

Senate White Paper
The Library as Knowledge Commons for the University

Joyce Ogburn
University Librarian and Director for the J. Willard Marriott Library

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For much of the 20th century libraries were known and valued for their collections, and the defining role for a library was to be “a repository of knowledge.” Although libraries continue to build and deliver a large collection of resources, we are now defined by the services we offer and our ability to make the work of our users more productive in all areas of teaching, learning and research. To meet this ambition our libraries have become agents of transformation, innovation, development, growth, and opportunity; we are centers for innovation, anchors for projects, and instigators as well as incubators for collaborations that produce integrated, scalable, extensible, lasting, powerful and demonstrable results. We supply access to high quality knowledge, coupled with high tech, high touch services that strive to remove the mystery from research and learning. We teach our students to be “smart for life,” with a solid grounding in critical thinking that will serve them for their entire life experience of finding, utilizing, evaluating, and creating knowledge in their chosen careers and personal lives. More than ever we are integral to the process of knowledge generation, and as intensively interdisciplinary centers, we serve as knowledge commons for the university.

As the Internet has matured the nature of our collections has greatly changed, creating a constellation and continuum of formats that range from papyrus to digital content that lives in virtual worlds like Second Life. Our ability to deliver knowledge resources has expanded, and we have more tools at our disposal. Research, teaching and learning are supported by the powerful combination of good resources, strong discovery technology, and strategies to capture and preserve the knowledge created and shared through formal and informal publishing channels.

Space and place are still critically important, but we have reinvented our space for advanced teaching, to facilitate team work, provide a place for the gatherings that reinforce the social nature of student life, improve access to services that support student academic success, and connect them with rich and credible resources. Our libraries are vibrant, noisy, interactive learning centers that are desirable destinations for our students.

The libraries can't possibly acquire and manage everything required to meet the university's goals. We seek partners, rely on extensive networks, and take advantage of commercial enterprises for tools and services that extend our capabilities. Librarians are expert collaborators and over decades we have built a robust cooperative global system that shares records and technology solutions, loans collections, jointly negotiates deals, and advocates for national policies that have a profound effect on the ability to create and share knowledge now and well into the future.

I will describe the areas where our libraries are actively advancing the university's mission as well as providing high-level services to a much wider community of users and stakeholders.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Marriott Library was redesigned to be a center for student services. The renovation created space for new classrooms and a café. The new KC that anchors the library's services brings together the skills and creativity of technologists and subject experts to field questions, guide research, create presentations and videos, and foster a vibrant collaborative environment. The Knowledge Commons has more than 250 PCs, Macs, and UNIX computers utilizing more than 350 applications. Nearby there are 18 glass-walled group studies, the Writing Center, a small suite of offices for academic advising, and more. The library also manages campus computer labs.

Marriott Librarians are heavily involved in instruction and prepare students to be scholars and citizens by imparting skills to navigate the intense information world through critical thinking, analysis, assessment, and thoughtful engagement with knowledge. Librarians also teach effective, appropriate and ethical use of technology.

The Marriott Library is partnering with Interdisciplinary Studies to develop a program to explore and expand initiatives at the U that provide courses, programs and services that enhance student competencies in visual, information and technology literacy. The first stage of the work will be to identify and support courses that represent new models and potential pilot projects that can be replicated. The Task Force is preparing recommendations regarding how to sustain and increase successful literacy programs and initiatives at the university. The recommendations should create a plan or a framework that lays out strategic directions, expectations and desired outcomes that will increase the effectiveness and scope of literacy initiatives.

The Marriott Library is graced with an unusual Book Arts program. It teaches formal classes in partnership with Fine Arts and the Creative Writing Program, as well as workshops open to the community. This group also has a treasure chest programs that utilizes a network of volunteers to teach kids in the public schools to make books, scrolls, and other products of recorded history.

The Eccles Health Sciences Library is widely known for its innovative approaches to service and its integration with the research and teaching mission of the colleges. It is responsible for the Eccles Health Sciences Education Building and manages the building operations, event scheduling, auxiliary services, classroom technology, and assists an interdisciplinary clinical teaching experience. The building promotes shared space for students to learn about other health professions as they interact. It is unusual for a health sciences library to be so involved in the daily operations of such an interdisciplinary building, but it provides the opportunity to be involved with many of the health sciences academic medical center's initiatives and missions.

Moreover, the Eccles librarians are deeply involved with the School of Medicine Curriculum Transformation that started in September 2009 for the incoming freshmen class. Their involvement extends to orientation to library resources and services, teaching how to remotely access library resources and how to locate and use electronic textbooks, introducing students to the key journal database PubMed, using evidence-based search techniques, and discussing clinical cases in small groups to ensure their ability to locate supporting clinical literature.

Additionally, they participate in the Clinical Team Experience that is an exercise that helps prepare students from all health sciences schools for the real world interdisciplinary health care setting. Students have a preliminary orientation and are then assigned to teams, representing other health care disciplines. Using the Clinical Skills area of the HSEB, they take turns interviewing a standardized patient who represents a carefully designed case study. When not actively interviewing, the students observe each other via video broadcast. After all team members have had their patient encounter, they meet again to discuss the case and what they learned about or from each other.

The Quinney librarians teach required and elective courses, including legal research methodology that enable our future legal practitioners to have a good grounding in the legal literature and effective research skills. They also support and train the Quinney Fellows who are faculty research assistants. The Quinney Library serves as the College of Law IT help desk, and provides technology support for law students and their laptops, for faculty, and for classroom technology.

