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CONNECTIONS

The Library Prepares for a Learning Commons

by Peter Deekle, *Dean of University Library Services*

Increasing use of technology as a means of accessing information and the recent shift towards cooperative learning and group study have brought changes in the way our students are using our libraries and its many print and electronic resources.

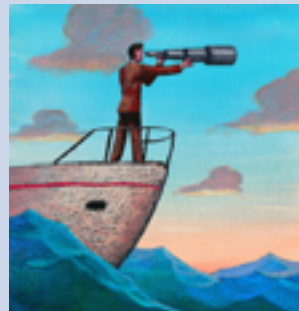
The University Library's strategic planning and its survey of library users (LibQUAL+) have prompted us to refine our mission -- focusing on the instruction of library users and services to meet their teaching, research, and study needs. To this end we are exploring new ways to combine information resources, technology, and research assistance. We are considering the reconfiguration of our public space and redesigned services to meet these new challenges by adopting the idea of the "learning commons"-- a central location that provides computers, information resources in various formats, and both library and technology staff assistance. According to Russell Bailey, Providence College's library administrator and advocate of the Learning Commons, the focus is on user needs (especially of "Net Generation" learning styles) in a way that the library remains a vital collaborative partner in the educational enterprise, ensuring that its users are able to meet more of their educational, research and production needs in one seamless, integrated continuum of services in the Library.

Dr. Bailey has described a Learning Commons that seeks to integrate all the resources library users need--comfortable and aesthetic space, helpful and responsive personnel, appropriate technologies; and effective support for both a) the traditional (high-touch, paper-print) library and its resources, and b) the extensive (high-tech) digital resources. Digital access to these resources will require multi-media computer-labs, electronic/multimedia classrooms, and collaborative and flexible group study and work areas/rooms. The Learning Commons integrates all of these resources in a way that demonstrates that high-touch and high-tech are necessarily mutually inclusive when focused on the needs of the end-user.

We look forward to collaborating with our Information Technology and Media Services colleagues in designing our public spaces and services for the future.

Looking Forward Into the Past...

By Veronica Maher, *Media Resources Librarian*



"Looking forward into the past: the future of archives at Roger Williams University" was the theme of my recent sabbatical, Spring semester, 2005. I spent time researching archival management practices; attended workshops and conferences; took a graduate course at Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information

Science ("Establishing Archives and Manuscript Programs"); visited, in-person and online, peer institution archives; and wrote a strategic plan to establish a new archives program at RWU.

I undertook this study primarily because the archives program at RWU has not been active for several years. Roger Williams is a university committed to the pursuit of knowledge through research and teaching and it is important for the university to preserve its past history and manage records of current growth. When the library was built in 1991 an area was designated for use as the archives. It consisted of a climate controlled room and an office or reading room for researchers. Unfortunately that area has been compromised because of the university's growth and the need for additional space for other programs.

A university archives is intended to preserve and promote the collective memory of the university's programs, goals, and accomplishments. The archives should house the non-current records of the university including academic program records, business records, papers of the faculty and staff, student newspapers, yearbooks, etc. Our current archives lack what are referred to as "finding aids," catalogs or lists of what is stored there, where it came from, and where it is housed or shelved. No policies are currently in place as to whom has access, what can or cannot be accessed, and when.

My plan for a new archives program suggests that we hire a certified project archivist on a temporary basis to help us get our house in order. It also recommends that the university establish a records management program to insure that the collection and preservation of university accomplishments continues in an orderly manner. I am literally looking forward into the past, have returned to campus and am working with Dean Deekle and the librarians to reach these new goals.



Integrating Technology in the Classroom

By John Schlinke, *Architecture/Art Librarian*

A professor introducing Russian Constructivism to her class begins with a talk about the social and political context of the movement. She follows with a six minute video clip of Eisenstein's Strike, then projects several still images of works by Malevich, El Lissitzky, and Gabo, while playing the score of Alexander Zhivotov's Fragments for Nonet. A computer-animated fly-through of Tatlin's Monument to the Third International comes next, along with an explanatory video clip of Constructivist theatre set design. The professor then presents a PowerPoint list of related web sites and electronic journal articles, suggesting to her students that they reference these in Blackboard before their examination next Thursday.

