Olin College is radically reinventing the Library space in Milas Hall. The future Library will be an active hub of student life and learning that embodies Olin’s pedagogy, values and spirit. It will be a welcoming stop at our “front door” - a high-impact entrance experience celebrating Olin’s unique culture.

This is a two phase project. We are first creating a new Reading Room, after which we will set out to reinvent the rest of the Library.

A Library reinvented?
While at once preserving and advancing broad information access and quiet study space, the new Olin Library will move beyond the traditional fixed programming and layout. It will be an agile, ever-evolving space accommodating a wide range of programming and services, traditional and new alike. We see the opportunity for our Library to be a beacon of innovation in keeping with the spirit of the college.

Why are you doing this?
This is a natural progression of both developing the distinctive learning culture at Olin and continuously improving the college as an educational laboratory devoted to experimentation. The current design is traditional and doesn’t reflect the interdisciplinary, innovative and collaborative learning culture of Olin. The Library space should be an environment for self-directed, innovative learning, an incubator for ideas and a home for tools for the rapid realization of those ideas.

Who wants this to happen?
The entire Olin community (alumni, students, faculty, parents and staff) has been calling for reimagining this space as the vibrant heart of the campus and event attendance has borne this out (see reverse).

What is going to happen in there?
The Library environment will be equally oriented towards consuming and creating knowledge. It will house a wide variety of resources – not just books and digitized information, but also shared tools, technologies and consumeable materials that allow for hands-on exploration, learning and creative expression. For example, it will include professional video equipment, engineering instruments, power tools, 3-D printers, electronic prototyping boards and more.

When is this going to happen?
In the next three months, Olin will embark on two exciting first steps of the project. By the end of the summer, we will complete a programming and vision statement for the new space. Then over the summer, we will be kickstarting the groundbreaking initiative with a pilot project to transform a small part of the library into a quiet study space that we’re calling the Reading Room.
This summer, 2015?
Yes, this summer, 2015! Construction on the Reading Room will start in July. The target date for completion is September; it will be completed and ready for use when students return to campus in the fall.

What is the Reading Room?
The Reading Room will be a quiet space for students seeking introspection, reflection and study. It will serve as an inspirational place where you can go to work and think in the presence of others.

Why is that what you’re doing first?
Students have asked for and will always need quiet space to focus and study. Creating a purpose-built refuge will ensure this for years to come. Students know that these spaces are available at other schools, that such a space is missing from the Olin campus, and that it will enhance their educational experience.

Where will it be and what will it look like?
It will be on the first floor, in the southeast corner of the Library in Milas Hall. There are large, floor-to-ceiling windows that look out over the campus, and it will be full of light and color.

What comes after the Reading Room?
While it may seem counter-intuitive, our process has revealed the first step to exploring a radical future for the Library is to preserve the past. By ensuring quiet space and the traditional library experience our students so value, we are able to explore new directions for the rest of the library.

• “How-To” Hub: From student-led microcontroller crash courses to professional digital media workshops, we envision students coming to the New Library not only “to learn,” but “to learn how.”

• Light Fabrication Studio: Light fabrication projects make up the majority of the curricular demands. The New Olin Library will wrangle the equipment, materials and personnel necessary to realize these projects in a collaborative, educational environment.

• Super-Curricular Amplifier: The Library will work with the community to host talks, produce events, stage hackathons, and accommodate design reviews to amplify & augment Olin’s mission and curriculum.

Erik Ryan, Leadership Gift Officer
781.292.2298, erik.ryan@olin.edu