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

The Libraries supply the documentation of research findings that enable our researchers to make new discoveries, invent new tools, create companies, provide better human services, and drive economic development. Together we license electronic journals and databases and provide desktop delivery of needed information on demand. Last year people downloaded articles we subscribe to nearly 4 million times.

One million physical items are housed in the Marriott Library's automated retrieval center, which is the largest robotic facility in North America. The libraries digitize older material to make it accessible and usable in new ways and lead the nation in digitizing newspapers, creating more than 700,000 pages from newspapers across Utah. The TAC Center, co-managed by the Marriott Library and the Graduate School, is placed right off the West Entrance to make it easily accessible for faculty. It is co-located with a new Digital Scholarship Lab that is developing services ranging from basic technology training to advanced assistance including digitization; data management; copyright and intellectual property consultation; creation of digital texts, web sites, and multimedia; video and audio recording; usability testing; data analysis; and spatial data support.

With the growing importance of digital scholarship and research computing we are attempting to capture digital files that use cutting edge technology and are often data intensive. The Marriott Library is well known for its successful digital library development. The Western Soundscapes Archive captures the sounds of the Western environment and preserves this rapidly dwindling natural history for the scholars of today and tomorrow. The Eccles library is a partner on the NOVEL project. The Neuro-Ophthalmology Virtual Education Library is an open access, discipline specific repository of images, videos, lectures and other digital media that supports neuro-ophthalmology professionals, educators, students and patients worldwide. Two services - USpace, the U's institutional repository and iTunes U - are growing resources for collecting and distributing intellectual assets created by our faculty.

At the Marriott we have completely rethought how to collect, manage and deliver content. I call our strategy POD2 - purchase on demand for e-books and printed books as well as articles - and print on demand with our Espresso Book Machine that can print and bind a book in about 5 minutes if it is available in a database that contains of millions of e-books (many derived from the Google Book Project). We can buy or print books when there is an expressed need instead of on speculation. We may also print a book more cheaply and deliver it faster than borrowing it, or we can even sell it to a requester at a good price.

The Eccles Library provides the evidence and helps others to discover supporting literature for their research endeavors. The library faculty is working with the Clinical and Translations Science Award to create collaborative spaces for researchers from the University, the Utah Department of Health, the Veterans Administration and Intermountain Health Care. The Library is planning a “research support center” or “research incubator” where faculty can come for one-stop help with developing their research ideas into practice and the library is leading a team that is creating a virtual collaborative space called MyRA, My Research Assistant.

All three of the libraries provide robust scholarship and publishing services for students and faculty utilizing several digital library and publishing platforms. The Quinney Library supports research and electronic publication for three student-edited journals published by the College of Law, along with other law school publications. They assist faculty with their web pages and posting and linking to their scholarship. The Eccles Library was the leader in developing our institutional repository.

The award-winning University of Utah Press is the cornerstone of the Marriott Library’s formal publishing efforts, producing 25-30 books a year. Their titles span western history, anthropology and archaeology, Mormon studies, the natural environment, poetry, and Middle Eastern studies. They distribute titles for KUED and a number of small publishing units in the state. We have other publishing units, use digital technologies for reformatting, capturing and disseminating scholarship, we offer specialized services, and include copyright services and training.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, OUTREACH, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ROLES

Our libraries are busy hubs of services for an extended community of scholars, patients, consumers, and practitioners. The Eccles Library serves as the hospital library and operates a small clinical library within the Hospital. They are relocating this space to the front lobby to open a consumer health information center for patients and their families. Librarians are partnering with community clinics to connect them to public librarians so that clinic patients can be referred using information prescriptions to learn more about their health. Further, they offer training on consumer health resources to public librarians and clinical personnel. The library is the home of the MidContinental Region of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine; one of 8 national contracts with the National Library of Medicine, serving not only Utah, but also Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wyoming, with staff distributed throughout these states. This is a five-year contract that is up for renewal in 2011.

The Marriott Library is the flagship library for the state higher education system and a primary resource for the region. We loan more than 22,000 items around the state each year. Our collections of primary source materials and archives are used globally by researchers who

come to us on site and online. Scholars draw on the extensive special collections that consist of local history, Western Americana, the history of science and technology in Utah, recreational archives, and much more. Resources include oral histories, family histories, photographs, personal diaries and journals, business papers, and artifacts that make up and document our lives.

The Marriott Library also oversees services for Utah Academic Library Consortium that includes BYU and Westminster, in addition to libraries in Nevada and Idaho. We also partner with many Utah institutions (museums, public libraries, historical societies, and state departments), as well as organizations and cultural groups. We manage digital projects for a group of 32 academic libraries west of the Mississippi. As a member of the Association of Research Libraries we participate in shaping national programs and initiatives.

The Quinney Law Library is a critical community resource for legal materials and provides research and reference assistance to attorneys and self-represented patrons. They also collaborate with the State Law Library and the BYU law library to provide legal information services statewide. They offer lectures, tours and subject focused library orientations for law-related courses from across campus and area programs at Salt Lake Community College, Westminster, Stevens-Heneger, and others.

All three libraries are invested in an open system of scholarly communication and our librarians have worked on the national level to enable public access to federally funded research results, and to shape policies involving freedom of information, intellectual property rights and intellectual freedom.

CONCLUSION

Not every system of academic libraries has been as forward looking, innovative or intertwined with the academic lives of their constituents as the three libraries at the U. We lead the nation in many activities that bring lasting benefits to the university and the state. You have a special system of world-class libraries that reinvents itself as needed to anticipate and serve the needs of the faculty and students at the U, and functions as an essential resource to our community as well.