1. Statement of Significance

The Murray Building, designed by noted Regina architect Kioshi Izumi working under H.K. Black Architect, was built between 1954-56. It is architecturally significant as one of the first Modernist buildings constructed at the University of Saskatchewan, and the first to use a full structural steel frame. (The Heating Plant, constructed at the same time, is also in the Modern style). Architecturally, it is also notable that at the moment of transition between the historicist impulse of the Collegiate Gothic and the modernist idiom of the Murray Building, a decision was made to continue the use of ‘greystone’ and Tyndall stone as the principal exterior materials. The Murray Building is also significant as the university’s first formal library building. Prior to its construction, the library collection was located in the MacKinnon Building or scattered in smaller...
libraries throughout the campus.
The Murray Memorial Library, as it was originally named, was built in honor of the university’s first president, Walter C. Murray. Murray died in 1945 never having seen his university build a library. After his death, a memorial fund was started in his honor with the purpose of constructing a library. The Murray Building represents the fruits of the memorial fund and a tribute to Walter Murray.

A large addition to the Murray Building was constructed to the south of the original building between 1972-74. The ‘South Wing’ addition is beyond the scope of this report. The Murray Building is configured with its floors numbered ground floor, first floor, second floor etc...

2. Character - Defining Elements

2.1 Materials

Although the Murray Building is designed in the Modern style, a conscious decision was made not to discard historic campus materials and scale. The exterior materials of the building include greystone, Tyndall stone and granite (Figures 1 & 2). Greystone and Tyndall stone, by this time, were firmly established as a unifying feature of the University of Saskatchewan campus. The Murray Building honoured this tradition, but re-imagined the meanings of these materials in the way they are expressed. Whereas earlier, greystone was used in a structural capacity, to support the weight of the building, here it is used as a non-structural cladding. Because the stone wall is no longer structural, the architect is free to arrange the elements of the wall at will. Formerly, Tyndall stone, was used for trim and decoration, particularly around individual windows. Here it is also used in conjunction with windows, but rather than serving to accentuate individual openings, it is used in the form of spandrel panels, to unify and define larger blocks of fenestration. Decoration is omitted, but large areas of window

Figure 3. A 1955 sketch by Professor Les Saunders depicts the Murray Building shortly after completion. Photo 2069-29-4, retrieved from http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/postcards/permalink/34240
and wall are used as elements in a carefully designed composition. (For further information on building stones used at the U of S, refer to ‘Appendix: Stone’.)

Materials are also used in the design of the Murray Building to articulate and differentiate volumes as elements of a formal composition. For example, a large volume of smooth cut Tyndall stone turns the north-east corner, facing ‘The Bowl,’ to mark the main entrance (Figure 8). Large slabs of polished pink granite also highlight the entrance, which is accessed by a set of stone steps (Figures 2 & 4). The pink granite also extends past the glazed entry doors into the foyer. These intersections of volumes and extensions of materials are a common device within Modernism, which sought ways to use the innate characteristics of materials and shapes to express architectural ideas, rather than using applied decoration and symbols. The elevations of the 1955 Murray Building are particularly skillful in their design, and their principal materials - greystone, Tyndall stone and granite - are all character-defining materials.

The interior of the building has been substantially modified; however, some of the original materials remain. The areas with the greatest material commemorative integrity are on the third and fourth floor. These areas still retain their original maple doors, wainscoting and dado rails as shown in Figure 5. There are also original maple framed chalkboards on these floors (Figure 6) as well as some study coves, tables and chairs which will be discussed in later sections. The condition of the maple materials is excellent where it exists; on the upper floors of the library portion and in the Saskatchewan Archives space. Maple is a character-defining element of the Murray Building.

Flooring in the Murray Building originally consisted of either vinyl composite tile (VCT) or terrazzo. Both still exist sporadically throughout the building. The staircases have all retained their terrazzo landings. The existing terrazzo has a high degree of commemorative integrity and is a character-defining material (Figure 7).

2.2 Form & Style

The design of the Murray Building represents a radical change in the architecture of the University of Saskatchewan. Compare, for example, the modernist design of the Murray Library with the historicist approach taken with the design of the Memorial Union Building; these two buildings, so different in character, are exact contemporaries. Modernist architecture is characterized generally by the removal of applied ornament in favour of an articulation of material qualities, the manipulation of form and
Figure 8. Architect’s sketch of the Murray Building, 1954. Photo A-5962, retrieved from http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/uofs_buildings/

Figure 9. Elevations of the Murray Building. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File MM-52-T.
the expression of function. Decorative elements tend to be abstract and geometric rather than figural or representational. The expression of material qualities and the formal composition of the building are discussed in Section 2.1 above.

