

Ideas on the Edge

Built for Surprises

WHEN SCIENTISTS CROSS PATHS, SURPRISING BREAKTHROUGHS CAN BE THE RESULT. THE TERENCE DONNELLY CENTRE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO WAS DESIGNED TO MAKE THOSE ENCOUNTERS HAPPEN MORE OFTEN.

“One of our goals was to build a place where you can’t really predict what will happen.”

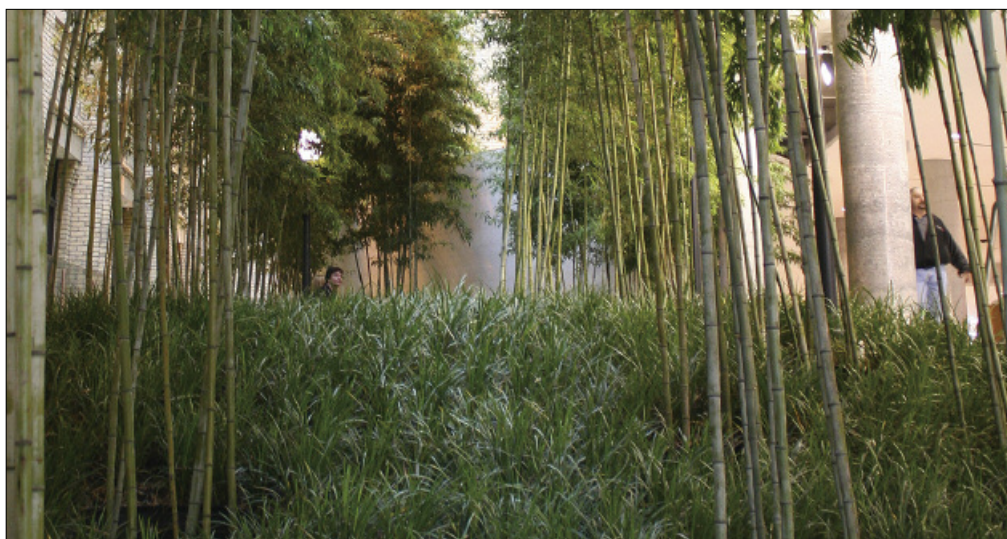
Dr. Brenda Andrews is describing the Terrence Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research, where she is Director. The Centre is located at the University of Toronto, in a sparkling glass

tower built with the help of funds from the Ontario Innovation Trust.

To illustrate the open-ended research ethos at the CCBR, Dr. Andrews refers to the Centre’s recent recruitment of a leading analytical chemist.

“His background is chemistry, but really, he’s an inventor who specializes in fabricating very small devices for looking at organisms. One of the things we’re doing here is putting people like him together with biologists who are thinking big—and frankly, I can’t predict where it will go.”

The Donnelly Centre was designed from the ground up to foster this kind of fruitful interaction. Welcoming lounge spaces, communal kitchens and green spaces dot the facility, encouraging

