

## BUILDING REEAFs: REPACKAGING AND PERSONALIZING LIBRARY SERVICES TO REMOTE MARINE SCIENCE FACILITIES

**Peter Fritzler**

William Randall Library  
University of North Carolina at Wilmington  
601 South College Road  
Wilmington, NC 28403

**ABSTRACT:** The University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) is a Comprehensive Level I University offering graduate programs and a new doctoral program in marine biology. With UNCW's new remote marine sciences research facility, management of a national undersea research laboratory, and expanding research opportunities, partnerships between Randall Library and the University's marine sciences community must continue to grow.

Metaphorically similar to coral reef ecosystems, libraries are rainforests for learning. As vital components of any college or university, libraries are home to collections and technologies that nurture inquiry and the search for truth. Using this metaphor to implement the Research Enrichment and Educational Assistance for Faculty and Students (REEAFs) initiative, Randall Library has repackaged its services for this geographically remote community. In doing so, the Library is using a dynamic blend of technology and traditional library principles to provide personalized support in research and teaching while increasing awareness and participation of library services by faculty and students. This facilitates research through the sharing of knowledge and leads to a richly enhanced ecosystem of learning.

The purpose of this discussion will be to highlight the REEAFs program and discuss methodologies and opportunities for outreach to faculty and students at remote research facilities at universities lacking a branch library or library specialist.

### **History of Marine Sciences**

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) is located on the southeastern coast of North Carolina approximately four miles from the Cape Fear River and five miles from the Atlantic Ocean. The origins of the University date to 1947 when New Hanover County, the county in which the University is located, passed a bond referendum to establish a permanent college in Southeastern North Carolina. Eleven years later, control of the College was transferred to the State of North Carolina, and in 1963, Wilmington College became a four-year degree granting institution. In 1969, the

College became the fifth campus of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system, and changed its name to the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (Hiatt 1984).

While joining the UNC system in 1969, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) was aware of the need for research and teaching in the marine sciences as early as 1965. Focusing on training and education in marine physiology, the privately owned Wrightsville Marine Bio-Medical Laboratory served as the original facility and was located across from Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. Merging with UNCW in 1971 and changing its name to the Institute of Marine Bio-Medical Research in 1973, the facility continued to focus on physiology while expanding to include biochemistry, marine biology, and other areas of coastal and oceanic studies. Sometime during the 1980s the facility, once again, changed its name to the Center for Marine Science Research.

The relationship between advanced research and teaching in the marine sciences at UNCW is historic as well. Offering a master of science degree in marine biology in 1980 and a master of science degree in biology in 1989, UNCW began offering the master's level program in marine sciences in 2000 as well (Biological Sciences Department, UNCW 2001). To further develop opportunities for student-faculty research collaboration, the University was successful in its efforts to establish a doctoral program in marine biology in 2002.

In 2000, UNCW opened a new 75,000 square-foot facility located seven miles south of the campus at Myrtle Grove on the Intercoastal Waterway with direct access to regional marine environments. Renamed the Center for Marine Science (CMS), this facility and its faculty are represented by the Departments of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, and Physics and Physical Oceanography with primary research areas in oceanography, coastal and wetland studies, marine biomedical and environmental physiology, marine biotechnology, aquaculture, marine geology, marine toxicology, and the oceans and human health (Center for Marine Science 2003). Additionally, CMS supports an office for the National Undersea Research Center (NURC), one of six centers around the United States supporting the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Undersea Research Program (NURP); an office for the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve (NCNERR); and an office for North Carolina Sea Grant. CMS also operates the 63' R/V Cape Fear, and operates the Aquarius underwater laboratory located off the Florida Keys.

## **Library**

William Randall Library opened its doors in 1969 and has developed a strong relationship with the sciences at UNCW. As technology has continued to develop, so have library services, especially to its off-campus constituencies. With the opening of the new CMS facility in the spring 2000, Randall Library, through the leadership of its Access and Delivery Services Department, instituted document delivery to faculty and staff at the new location. With this service faculty members received electronic delivery

(PDF) of journal articles to their e-mail when possible, and print delivery of other materials using a campus shuttle. The library also placed a book drop box at CMS for faculty to use when finished with materials. The shuttle made regularly scheduled trips from campus to take materials and retrieve materials from the drop box. However, due to state budgetary cuts, this service was discontinued. To assist in mitigating these circumstances, the library increased its electronic delivery services and usage of its table-of-contents services through *Ingenta* and the library's own in-house subscriptions.

### **New Explorations**

With the addition of the doctoral program in marine biology, Randall Library began exploring opportunities to continue supporting the marine sciences, and specifically the Center for Marine Science (CMS). Offering classrooms and laboratories for faculty and student use, CMS' suitability for research and teaching has continued to grow; so much so that plans are being discussed for expansion beginning in 2004 and will potentially include a small library.

Recognizing this trend, Randall Library has sought to increase its participation at CMS. In doing so, the library has identified particular goals to accomplish through outreach to the facility. These include determining the information needs of the user group; maintaining and increasing positive perceptions of library's value in an information-rich environment; promoting the library and librarians as viable primary resources for information-dependent projects (e.g. grants, papers, information and library management issues, etc.); developing relationships and making connections for partnering with faculty and showcasing library's value; educating about changes in information and library-related technologies; learning about various topics and issues being researched; and repackaging library user services to streamline and promote more effectively.