Such a seamless presentation of information across media is a simple idea, but one that is difficult to achieve in reality. Presenting ideas in an appropriate medium can dramatically increase the impact of those ideas, but differing file formats, hard media formats, presentation software, copyright issues, network bandwidth, availability of "smart classrooms," availability of training, and a host of other issues can get in the way of effective instruction. When a class has to wait for a video to be cued up, a slide can't be shown because it is checked out, a CD is played on a tinny sounding player, or a modern dance piece has to be described rather than shown, good teaching is compromised by ineffective technology.

This semester, Professor Anne Tait, along with her colleagues teaching Core 105 Aesthetics in Context, are using the course as a laboratory to more fully integrate technology in the classroom. One of the first results of their efforts is a DVD compilation of materials for the class pre-test. Working with members of the Media Services Department, they created a disk containing the material in a variety of file types. Copies of the disk were given to all the faculty members teaching Core 105 to use at the beginning of the semester. The DVD allows the professors to seamlessly present the material, rather than having to project a slide of an art work, then use a VCR to show a video dance clip, then use a CD to play a musical piece, avoiding all the attendant disruptions. Professor Randall Van Schepen has been assembling a central repository of material for the course.

Another area of the professors' work has been the transition from slides to digital images. In spring 2005, the University Library began a digital image database of art and architecture images for use by the campus community (named MDID). At the same time the Library also started subscribing to ARTstor, a similar though substantially

larger database available via the Internet. Digital images from these databases combined with the professors' own images, as well as images they obtain from other sources can be projected in the classroom using viewing software that is part of the databases, or by importing the images into a software presentation tool like PowerPoint.

While MDID and ARTstor are the beginnings of central, easily accessible repositories of still images at RWU, the next step may be the incorporation of other file types (moving images and sound files) into a database. Like still images, these would be available to faculty for classroom presentation, and since they would be accessible through the Internet, preparing the electronic material for a class could be done either on or off-campus.

The provision of new technology on campus necessarily means providing training to use that technology. Working in conjunction with the Information Technology Department, the Library hopes to create a Learning Commons within the Main Library where students and faculty will be able to learn how to apply new technology in their work, receiving help from expert users along the way. Knowing how to use technology means ideas can be presented in their most effective form, improving the communication that is at the heart of every good academic institution.

Rescuing the Abandoned

By John Fobert, *Serials/Government Documents Librarian*



Government Documents Assistant Ron Desnoyers has recently been deployed twice by the United States Humane Society to help rescue animals in the path of Hurricane Katrina. In New Orleans, Ron rescued many animals, most notable of which was a puppy he found abandoned in a trash bag.

Through Ron's extensive efforts, the puppy is now safe and sound in Rhode Island living with Ron until he can find a proper home. Over 300 calls were received by Ron after he and the puppy were featured on Channel 10 and the MSNBC website.

Ron's dedication is no surprise to those that work with him. A graduate student of the Department of Justice Studies at RWU, he is in the process of completing his thesis on animal cruelty in Rhode Island. Ron's willingness to help others and his diligence make him an asset to the university.



Why Library Instruction Matters

By Barbara Kenney, *Instructional Services Librarian*



Today's students possess a technological proficiency that often belies their lack of information competency. When asked to do college level research, their first choice is the Internet, that great unorganized, uncontrolled, storehouse of music, art, news, entertainment, games, sports, random thoughts, disturbing images, lies, rants, controversy, statistics, consumer and educational information, *virtually* every topic imaginable. Most students, however, have no idea how to conduct an efficient search, how to evaluate the information they find, or how to use web-based resources ethically. We expect them to transition from high school level "report writing" to academic level research but they have little understanding of what that means, while they've been effectively "Google-ized" and "Yahooped" in their formative years.

