

Restoring a legend

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By Cathie Anderson

The renovation of Sacramento's Stanley Mosk State Library & Courts Building took years to complete, but the team who undertook the project can now stand back and relish their accomplishment.

On Sept. 27, this project and 19 others around the state will be recognized as outstanding by the California Preservation Foundation. San Francisco's Carey & Co. took on the task of studying the design and working with Arntz Builders and its subcontractors to bring new life to the building's failing infrastructure.

"It still had the original plumbing and pretty much the same original electrical, and over the years, it had IT and telecom stuff kind-of scabbed into the surface of the building, and in the '70s, the air-conditioning system was installed, so pretty much every single one of those systems was at or beyond its useful life," said Pella McCormick, who directed the project for the Department of General Services Real Estate Services Division.

The renovation project was authorized in 2005, but it wasn't completed until last January.

"The challenge with that building ... is it has some very elaborate coffered ceilings and a lot of hand stenciling that is original from the 1920s," McCormick said. "It's all very valuable historic fabric, and to be able to install the infrastructure systems, you need to get above all the ceilings, so the challenge for the contractor and design team was to figure out how to really thread all these large systems over and around our very elaborate coffered ceilings and not really damage any of the finishes."