

PLACE: THE CUNNINGHAM MEMORIAL LIBRARY OF INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

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When one thinks of a library, often the first image that comes to mind is a brick or stone building. However, one should also remember that a library is a gathering place. Within its walls are carefully gathered or collected resources, whether electronic, print, or sound. Beyond such artifacts, the library is moreover a gathering place for people, be it library faculty and staff, or the patrons which they serve. It is a place for people to work, investigate, socialize, or repose. Indiana State University's Cunningham Memorial Library (CML) embodies both these concepts. Yes, it is a physical structure, but even more so it is a gathering place. What follows is an exposition of the library's rich history, its buildings, its collections, and the means through which it gathers people into its fold – library faculty, staff, and patron alike.

THE LIBRARY BUILDINGS, THEIR HISTORY, AND THEIR COLLECTIONS

In 1870, Indiana State University began life as the Indiana State Normal School. At that time, one would be hard pressed to say that the school had a library. Given this situation, Chauncey Rose, one of the early benefactors of the community and founder of Rose Polytechnic Institute, gave the Board of Trustees \$4,000 in 1873 for the purchase of books for the library. The State also appropriated \$500. This first library collection was housed in the President's office, and one professor was put in charge and paid \$20 per month for this extra service.¹

Disaster struck in 1888 when the building of the Indiana State Normal School with all its contents, including the library, was destroyed by fire. The city of Terre Haute immediately contributed \$50,000 and the State appropriated \$100,000 of which \$15,000 was devoted to library purposes. During this period the President's secretary, who was also clerk and registrar, performed the duties of librarian. In 1890, the library gained its first professional librarian. Arthur Cunningham was the Assistant Librarian of DePauw University when he was appointed Librarian of the Indiana State Normal School. Under his tenure the

Indiana State Legislature appropriated \$99,970 for a new building, contracts were signed, and on December 17, 1909, the Board of Trustees received the building. The dedication of the new building, what was to become Normal Hall, was held in June 1910.

The new building was essential to the vision that Cunningham had for the expansion of the library. As a normal school, with its emphasis on the training of educators, he saw the need to expand the number of educational titles on the shelf. It should be kept in mind that Cunningham had a keen interest in the new pedagogical developments of his day and that he made every effort to collect materials that would place the normal school's students at the forefront of their future profession. As related in a collection development policy document for what is now known as the "Cunningham Collection," "Cunningham was recognized for his collection-building efforts in education, building a nationally important resource."²

After 38 years of stellar service, Arthur Cunningham retired in 1928 and in 1929 Edwin Fitzroy was appointed Director of the Library. At the time of his appointment, the name of the Indiana State Normal School was changed to Indiana State Teachers College. In 1933, Fitzroy stepped down as Library Director and at that time Hazel Armstrong became the new library director, a position that she would hold until 1954. Throughout this period, the collection continued to grow so that by 1953, the need was seen to add a new wing to the library building.

Growth continued throughout the ensuing decade, so much so that by the late 1960s, it became evident that the University's library building, now called the Cunningham Memorial Library, was not meeting the needs of the growing collection. The legislature appropriated \$6,250,000 for a new library building for what was now called Indiana State College. Construction began December 1970, and the new library opened its doors in January of 1973. As we now write, the library is celebrating its 30th anniversary of the current building, and plans are being made to modify the library structure to fit the growing needs of the University's students and faculty. These changes are being made not

only to improve the manner in which we support the curriculum of the University, but also, as we will see later, to make the library a more welcoming structure – one which will compel people to visit and to gather.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING NEW LIBRARY FACULTY AND STAFF

A library is very much a human place, and because of this quality, its staffing often is in a state of flux over time. Retirement, opportunities for professional advancement, and changes in everyday life deplete the ranks of the library family, and when this occurs, the void is genuinely felt. Such loss is both professional and personal, because the dynamic of an effective library staff is dependent both upon the professionalism of its workers and upon their collegiality. For anyone who has spent time in libraries, it is readily apparent that libraries have distinct personalities. Some libraries may be quiet and reserved, others cold and imposing, and still others warm and ebullient. Because of this, the hiring of a new professional goes far beyond their qualifications and often takes into account the persona of the individual and how they would fit into the outlook of the organization. As in any good relationship, each library has to find a “partner” that is a good fit – someone who will mesh well with other members of the organization. At CML, this is very much the case, given that we are “team” oriented.

When we lose a team member, our Dean assesses the needs of the library, and a decision is reached to meet these needs through the recruitment and hiring of new faculty or support staff. Once this decision has been made, the Dean of Library Services contacts the office of the University Provost to obtain a clearance for a job search. After “clearance” is obtained, the Dean then meets our Library Faculty Assembly (LFA) who in turn charges the Library Administrative Affairs Committee (LAAC) to examine a preliminary position description. Upon the finalization of the position description, in the case of professional faculty, the Dean then forms a search committee. In case of support staff, the Dean works closely with the Office of Human Resources in finding candidates who are not only interested in working for the library, but also who are well qualified to contribute its overall operation. Once these individuals are identified, the team leader, or department head interviews them, and recommendations are made to the Dean.

In the case of library faculty candidates, a search committee is formed. This process begins with a call for volunteers who would be willing to serve on the committee. The Dean selects the members for the committee based on their qualifications and their ability to work effectively together. In the past, our search committees were composed of five people. At the present time, however, our committees at CML are

limited to three people only for greater efficiency. The Dean feels that keeping the committee formation to only three people helps the library get a better handle on the tight deadline schedule from the Provost’s office. Of the three members, two are of faculty rank and one is a member of the support staff. By doing so, all individuals who work in the library are represented.

