

# Havens: Students Mourn Carrels' Last Days

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"Right now, they're like glorified phone booths," is about the best that John Axcelson, assistant dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences has to say of the study carrels on the 7th, 8th, and 9th floors of Butler Library. Come October, the construction workers already at work on Butler will renovate those floors, and the rows of claustrophobia chambers will see the light.

Yes, they're tiny. Yes, they're dark. Yes, graduate students have to tack up cloth, or in one case, a huge Texas flag, to cover damaged walls and see-through doors. And yes, some students love them. But it's a love tinged with hate.

Jennifer L. Foray, now in her sixth year of graduate school in the history department, has made room 819 something of a second home for the past two years. But she's not too sorry to see it go.

"It's nice to have a place, but my life isn't going to end without it there," she said, adding that the room's wooden chair has been less than kind to her back during long hours of studying.

Foray's introduction to 819 wasn't perfect, either.

"I opened the desk drawer, and inside was a pair of women's underwear," Foray said. "A lot of people talk about bugs, but that was probably the nastiest story I've heard."

This event points to something else that may be lost with the renovations. Every college seems to have its library lore, but the open-style study rooms, which will replace some of the current carrels, might leave something lacking in the way of privacy.

"It's actually nice," said Foray of the current setup, "because you know you can seclude yourself. There's a place you can go where you won't be tempted by e-mail, or anything else."

To spruce things up, Foray covered the walls with photos and postcards. She also brought in a stereo to drown out noise from the hallway, "or to listen to the news so I could remember I was part of this world."

Room 819's access to the roof of Butler might also be a thing of the past. Graduate students have been known to use the roof to make phone calls, smoke, drink, and converse, but Axcelson says he can't promise that the new rooms will open onto the roof.

The construction is scheduled to finish in March, but until then, the legendary English student who set up house in his carrel after getting kicked out of his apartment, will have to start working the circulation desk.