### **The REEAFS Concept**

Establishing these goals the library began to identify opportunities for implementation. Thus, the library began exploring ways in which it could publicize library services seamlessly while promoting the value of the library in research and establishing a relationship between both entities. The question became, how could the library effectively capture the attention of faculty and students and relate to the culture of their environment? After exploring several concepts, the idea of expressing the library's value through the metaphor of coral reefs was realized. As "rainforests of the sea," coral reefs are among the most diverse, productive, and vital components of ocean ecosystems (NOAA 1999). Home of an estimated million different species of animal and plant life offering an unknown number of benefits to humans, coral reefs are living museums of the Earth's natural heritage, reflecting thousands of years of history and are integral parts of many cultures (NOAA 2001). And yet, they are endangered by human activity.

Similar to coral reefs, libraries are rainforests for learning. As vital components of education and society in general, libraries are home to diverse collections that nurture

inquiry and the search for truth. Libraries are living museums as well, reflecting thousands of years of history and cultures. With their unique missions, libraries are repositories of the human race, preserving, organizing, and making accessible the failures, achievements, and discoveries of humankind. And yet humans too endanger them.

Using this metaphoric relationship between libraries and coral reefs, Randall Library has implemented the REEAFS initiative to promote its services and support for faculty and students at CMS. As an acronym, REEAFS stands for Research Enrichment and Educational Assistance for Faculty and Students, and is focused on repackaging or streamlining library services to promote them seamlessly while perhaps more importantly creating a symbiotic relationship between CMS and Randall Library.

One facet of the REEAFS initiative was the implementation of library office hours at CMS. Beginning in January 2003, a librarian started hosting regularly scheduled office hours in one of the facility's graduate computing labs. To raise awareness about the librarian's presence, flyers were posted throughout the facility and e-mails were sent to faculty and graduate students notifying them of this service. This provided the library with an opportunity to meet with faculty and students in their environment. While seen by faculty and students as helpful, contact between the librarian and the CMS residents was minimal in the first several months. As a result, the librarian began employing the age-old method of salutation when passing faculty and students in the corridors of the CMS building. When this interaction occurred, there was a wealth of information shared between both parties. Often, CMS faculty and residents were unaware of a library service, or how a librarian could support them in their research. Vice versa, the librarian was unaware of the unique subtleties of research being conducted. This allowed the librarian to listen to faculty and students, and ask what information needs were being identified by this user group. By listening to the faculty and students the library was able to identify and promote services that met those needs. Furthermore, by hosting office hours at CMS the librarian was provided with additional opportunities for introducing himself to the facility's senior leadership and supporting administration, thereby increasing prospects for a stronger relationship.

A second facet of the REEAFS initiative was the distribution of brochures to faculty and graduate students at CMS throughout the 2003 fall semester. This brochure emphasized the promotion of library services that students and faculty previously had mentioned they were unaware of. To capture their attention, each service was colorfully name-branded with a concise annotation describing its value. For example, to promote the library's student thesis assistance program, or STAR, a logo was designed to attract graduate students' attention.<sup>1</sup> Primarily for faculty, another service emphasized was the literature review assistance service. This service advocates establishing research profiles with the library. In return, the library provides regular updates on literature published in areas of

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information on Randall Library's STAR program, please see the following webpage: <http://library.uncwil.edu/star.html> [Accessed: 03 November 2003]

research identified by the faculty member in the profile. Using citation management software (e.g. EndNote) the library submits each update to the faculty member in a bibliography using that faculty member's preferred citation style. Lastly, a photograph of the librarian responsible for hosting office hours at CMS was included to provide face recognition and personalization.

## **Conclusions**

While the REEAFS initiative is still in its infancy, it has helped increase the presence and awareness of the library at the Center for Marine Science. In the few months that it has been active, the library has developed three long-term literature assistance profiles, eight on-demand literature searches, and one on-going literature review for a proposed research project. Library assistance to graduate students in the marine sciences has risen as well. During the fall semester, eighteen graduates have either signed up for the STAR program or received literature review and database assistance at one point or another. While it remains to be seen how many students signed up for the STAR program as a result of the REEAFS initiative, it is clear that many registered after meeting with the librarian at CMS. Other topics in which the library has participated have included data management and metadata issues, preservation of facility-produced documents, and potential digitization projects. Additionally, by hosting office hours the library has been able to collaborate with the CMS web development team and establish a library web site designed specifically for the CMS user community.

Through the provision of office hours and distribution of brochures promoting library support, the library has been rewarded with increased opportunities to assist faculty and students. This has also allowed the library to learn more about the various topics being researched by faculty and students; in turn, this has enhanced the library's abilities for stronger collection development. While repackaging library services may have been one of the library's original goals, the library is now primarily focused on continued relationship building and personalized service. Through its efforts, the library hopes that this will indeed create an enhanced reef-like environment and a stronger ecosystem of learning for all.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For additional information on library services for the Center for Marine Science at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, please see the following web site: <http://www.uncw.edu/cmsr> [Accessed: 03 November 2003]

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