

Ransom Center undergoes exterior renovation



A worker power-washes the exterior of the Harry Ransom Center on Thursday afternoon. Along with the revamping of the exterior, the H.R.C. plans to renovate the interior by adding better means of climate control to preserve the expensive collection of artifacts.

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By [Leila Ruiz](#)

The Harry Ransom Center is currently undergoing exterior renovations, the first outdoor maintenance on the archive and museum building since it was built in the early 1970s.

The \$400,000 project, which is entirely funded by the UT System's Library Equipment Repair and Rehabilitation Fund, will clean the building exterior and replace or repair damaged seals, mortar joints and window gaskets. Although the age of the building and time since renovations do not add complications to the project by University standards, the recent cold weather has made the work more difficult, especially when re-pointing joint panels, according to project director Sang Lee.

“Compared to other buildings in UT main campus, [the] about 40-year-old HRC building is a kind of a young building,” Lee said. “Joint material is mortar, and to install mortar, temperature has to be above certain temperature ... All those cold days prevented contractors from working, so the schedule is pushed back.”

Lee said although the building might look brighter because of power-washing, there will be no other visible changes to the exterior appearance of the building.

Jennifer Tisdale, director of public affairs for the center, said staff members monitor the building to assess when renovations are necessary. The center's first two floors and basement were renovated in 2003, and a roof replacement, sprinkler installation and creation of a cold storage and low humidity vault for acetate film have all been completed in the past decade, Tisdale said.

"As with all buildings, maintenance is an ongoing process," Tisdale said. "Collection acquisitions have also been supported by [Library Equipment Repair and Rehabilitation Fund] funding, including the acquisition of J.M. Coetzee's archive and Julia Alvarez's archive."

Tisdale said upcoming renovations include an upgrade to the Center's Prothro Theater, as well as the replacement of the building's heating and cooling system, which will be funded by the University.

"The staff is trying to preserve the items by keeping the building to a certain humidity point and temperature so that the items will not be damaged," said Jim Janknegt, the center's building manager.

The renovations will serve to better insulate the center's collections, which are valued at about \$1.4 billion. The Ransom Center's tools, such as a clean steam humidifier and the cold storage and low humidity vault, further allow more specific temperatures for preserving artifacts.