Architects of the Modern period were interested in expanding the expressive range of forms, and this impulse led to designs that were no longer bound by conventions of symmetrical composition. The asymmetry of the Murray Building, in the arrangement of its forms and its elevations, is characteristic of the period. In form, the Murray Building is a composition of large rectilinear volumes. Figure 8 illustrates the play between a 4-storey greystone-clad volume on the north-west corner, intersecting with a three-storey volume to the south, mediated by the Tyndall stone entrance volume. The projections and intersections of these volumes are character-defining elements.

In elevation, the greystone, Tyndall stone and glazing are treated as discrete elements reinforcing the asymmetry of the form. The entrance volume is marked by large surfaces of smooth Tyndall stone, uninterrupted by windows except at the entry level. The entry is located at the corner, rather than in the centre of a wall as it generally was in earlier Collegiate Gothic buildings (Figure 9).

The design of the windows and the exterior steel balustrades that mimic them are examples of the abstract decoration typical of Modernist architecture of the period, and are character-defining features. The windows are functional elements, but through the alternating repetition of their frames, they take on a decorative quality. The design of the exterior hand railings repeats the same device (Figures 10 & 11).

Although the style of the building differs from those built earlier around The Bowl, the scale of the Murray Building is in keeping with its surroundings. The scale of the building, at three to four storeys, is a character-defining element.

\[ 2.4 \text{ Location} \]

The Murray Building is located on The Bowl, at its south-west end. As such, it is integral in shaping this prominent outdoor space (Figure 12). The 1972-74 addition to the building extended its floor plate south.
2.5 Spatial Configuration

Technological changes, such as the use of concrete and steel structures and the adoption of electric lighting, permitted changes in the form and spatial configuration of buildings, although sometimes these effects took several years to manifest themselves. The Murray Building illustrates one such change in its use of deep floor plates. Previously, buildings tended to have narrow floors permitting windows in most rooms. Artificial lighting allowed buildings to be designed with larger floor areas. As a large university library, the function of the building lent itself to this form; books could be stored in rows of stacks that did not require access to windows. The general spatial configuration suggested by this approach was for floors arranged with stack space at their core, and a ring of offices and study spaces around the perimeter. Larger floor plates also permitted larger rooms and open plan configurations. These configurations characterize the original design of the Murray Building (Figures 13-15).

Figure 13. Ground floor plan. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 053-4-T.
Figure 14. First floor plan. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 053-3-T.

Figure 15. Second floor plan. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 053-2-T.
The spatial configuration of the Murray Building has been significantly altered by numerous interior reconfigurations and its interiors maintain little heritage value. The layout of the building has been fragmented with the piecemeal allocation of parts of the building to library uses and parts to the Department of Art & Art History. The result has been a division of the building characterized by a lack of access and interconnection. Figures 16 through 18 show the results of the 1973 reconfiguration to accommodate the Arts Department in the building.

The Saskatchewan Archives is still located in the building’s ground floor and retains its commemorative integrity. Its layout has scarcely been changed. Figure 13 shows the original ground floor plan with the archival space in the lower left.

All of the staircases are original to the building.

Figure 16. Ground floor plan after 1973 renovation. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 053-512-T.
Figure 17. First floor plan after 1973 renovation. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 053-511-T.

Figure 18. Second floor plan after 1973 renovation. Retrieved from Facilities Management Division Asset Record System, File 053-510-T.


Figure 20. A student uses the library in the MacKinnon Building, 1940. Photo A-3427, retrieved from http://scaa.usask.ca/gallery/uofs_events/articles/1956.php
2.6 Systems

Although steel structural elements had been used previously in conjunction with other structural systems, the Murray Building marks the first use of a complete steel structural frame at the University of Saskatchewan (Figure 19). Concrete floor slabs are supported by open web steel joists spanning between steel beams. The exterior greystone walls are a veneer, supported on steel angles fixed back to the steel structure. The stone is laid up against backing walls of cast-in-place concrete or clay tile, but the backing walls are supported by the steel frame.

