

Building an Epicenter of Irish Culture

Spacesaver storage solutions help preserve Irish literature and foster a sense of community



THE CHALLENGE

The \$5 million dollar McClelland Irish Library took 18 months to complete and opened in October of 2012 in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. The 15,000 square foot, three-story building resembles a traditional 12th Century Norman castle from the Emerald Isle and is the only library of its kind in the Western United States, dedicated to Irish literature masterpieces.

This library is home to more than 5,000 works from Irish authors and artists, an ongoing exhibit of a rare, full-color reproduction of the Book of Kells, reading rooms and computer resources to access the library catalog and databases. In addition, the three-story building houses numerous genealogical research tools to discover more about Irish ancestry and offers classes devoted to Irish music and dance.

Due to the multifaceted nature of the library, a variety of unique storage solutions were needed to house the plethora of Irish works and genealogical resources. It was essential that these books, materials, technology and tools were easily accessible by patrons, as well as integrated into the "old world" environment that the library sought to emulate, all while maintaining room for future growth of the collection.

THE SOLUTION

Interior Solutions, the authorized Spacesaver Representative in Phoenix, worked closely with the principal designer, Nina Sheriff, the Irish Cultural Center's Board, and Norman McClelland, the Library's namesake, to ensure the project carefully blended modern elements and functionality with historical features.

To incorporate a more durable storage solution for the numerous Irish works, steel shelving was implemented into the project and complemented with wood features that match the wood trim and furniture pieces within the building. Rows of Irish literature are now nestled in Spacesaver cantilever shelving with custom wood end panels, which integrate well with the other historical pieces in the Library. Multi-media materials are now stored within drawers and rolling boxes mounted on 4-post shelving and archives are housed on wide-span shelving. Tapestries and large pieces of artwork are hung on Spacesaver ceiling-mounted art racks.





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The Library hosts an ongoing exhibit of a rare, full-color reproduction of the Book of Kells.

"It was challenging to balance the requirements of modern technology with an old world feel, but that is what we were able to accomplish," said Matt Gawin, sales representative for Interior Solutions.

STORAGE SOLVED

"Ireland has a long and rich history of culture, defeats and victories," said Norman McClelland, CEO of Shamrock Foods, the library's namesake and founder. McClelland grew up the son of Irish immigrants, working on his father's dairy farm in Arizona.

"This library will help preserve that history."

To him, the purpose of the Library is two fold: to help people of Celtic heritage and descent research their family's ancestry while also serving as an epicenter of Irish culture, meant to educate not only the Irish but people of all backgrounds.

The front entrance contains a stirring recreation of a limestone archway, a masterpiece of past Irish civilization. Frank McCormack, a master stonemason from Ireland, helped create the Celtic design on the edges of the stone archways, modeled after a doorway at the former St. Brigid's Church, a 10th century structure on Holy Island in Ireland.

The brick-and-stone Heritage Clós (courtyard) contains a map of Ireland's 32 counties, and hosts a stone sculpture memorial to the Great Famine. It is bordered by the Center's Great Hall and Cottage. The Great Hall includes an expansive multipurpose space and the Cottage houses a rare, numerous cultural artifacts and an Irish gift shop.

"It's more than a library; its a community arts center," said Chas Moore, Head Librarian of the McClelland Irish Library.

Future initiatives for the library include hosting Irish-oriented events including festivals, movie screenings and showcases of Irish art within the walls of the Library.

The McClelland Irish Library is a great example of effective space allocation and storage planning. Not only is the Library able to house the multitude of Irish books and materials, but, perhaps most importantly, this space has begun serving as a community center and not just a "library." Spacesaver is proud to be a part of this architectural treasure.

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