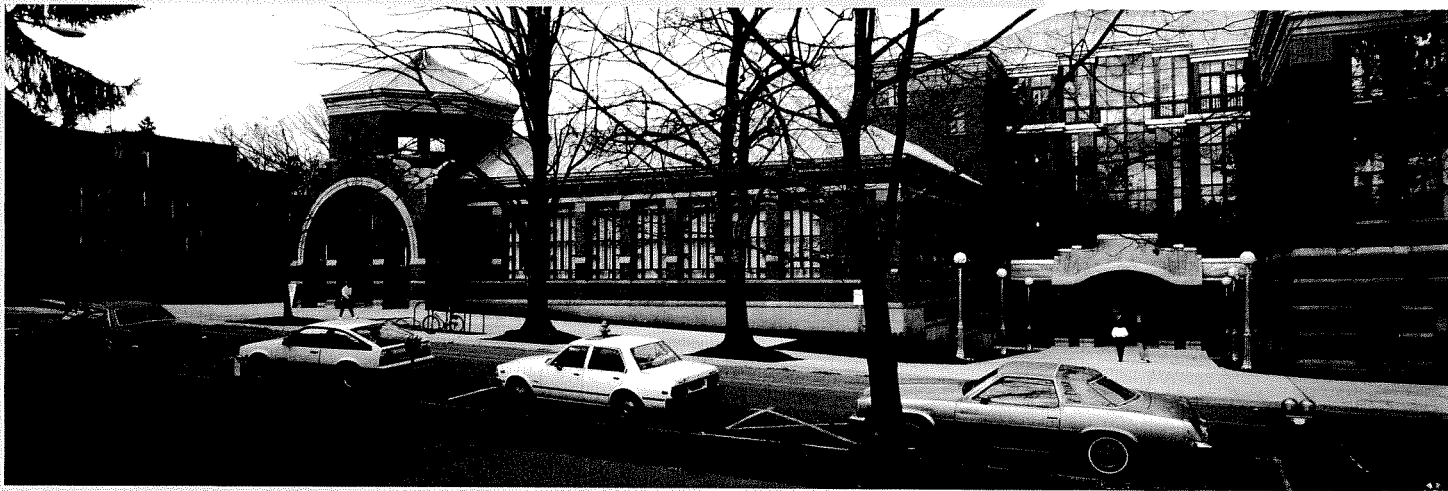
My special interest was in making buildings that fit the campus and had plausible relationships with the other buildings there. I shared what was, fortunately, a general preference for the older part of the campus over the part built in the 1960s, which included the science buildings. If I had not felt strongly about that I would have been in considerable trouble.

We focussed on creating buildings that would go with the older campus, soften the newer buildings and be part of 13th Avenue. It seemed to most of us designers and participants that 13th Avenue was abutted mostly by the “thin” or narrow ends of buildings. On the other hand, since what we were building would be much more dense than the early part of the campus, I was very anxious not to have buildings standing with wide sides to the street making the whole thing seem blocked up, without any breathing room.

I realize now that the designers came up with inventions. They seemed inevitable at the time. For example, we went to some lengths to make the porch along Willamette Hall open and small scaled, so it would scale down to the Volcanology Building on the other side of that courtyard. That way, we felt, the courtyard would be a gently scaled, clearly defined space that reaches back from 13th Avenue to another courtyard adjacent to the geology building.

I cannot say we did things like that specifically because we were told to by physics professors, but we did work in accord with the concerns that they expressed to us.





After we had established that basic relationship between Willamette Hall and the Volcanology building, we kept experimenting with the details. There were many people involved. Somebody would present an idea, then somebody else would react. I am not certain who came up with the final configuration, or when. But the courtyard stayed full of surprises; the change of grade and the steps were nurtured by various people.

What I especially like about those buildings is that they are so full of special places. They are often places that are willful or quirky, which is not bad. With that many buildings covering that much area, if the solution had been standard the buildings would have been boring and you would have lost your way very quickly. There were so many people involved that solutions did not get stamped out.

How did you work with *The Pattern Language*?

One of the excitements of designing the science complex was the opportunity, the adventure, of working with *The Pattern Language*, as adapted for the University. One strength of *The Oregon Experiment* is the importance it has in the minds of the Oregon faculty, particularly the architecture faculty.

I did and do admire *The Pattern Language*; I think it is at its best when it notes the common sense wisdoms architects generally forget — for instance, if there is a beautiful place on your site, it is better to stand aside and admire it than to wipe it out with a new building set on top of the admired green.

During this project I took *The Pattern Language* as more of a check than anything else. I never went through the book and tried to find a message about what to do. Most everyone involved was using *The Pattern Language*, not with fundamentalist blinders, but for the help it could give to keep the discussion

sane and helpful. We used *The Pattern Language* like a preacher uses the Bible — we did what worked out and used *The Pattern Language* to justify it.

I do not recall an instance in which *The Pattern Language* caused us not to do something we would otherwise have done — which is as it should be, because *The Pattern Language* is meant to be common sense, and we were using common sense, I'd like to think.

The Pattern Language is useful as a very general start, as a basis of a philosophy about how to proceed. It served in the background as a general instigator and it kept us honest. Eugene is a participatory place anyway, and *The Pattern Language* helped keep discussion open and colorful.

This text is edited from written comments by Moore and a conversation between Moore and Todd W. Bressi.

Credits

Engineers

Structural: PMB Systems Engineering, Bill Dasher, Sukomal Chakraborty, Rodrigo Santos, Richard Lundberg, Brian Wilson. *Mechanical:* Gayner Engineers, Grant Wong, Nick Mironov, Lloyd Byron, Silvan Peterhaus, Bill Stahl, Sheun Lo. *Electrical:* Cammisa & Wipf, Darrell Wipf, Mel Cammisa, Victor Wong, Bob Boyd. *Civil:* Balzhiser Hubbard, Dave Bomar.

Landscape Architects

Royston Hanamoto Alley & Ahey: Asa Hanamoto, Robert Royston, Dick Glanville, Masa Moriyama, Rick Strong, Manuela King. *Cameron and McCarthy:* Ron Cameron, Brian McCarthy, Larry Gilbert.

General Contractors

Cascade Hall: Robinson Construction Co.; *Willamette and Streisinger halls:* Wildish Building Co.; *Deschutes Hall:* Hyland & Sons, Inc.

Other Consultants

Laboratory Planner: McLellan & Copenhagen, Tom McLellan, Steve Copenhagen. *Cost Consultant:* Lee Saylor, Inc., Lee Saylor, Bill Cole. *Energy/Solar Planner:* Berkeley Solar Group, Bruce Wilcox, Joe Steinberger. *Conceptual Lighting Design:* Peters Clayberg & Caulfield, Dick Peters. *Acoustics:* Charles M. Salter & Associates, Charles Salter, David Schwind. *Codes:* Nolte & Associates, Michael Nolte. Rolf Jensen & Associates, Ray Grille.