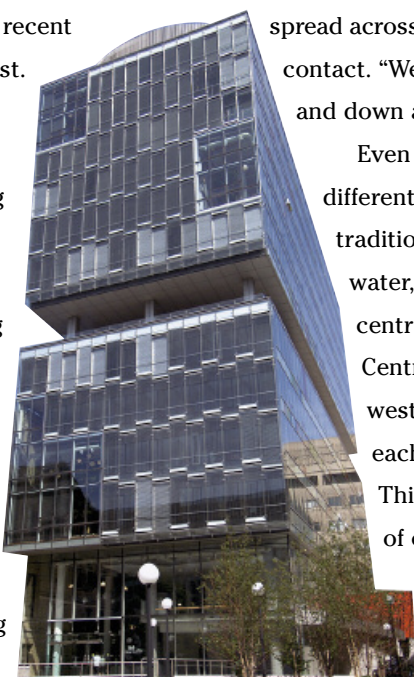


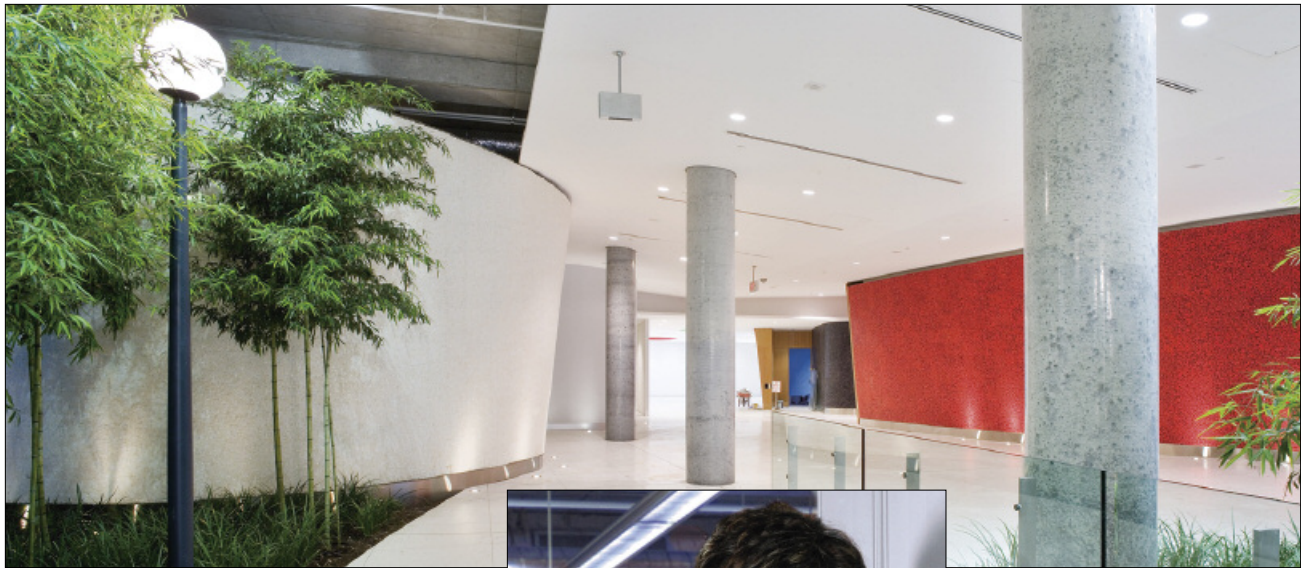
the kinds of chance encounters and informal conversations that can lead to promising new lines of inquiry.

In some cases, research groups are deliberately spread across several floors to increase interpersonal contact. “We want to encourage people to go up and down and around,” says Dr. Andrews.

Even the plumbing plays a role in bringing different kinds of scientists together. In more traditional science buildings, services like water, waste and gas lines are contained in a central core. The pipes in the Donnelly Centre, however, are concentrated in the west wall, so that the central lab space on each floor can be creatively configured.

This makes it possible for the “wet labs” of chemists, for instance, to co-exist on the same floor as the workstations of computational biologists. It also





means that labs can be re-configured as the focus of research changes.

The approach is paying off. The profile created by the new building has been a key element in recruiting world-class scientific talent—a critical and increasingly difficult task in the life sciences, where

global competition is intense. And already, researchers at the Centre are beginning to produce breakthrough

insights on a key frontier— understanding the complex ways in which genes and proteins interact with one another.

University of Toronto

“We’re just constantly searching for people who are thinking the right way,” says Dr. Andrews, referring again



BRENDA ANDREWS

to the Centre’s open-ended, interdisciplinary approach. “Having this type of space is a good way to attract them and keep them here.”

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS
REAL-WORLD BENEFITS FOR ONTARIANS:

- foundational research that will lead to prevention and treatment of a host of diseases
- leadership in the key life sciences sector of the global economy, creating jobs and investment in Ontario

Project: Terrence Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research
Institution: University of Toronto
Research Sector: Health Sciences
Principal Investigator: Brenda Andrews
Trust Investment: \$15,000,000
CFI Investment: \$15,400,000
Total research investment from all sources: \$42,550,000



Ontario
Innovation
Trust

MaRS Centre, Heritage Building
101 College Street, Suite HL20
Toronto, ON M5G 1L7
416-977-9188 Fax: 416-977-9460
innovation@oit.on.ca
www.oit.on.ca

Infrastructure for Innovation
About the Ontario Innovation Trust

The Ontario Innovation Trust was created in 1999 by the Government of Ontario to invest in research equipment and facilities at Ontario’s universities, colleges, hospitals and other non-profit research institutions. The Trust is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, according to the terms of a Trust agreement established by the Ontario government. A small permanent staff looks after day-to-day operations.

Since its inception, the Trust has committed almost \$843 million to strengthen Ontario’s position in the global marketplace of ideas. This represents more than a third of the \$2.44 billion in total funding that has been invested in Trust-supported projects.