Students believe everything they need to do college-level research is free and available on the web. While the web is an extraordinary source of information, most first-year-students benefit greatly from instruction in the efficient and effective use of web-based resources. Bridging the chasm between what our students are accustomed to using and what our faculty expect them to use to support their research, is one of the major goals of the RWU Library Instruction Program. Working collaboratively with classroom faculty, librarians provide innovative instruction in the use of print and electronic resources, providing an effective means of introducing students to their new roles as academics.

Our students come to us with varying levels of preparation for college research. Many haven't written papers since their junior year in high school. They are unfamiliar with the language of the academy. The words *journals*, *periodicals*, *databases*, *monographs*, and *bibliographies* are foreign to them. Some don't know the difference between a book and a periodical. Many have never used a subject-specific encyclopedia, and if they can't locate a resource online, they won't use it, no matter how much more efficient using a reference source can be. Many students

believe, "If it's published on the web, it must be true," and it's free for the cutting and pasting. They plagiarize out of ignorance because the electronic universe has blurred the rules for the use of web-based information. "Authority" is a foreign concept. Students need to be taught the scholarly communication process and why it's important. They need to know that the professor who's teaching their Intro to Psychology class is also publishing in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* which is indexed in *PsycINFO*.

Library instruction provides students hands-on experience with the journal literature and the indexes used to access it. We teach the importance of authority and peer review, and introduce students to abstracts and the value of bibliographies. We discuss disciplinary and inter- or cross-disciplinary research and provide the opportunity for them to use scholarly resources during the instruction session while working on their assignments. Instruction librarians are trained in pedagogy and develop interactive instruction sessions that are user-centered and assignment-focused. We teach the tools as well as the process of research. When we teach *Lexis-Nexis* to access newspaper articles on the Iraq War, we also talk about bias and objectivity, and why it's important to read the *New York Times* as well as the *Jerusalem Post*.

The instructional model librarians employ is grounded in the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education established by the Association of College and Research Libraries. The Standards guide us in setting instructional goals and outcomes for each session, emphasizing active engagement and critical thinking. Problem- or case-based learning is used in order to simulate real-life information problem solving. Students work in groups using information sources to provide evidence for a speech or writing project.

As faculty, we all struggle with issues of academic integrity, specifically plagiarism and copyright infringement. Library instruction addresses these issues by providing criteria for evaluating information sources and teaching students how to access authoritative resources electronically from their dorms, homes or cruise ships. We try to wean them from an over-reliance on the open web by providing access to electronic resources specifically chosen to support their academic work. We instruct students writing research papers in the use of RefWorks, a bibliographic citation manager, in order to organize and properly cite their research.

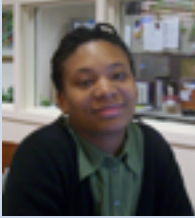
The primary goal of each instruction session is to help students understand the role the library plays in their academic life. We offer research appointments, email and chat reference, support and guidance. We help students navigate the complicated world of information.



Welcome New Library Staff

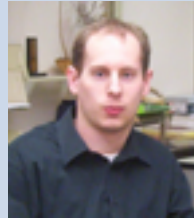
Please join the library staff in welcoming two new staff members.

Janaya Kizzie



Janaya Kizzie joined us in September as our first Reference Services Assistant. She provides organizational support to the reference librarians and assists with providing reference services to students and faculty at the Reference Desk. Her ideas are plentiful and she has already put up a very successful library blog for internal staff communication. She has a degree from Bard College in history and creative writing and has had extensive public service experience in both retail and library environments. She has already made herself indispensable to the staff and her dry wit entertains us all!

Adam Riccitelli



Adam Riccitelli started work in August and replaced Mary Beth Wilson as the Circulation Coordinator (nights and weekends). He manages Circulation and Reserves from 4 PM until 10 PM Sunday through Thursday. Adam comes to us from the banking industry and also has served as a library technician at the University of Rhode Island. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Library Science at URI. Go Adam!

FAREWELL AND GOOD LUCK!

Many thanks and a fond farewell to our library intern, Carol Hermann, who has assisted the librarians at the reference desk this past semester as part of an internship towards a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science at URI. Carol's intelligence, good nature and natural reference skills will be sorely missed! Best of luck to Carol in the completion of her studies and the pursuit of a library career.

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