



Aerial view



The renovated building



The renovated building

Photo by John Weiss

## DUMBARTON OAKS, MAIN HOUSE RENOVATION

*Architects: VSBA*

*Location: Washington, DC*

*Client: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library  
& Collection*

*Area: 45,000 gsf*

*Construction Cost: \$14,000,000  
(including Fellows Building)*

*Completion: 2007*

The Dumbarton Oaks estate dates to the 18th century. In 1920, Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss acquired the property and, over the next 45 years renovated and expanded it to house their noted Pre-Columbian and Byzantine collections and library. Working with landscape architect Beatrix Ferrand, they transformed the grounds into a series of noteworthy gardens. In 1940, they created the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection to be managed by Harvard University. VSBA was retained in 2001 to implement a campus master plan for expansion, which centered on creation of a new library and renovation of the Main House.

Originally constructed in 1800, the Federal-era Main House was expanded and stylistically “updated” several times, most notably by the Bliss family to accommodate their growing collections. It now includes an historic Music Room and other additions by McKim, Mead and White, and Philip Johnson’s 1963 Pre-Columbian Gallery.

We restored the mansion’s historic interior rooms and renovated galleries and public spaces to improve circulation and provide visitor amenities. Other renovated spaces include administrative offices, collection storage areas, and research facilities.

Our work also included all new mechanical and electrical systems to maintain appropriate environmental controls, and updated fire and life safety systems. Other modifications, including a new elevator, made public areas fully accessible.

*The historic Music Room, after renovation*



*New museum shop*

*The renovated Philip Johnson Wing*

