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## Room to Read

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# Special Collections *Flyer*

## Room to Read

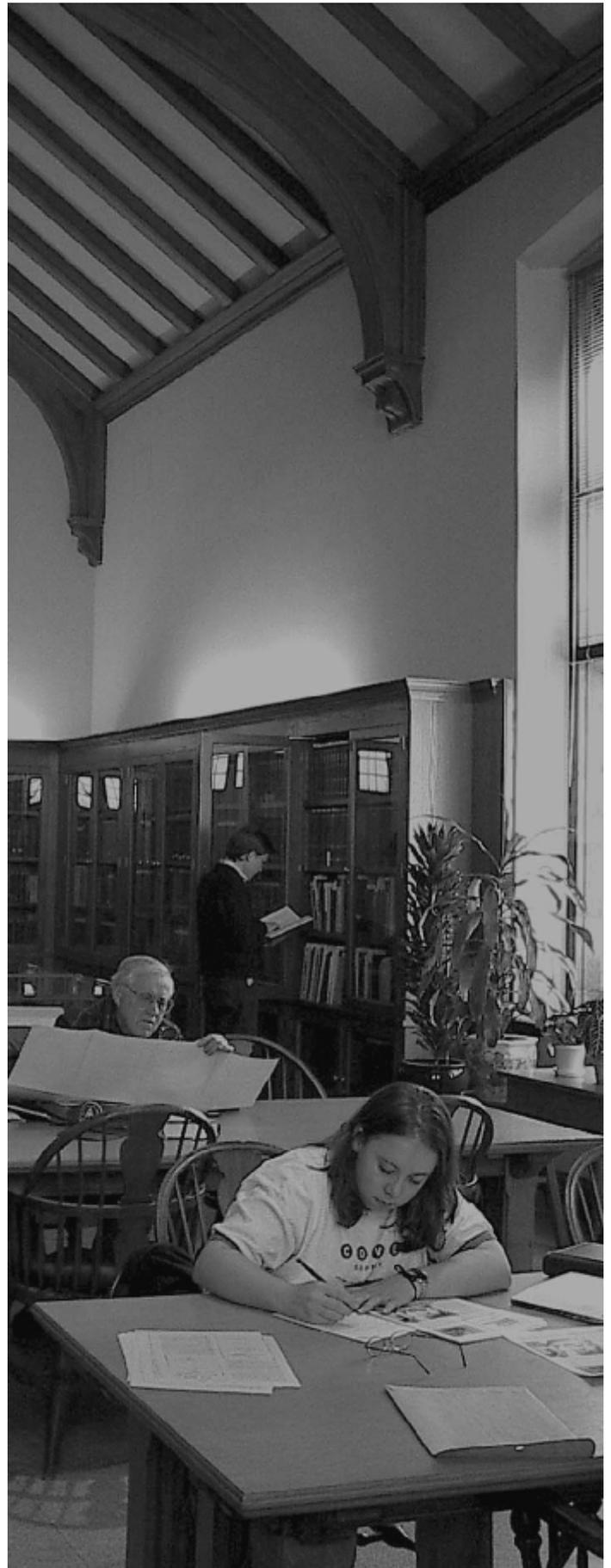
With plans underway for Linderman Library's revitalization, this is an appropriate moment to highlight a very successful revitalization from the past: the creation of the Bayer Galleria of Rare Books as a reading room for Special Collections.

In any special collections, the most crucial element is, of course, the collection. An abundance of material of use to scholars and students must be present, and as you've been discovering in these Special Collections Flyers, Lehigh University is quite fortunate in this regard.

But there's another element, the reading space for the collection, which is also important. Since special collections materials, for reasons of scarcity and value, do not circulate, the place where readers encounter documents is, by necessity, the reading room. The room's ambiance: its lighting, appearance – the message the room sends about how the institution values serious scholarship – are all aspects which are important in the conception of a reading room.

The room which is presently the Bayer Galleria started life as an art gallery in the 1929 addition to the original Linderman Library. There are a few pho-

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tographs of the room in its original condition, showing plaster copies of Greek statues and unidentifiable paintings.

What sort of art exhibitions were featured over the



Curtis F. Bayer and family at dedication of Bayer Galleria in 1985.

years is not well recorded, but in the 1950s or 1960s, in a search for more administrative space, the room was subdivided with metal partitioning and a suspended ceiling was installed. The room, in all its beauty, for all intents and purposes, disappeared.

In the early 1980s, after the decision was made to revitalize the position of Special Collections at the University, the former art gallery presented itself as a nearly ideal solution to the problem of finding a reading room.

At the same time, Curtis F. Bayer, '35, presented himself as a benefactor. The Galleria project, along with the creation of the Bayer Family Room across the hall, appealed to this most loyal son of Lehigh, and he provided the funds for a thorough and effective remodeling, which was completed in November 1985.

Both rooms remain a lasting and potent memorial to Mr. Bayer.

The Bayer Galleria of Rare Books serves two inter-related functions. As mentioned, it provides comfortable space for the use of the wide variety of materials available in Special Collections, from historical documents relating to the University, to folio plate books of 19th century engineering.

In addition, the room offers effective space for exhibition of Special Collections materials. Displays of aspects of the collections are mounted on a rotating

basis.

One of the most notable features of the room is the high quality ambient light, which consists of carefully controlled natural light from large windows reinforced with incandescent and fluorescent lighting in the ceiling.

Visitors who come to the Bayer Galleria, whether to check a quick reference, spend days or weeks examining materials, or just view an exhibition, may not be conscious of the room's lighting.

They do react, however, to the architecture of the room. I've been told many times how pleasant a place it is to work in. Readers who come from off campus also express a wider appreciation for the value Lehigh places on humanities scholarship.

Professor of English Barbara Traister, whose class in editing recently completed a project which required



A class meets in the Galleria (photo by John Kish)

frequent meetings in the Galleria, praised its quiet, well-lit ambiance, noting that the students said they felt "different" and "special" when they met in the room.

Please pay us a visit and see for yourselves. – P.A.M.

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*Special Collections materials are available for research and consultation without restriction. For further information contact Philip A. Metzger, Curator of Special Collections, or Ilhan Citak, Special Collections Assistant. Reading room hours are Monday through Friday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. Telephone: (610) 758-4506; fax (610) 758-6091; e-mail: inspc@lehigh.edu*