

# \$11.6 million library expansion nearly complete at ASU

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JONESBORO — A peek from the heights of the bell tower in the newly built Dean B. Ellis Library at Arkansas State University provides one of the best views in Northeast Arkansas.

The library is Jonesboro's tallest building and holds the material for university students to achieve educational peaks they had perhaps not before dreamed possible.

Work on the 264,000-square-foot, eight-story building is complete, with the exception of final touches on the top three floors. Workers are preparing the conference room for the anticipated Wednesday meeting of the board of trustees, which will move out of the close confines of the administration building into the spacious eighth floor.

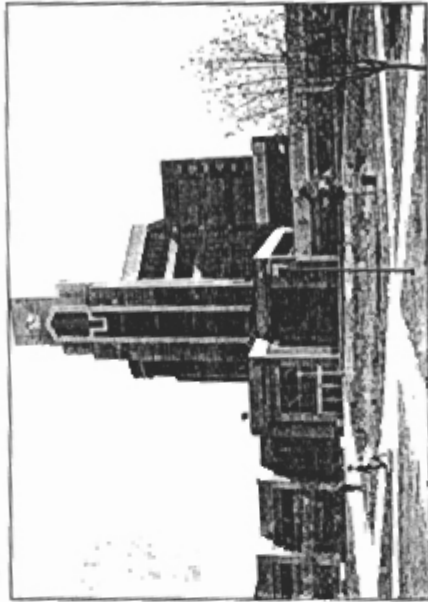
On top of the building, the 70-foot bell tower houses four copper bells cast in southern France. They ring every 15 minutes. ASU officials have secured seven additional bells for the

tower. The lower places the total height of the library at the equivalent of a 19-story building. When construction, engineered by Jonesboro architects Jerry Brackett and George Krennerich, began in 1992, the building was three stories tall. Total cost of the expansion is projected at \$11.6 million.

After funding was secured, mainly through the 1990 Arkansas College Savings Bond Act, university officials decided to build onto and on top of the present library instead of relocating. That created a visual centerpiece not only for the university, but the community.

The marbled floor in the entrance lobby bears ASU's insignia, with spiral staircases to each side. Above is a large skylight, framed by 54 flags that represent the nationalities of the students who attend ASU. The flags will be changed with each year's class.

Eugene Smith, ASU's interim president, said, "Basically we



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**TALLEST BUILDING IN TOWN** — The new Dean B. Ellis Library at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro is now the tallest building in the city. The view from the top of the bell tower of the eight-story building is expansive.

are nearing completion with the more than 1.3 million books and building (which opened Aug. 8) documents.

When Smith walked the ASU and are in the settling-in period." Included in that settling in was campus as a student in the late 1940s, the library was in the the moving and organizing of

basement of Wilson Hall, the university's English building. The current library, which has undergone renovation, was built in 1961, while Smith was a faculty member. He also was president when the expansion was conceived in the mid-1980s before his initial retirement in June 1992.

"That was a great day for the institution, and it will be just as grand when we dedicate the expansion," Smith said. "When I the 1961 construction. "When I graduated, there were 763 students here, and the institution has been in a steady growth period" with nearly 10,000 students enrolled in the fall semester. "I think over the years the library has been a key factor in that."

Bill Hansard, library director for 13 years, said research materials, an audiovisual department, reference area and general collections make up the majority of the first five floors. The sixth and seventh floors currently are being used for storage. The eighth floor will hold the conference room.