

Base Library Upgrade Improves Visibility, Access, and Community Use

CHALLENGE

On a military installation in South Carolina, the base library was facing a challenge familiar across many modern military communities: the way people used the space had changed, but the building hadn't.

Originally designed around densely packed book storage, the library featured tall shelving, narrow aisles, and limited visibility. Meeting spaces were constrained, seating was dated, and staff had difficulty monitoring activity across the floor. The layout made it harder for families, young readers, and service members to find what they needed or gather for programs.

The shift from "book warehouse" to community hub was underway across the military, and this library needed to follow suit. Opening up the floor plan wasn't simply about aesthetics. It was about improving accessibility, creating flexible space for programs, and supporting the thousands of people who use the library each year.

SOLUTION

Working within Air Force parameters, Patterson Pope partnered with the library staff to modernize the space while respecting its existing mission. The team began by streamlining the collection, reducing it by roughly 15%. Many items were relocated to a sister library on a neighboring installation, ensuring they remained accessible to the broader community.

With inventory optimized, attention turned to visibility and flow. The maximum shelf height was lowered from 82 inches to 60 inches, dramatically improving sightlines and making it easier for staff to monitor the space.

Repurposed cantilever shelving was refreshed with wood end panels, creating a cohesive, warm look that felt more like a modern bookstore than an institutional stack room.

A custom-designed circulation desk became the new focal point of the library, anchoring the entryway and providing staff with better workspace, storage, and visibility. The refreshed layout also created clearer pathways, improved ADA access, and opened new opportunities for programming and flexible seating.

"We opened the newly renovated library just after Thanksgiving, and it's been a wonderful transformation," said the library director. "We serve thousands of people each year, and this space really reflects their needs now."



ACHIEVEMENT

The renovation delivered a brighter, more accessible library that better supports the military community it serves. Open seating and lower shelves made navigation easier for families and new patrons. The updated circulation desk improved daily workflow for staff, while the refreshed layout created a more inviting environment for reading, studying, and group activities.

"I've worked with Patterson Pope before, and they've always been great," the director added. "They're available, helpful, and responsive. I never had to worry about something not being addressed."

What was once a crowded, aging layout became a flexible and modern library ready to grow with the needs of the installation. The transformation strengthened the library's role as a central, active resource for service members, families, and the wider base community.

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