

Restoring the Waring Historical Library at MUSC

The building that houses the Medical University of South Carolina's Waring Historical Library was built in 1894 as the library for the Porter Military Academy. It served in that role until the university purchased land from the Porter Academy in the 1960s.



In the late 1960s, the library began housing the rare book and special collections and was named after the first director, Dr. Joseph I. Waring, an author and professor of pediatrics at MUSC

starting in 1927. Today, it is home to the Medical University's rare book and special collections, including the original library collection and meeting minutes of the Medical Society of South Carolina, books covering the history of the Atlantic Medical World in the 18th and 19th centuries, and records documenting the history of health sciences in South Carolina and the South. The library is on the National Register of Historic Places and is considered the finest example of Neo Gothic architecture in Charleston, which has few examples of that style in the whole city.

An invaluable building, in critical need

Although it is one of the oldest buildings on campus, the Waring Historical Library has not received any apparent structural attention since the university acquired it in the 1960s. Given its historical significance and the value of its collections, we are increasingly concerned about the building's declining condition.

Among its deficiencies:

- The overall lighting is poor.
- The wiring is old and insufficient, with exposed cords running across the floor.
- Its fire suppression system is outdated. There is only one exit if it deploys.
- The restroom and second floor are not accessible to people with disabilities.
- It is not reliably climate controlled, putting valuable documents at risk.
- There is inadequate space for storage, meetings or events.
- The ceiling, walls, doors, floors and window casings are all damaged.
- Rodents and water intrusion are constant problems. When storms threaten, we cover the shelves and windows with plastic sheeting.

For these reasons, we are seeking philanthropic funding to help pay for the Waring Historical Library's restoration, updating and overall improvement.

Our vision for the future

Our vision is to create an environment for the reliable preservation of our history, while also setting the stage for an expanded use of the Waring Historical Library in the future.

To that end, we will:

- Install a modern fire suppression system.
- Update electrical systems and technologies.
- Reconfigure and update the HVAC system, improving temperature and humidity conditions.
- Install window covers/inserts for hurricane and disaster safety.
- Install new lighting throughout the library.
- Create more shelf space for the collection
- Create more open space to accommodate student, faculty and staff use.
- Create a second entrance/exit to improve access and safety.
- Install a lift for access to the second floor.
- Create a records processing room and conference/presentation space.
- Remove metal screens from the first-floor windows.
- Repair and restore the original shelving on the first floor.
- Repair windows, floors, walls and ceiling on the second floor.
- Install a new front door.
- Create a separate, ADA-accessible restroom.
- Add a ladder and rail on the second floor for access to books.

Costs and funding needs

These repairs and updates are projected to cost an estimated \$1.2 million. Of this amount, the Medical University has committed to provide \$900,000 from its deferred maintenance fund. The remaining \$300,000 must be provided through fundraising.

The Medical University invites all those with an interest in the preservation of medical history to partner with us, as we embark on this important endeavor. Significant contributions in support of this restoration will be recognized on a special donor wall to be displayed within the library. We also are offering a limited number of naming opportunities within the facility.

For more information about giving opportunities and our efforts to restore the Waring Historical Library, please contact Linda Cox at 843-792-4282, coxl@musc.edu. To make a gift in support of the restoration, please visit fundraise.musc.edu/waring or scan the QR code below.