Having been constructed as a library, the Murray Building’s structural system also had to take into account the additional live load attributed to books. A myth circulates that the architects of the Murray Building failed to take into account the weight of the books in the building’s design. In the 1970’s students used this logic to explain why a new library was being built directly adjacent to the old one. In fact, the original drawings correctly note the required live load, and the building is structurally sound. The new library was built simply to accommodate the rapid growth of the university.

2.7 Use(s)

The Murray Building was the first purpose-built library at the University of Saskatchewan, although other buildings contained library collections prior to its construction. The first library collection was housed in the MacKinnon Building and other collections were held in smaller departmental libraries throughout the campus. Figure 20 shows the early library in the MacKinnon Building. The Murray Building was also built to accommodate the College of Law, the provincial archives and a 105 seat lecture theatre that was state of the art in its audiovisual provisions at the time. Figures 21 and 22 show the old library card catalogue and the Special Collections area. Figure 23 shows the Saskatchewan Archives.

Between 1972 and 1974 a new six floor building was added to the south side of the Murray Building and for a time became known as the Main Library. The Main Library took over many of the original functions of the Murray Building; the circulation desk and much of the book collection was moved into the new addition.
In the mid 1970’s a series of renovations prepared the Murray Building for use by the Department of Art and Art History. This saw the division of the building between library and art department. The ground floor of the western portion and the second and third floors of the eastern portion came to be used for art education and exhibition (Figure 24). The use of the building for art and art history is not original, but it has been in place for almost forty years.

The consistent use of the Murray Building as a library is character-defining.

2.8 Cultural & Chronological Associations

The Murray Building can be associated with its namesake, the first president of the university, Walter Murray. Murray was appointed president in 1908 and remained in office until his retirement in 1937. He is well remembered for his vision of a ‘people’s university.’ Walter Murray passed away in 1945. After his death, a memorial fund was set up in his name for the purpose of building a library, resulting in the construction of the Murray Memorial Library. Figure 25 illustrates the unveiling of Murray’s portrait at the opening of the building.

The Murray Building can also be associated with the history of the library system at the University of Saskatchewan. The library began loaning books in 1909 from the second floor of the MacKinnon Building and expanded into small departmental libraries scattered across the university. As the first purpose-built library building, the Murray Building unified and consolidated the library system.

Arthur Silver Morton was the first university librarian and served in this capacity between 1914 and 1940. Morton was also the first provincial archivist from 1937 until 1945. He was instrumental in the decision to allocate space at the University of Saskatchewan to the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Annie Maude (Nan) McKay, the first Mètis and first Aboriginal woman to graduate from the University of Saskatchewan, worked as Assistant Librarian at the University Library between 1915 and 59 (Figure 28).

The third of five children, Nan was born October 10, 1892, at Fort à la Corne, Northwest Territories to an English Mètis family. In 1912, she won a $200 entrance scholarship, which enabled her to attend the university. Nan took a very active part in student life at the university, working on The Sheaf student newspaper, serving as a member of the Students Representative Council’s (SRC) executive committee, as secretary of the campus YWCA and as secretary of the Literary Society. She also played ice hockey.
for university teams. After graduating, she served the assistant librarian at the University Library until 1959. She died on July 27, 1986, at the age of 93.

3. Associated Objects

The Murray Building has retained much of its original furniture. Maple chairs and tables are still used throughout the building and the addition.

Two plaques on the Murray Building honor Walter Murray, and Arthur Silver Morton (Figures 26 & 27).

Figure 26. Plaque dedicated to Walter Murray and family.

Figure 27. Plaque dedicated to Arthur Silver Morton.

Figure 28. Annie (Nan) McKay, first Aboriginal woman graduate of the university, and Assistant Librarian from 1915 to 1959. (Image: University of Saskatchewan Library).
4. Supporting Documents


5. Summary of Character - Defining Elements

Materials
- greystone walls
- Tyndall stone trim, spandrel panels and soffit
- granite wall panels
- maple doors and surrounds
- terrazzo flooring
- expansive glazing

Form & Style
- planar facades
- large cubic volumes
- asymmetrical composition
- intersecting volumes and materials
- lack of ornamentation
- repetition of elements, such as windows
- alternating pattern of window frames, used as a decorative element

Location
- the Bowl

Spatial Configuration
- deep floor plates
- open plan library stacks
- study rooms and coves
- lecture theatre
- Saskatchewan Archives
- staircases

Uses
- library
- College of Law
- Saskatchewan Archives
- art education, practice and display

Cultural & Chronological Associations
- President Walter Murray
- History of the U of S library system
- Arthur Silver Morton, first librarian