The library has added a significant number of study seats in recent years, but the number is still not enough to meet demand during busy periods of the academic year. As well, the majority of these seats are of a similar style and format. The range of furnishings and study spaces provided does not reflect the range of learning behaviours and activities that today’s students are engaged in. Mills is often a crowded and noisy place that fails to offer an inspiring learning environment to its thousands of daily users. Students are eager to have 24-hour access to study space, but the building only supports extended hours in one large reading room.

Numerous phases of renovation have made Mills a complex building to navigate and use, compromising space planning and user experience. The main entry, with its low ceilings and obstructed views, fails to communicate the sense of excitement and discovery that should be central to the experience of the library. Circulation routes and building services are widely distributed, and variation in floor-to-floor heights limits contiguous parcels of space and constrains planning opportunities. This complexity makes wayfinding difficult and unintuitive. The relationship between circulation routes and program elements varies across floors and between levels, and a lack of cross-sectional visibility limits visitors’ understanding of the resources and programs the library has to offer. As a result, while the library offers exciting and innovative programs, many of them remain undiscovered.

While many of the library’s program areas have been altered and upgraded to meet changing needs, the building’s infrastructure has not, and is severely overtaxed. With recent increases in occupant load, the building does not meet code requirements for washroom provision. Similarly, it does not meet current standards of accessibility, either in terms of code requirements or contemporary expectations. Technical infrastructure is likewise overtaxed, with insufficient power and data supply and aging network capabilities.

Mills is home to the world-renowned William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections. Unfortunately, because of its basement location, the collection and associated public spaces are hidden and most members of the community are unaware of the remarkable resources available for their use. This area lacks any dedicated teaching space. Division staff prepare compelling exhibits which very few people get to see given the difficult to find display space. Furthermore, the exhibit space is extremely small. The reading room becomes very crowded during peak periods.

Staff spaces within the library are distributed across floors and across levels, creating challenges both for staff and for the building as a whole. Staff are isolated from each other in a variety of small and often ill-suited parcels, limiting opportunities for informal interaction and collaboration, leaving staff feeling orphaned from their colleagues. Meanwhile, privatised pockets of staff space located throughout the building compromise space planning and programmatic flexibility for the library as a whole.