

C.J. Erickson Anticipates Needs of Future Scientists with Jay R. Smith Specialty Products

C.J. Erickson Plumbing Co. took on the complex task of installing plumbing systems not only to meet the individual needs of an exacting group of tenants already scheduled to move in, but also to anticipate the needs of unknown future tenants. The new William Eckhardt Research Center at the University of Chicago will offer

world-class scientific research facilities, and thanks to C.J. Erickson and Jay R. Smith Mfg. Co., those facilities are prepared for just about anything.

The William Eckhardt Research Center is a 277,000-gross-square-foot facility with five above-grade floors, basement, and subbasement. The building will

house offices, conference rooms, and laboratories for the university's Division of Physical Sciences units, including the Astronomy and Astrophysics Department, the Kavli Institute for Cosmological Studies, and the Enrico Fermi Institute. It will also house the university's new program in molecular engineering, providing offices, conference rooms, an 11,000-square-foot clean room, and specialized laboratory and imaging facilities.

Making Adjustments

Because of the complexity of the project and all the entities involved, the design phase alone was a five-year project. C.J. Erickson got involved in 2012. Among the many challenges with this project was the base of the structure. The five above-grade floors and the two subfloors sit on a 3' slab of concrete. C.J. Erickson had to encase all the piping within that slab so that if the building settled, the plumbing would settle along with it.

C.J. Erickson digitally mapped out the area. Using 3D modeling, they set up a grid that included all the field layout points. When construction began, they laid and suspended all the piping, and the concrete slab was poured over the piping.

Another challenge was in the design of the plumbing for the two floors of laboratory space. Dan Whitehead, project manager for C. J. Erickson, said the designs for individual laboratories were shown to the researchers who would use them.

"Each researcher came in with very specific and special needs, so we had to go back and design the space for each of those researchers. We constantly had to pause and make adjustments," said Whitehead.

All parties involved decided that even though the process may have been slower up front, having the

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C.J. Erickson used acid-resistant pipes from Jay R. Smith Mfg. Co. throughout a new scientific research center to ensure that all researchers, regardless of the work they were doing, would have the appropriate plumbing in their lab space.



To accommodate any building settling, C.J. Erickson encased all the piping within the concrete slab of the base. They used 3D modeling to set up a grid with all the field layout points. Then all the piping was laid and suspended, and the concrete slab was poured over the piping.

Tips from WennSoft for Getting the Most Out of Your Existing Software

When a business has been using the same software system for years, it is easy for employees to get trapped in a cycle of doing things the way they have always done things. It does not occur to them that there are different—and sometimes better—ways to tailor their software to fit their needs.

When a software system is first implemented, it is designed to meet the needs of the business at that time. But soon, two things happen. First, the software changes. Most software companies are continuously improving their software and often provide free upgrades. The improvements typically include a lot of newer functionality. Second, the needs of businesses change. A function that was not needed just a few years ago may now be the company's key to success.

When it comes to discovering previously unused features of your software, how do you figure out what is available and what could be of the most benefit to your company? First, step back and

look at your software as if you were buying it for the first time. Does it fit the needs of your company today? Where are your areas of greatest inefficiencies? Here are a few other ways to educate yourself about all the features of your existing software:

Take advantage of online demonstrations and e-learnings provided by your software vendor. Even executives should periodically reeducate themselves about how their systems can work. If your company had a tool in the field that your technicians were only using half right, you would immediately insist that they learn how to fully utilize that tool. Your software is no different.

Ask for a system review. Many software companies will spend time at your company shadowing your users and reviewing current processes, then provide advice on areas for improvement. These checkups are designed to provide recommendations tailored to your specific business needs.

Network with other companies using the same software. Talking to a similar business about the way you each use your software can be invaluable. In talking through each other's successes and failures, you will learn what to try and what to avoid. If you do not already know another company that uses the same system in a similar way, ask your software company to connect you with one or more businesses.

Attend a users' conference. Many software companies host an annual customer conference that brings together a diverse mix of different users of that company's software. In addition to providing opportunities to meet and network with other users, these events expose users to new software functionality. Breakout sessions showcase new product features, and experience centers offer the opportunity to test drive those new features.

For more information, visit www.wennsoft.com.

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researchers who would be using the space involved at the start of construction was the better process. It was easier to redesign each space than to shell it out and make the adjustments after construction.

Products for the Future

Another challenge, but perhaps the easiest to overcome, was the specification of products. With all the individual laboratories in the building, most drains and piping had to be acid-resistant.

Whitehead said that you could not just do your specification based on the

needs of particular researchers lined up to come to the facility and the type of research they were planning to do. You had to plan for potential future research and design to accommodate the "worst-case scenario" to ensure that anyone coming into the lab, regardless of the work they were doing, would have the appropriate plumbing in their lab space.

C.J. Erickson worked closely with Jay R. Smith Mfg. Co. through the constant changes to spec out the appropriate drains, piping, and eye wash stations. In addition to specialty products, Jay R. Smith Mfg.

Co. also supplied water closet carriers, urinal supports, roof drains, and wall hydrants for this project.

The job is now sixty-percent complete, and Whitehead said they are on track to finish up by June 2015.

Whitehead offered his take on the challenges faced while building the research center: "There's a saying: 'There is no hill for a climber.' These are all just challenges you need to manage to complete the job."

For more information, visit www.jrsmith.com.