Beyond the formation and composition of the search committee, the search process itself follows common practice: job advertisements are mailed to library schools and are placed in print publications, Listservs and websites; applications are screened and the pool of candidates is narrowed; telephone interviews are conducted to further narrow the field; and finally, three or four candidates are invited for onsite interviews. These final interviews provide an opportunity for the staff to get to know the candidates better and to see if they would be a “good fit” for our organization. Throughout the interview process, library staff fills out evaluation forms, giving their impression of the candidates. These become critical aids to the search committee and the Dean, who will ultimately make the final decision in the hiring of the individual. Once the library has hired a person to fill the position, CML makes every effort to assure that the new librarian or support staff will succeed and want to remain with the organization. One means of accomplishing this is through the assignment of library mentors.

The type of mentoring provided by CML is fairly unique to our University environment, as other departments have not engaged in this practice. Our mentors are usually drawn from senior faculty or staff, so that they may impart to the new person the wealth of their experience derived from working for the library over a period of time. Mentoring at CML comes in a variety of styles: professional, social, and unofficial. Professional mentoring involves helping the new faculty or support staff member to acclimate to their new role, and to help them both succeed and advance in their position. These mentors are identified and assigned by the Dean, and they are paired with the new individual because it is felt that their personalities will be a good match. For library faculty who are expected to fulfill certain requirements that lead them into tenure status – research, publication, presentations, and service – the assignment of a mentor eases the demand of the process.

In addition to mentoring, from day one new faculty or support staff members are made aware that there is an open door policy on the part of the Dean and Associate Dean. Should they have any concerns, they know that both administrators are supportive and open to their ideas. Such openness and availability is largely a result of the Deans taking time to get to know their employees.

Camaraderie is another essential ingredient to retaining new faculty or support staff members. One

means of strengthening staff bonds is through their participation in group activities, whether it takes form in a staff retreat, professional training sessions, parties, or the sharing of meals. For example, every Friday a call goes out via the library Listserv inviting colleagues to order pizza, or to simply join the lunch group. It has become one of our staff's favorite activities. Another means by which we have come together and have shared the wealth of our library experience is through what we call the "Third Thursday Forum." As the name implies, time is reserved on the third Thursday of the month for conference reports, training activities, or the sharing of research on the part of colleagues.

The promulgation of a team spirit within the library ranks has facilitated, to a certain degree, the changes proposed by the new Dean to our library environment. When the Dean determined that the current library structure needed a face-lift, she made a conscious effort to involve all members of our support staff, faculty, and administration in the planning overall process. To this end, a number of brainstorming sessions were held. Two components of these sessions were game activities and the sharing of food, which promoted our working as a team.

Accommodation for the research, educational, and personal needs of our faculty and staff is given in the form of flexible scheduling. Flexibility of scheduling is extremely appreciated by our faculty because of the research demands made upon them. To ensure tenure and promotion, they are expected to publish or deliver papers at professional meetings. Librarians are allotted five days each year for research purposes. Beyond this, accommodation in scheduling for research is given at those times when our students are not present on campus. Flexibility in scheduling is also extended to the support staff that work in technical services. Many of our people arrive early in the morning so that they may leave early in the afternoons. One benefit of this practice is that it allows them to better meet the needs of our patrons through the rush cataloging and processing of materials early in the day.

A final means of retaining faculty and support staff at CML takes form in the tremendous generosity of the University and library administration with respect to opportunities for professional development. Our colleagues are encouraged to participate in professional meetings or training sessions, and to assure they partake in such activities, time is granted with little or no questions. Further, library administration endeavors to see to it that their employees are compensated for a portion of their travel and registration expenses. All benefit from this munificence, particularly the users that we serve.

Our library is a wonderful place in which to work and to grow professionally, and this is due, first and

foremost, to the care exercised by library administrators to assemble people who work well together. In the end, it is the "gathering" of people who work here, their talents, and their personalities that constitute one factor that makes our library the place that it is. However, there is another factor that makes our library the place that it is, the patrons that we serve, and the means by which we attract, or encourage them to gather here takes upon many forms.

ATTRACTING LIBRARY USERS

As set out in the vision statement of our library, CML views itself as a "partner in advancing the teaching, research, and service missions of the University."³ Central to this vision are the concepts of service and environment, as both factor into attracting users to the library. We are very aware of our user's needs; therefore we strive to collect the best resources to meet these needs, both print and electronic. Regardless of the quality of these resources, assuring that our patrons have access to information is proportionate to the quality of service that we provide. In this area we are constantly and continually updating our professional skills to meet these demands. Further, we have explored the use of emerging technologies to enhance access.

At the present time, we are building upon the concept of the library as a gathering place by creating collaborative computer workstations. Finding that members of our teaching faculty are increasingly asking their students to participate in "group projects," we responded to this need through the creation of computer workstations that would allow large groups of students to sit together as they access our electronic resources. Relative to this, we also circulate wireless laptops, so that our students may use them in the privacy of our group study rooms. Should students desire to use wireless technology with their own laptops, wireless cards circulate from the information desk and are installed by our systems people. It should be noted that our library had the first wireless network on campus.

Even though we have these wonderful resources and provide valuable service, we still have to attract students to the library. Over the past two years, we have tried to make our new students, especially our international students, more comfortable with what could be called the "library experience." Welcome back student events draw both new and returning students into the library through the use of door prizes and food. Once within the library, they are offered mini tours of the building, and as part of this process they are introduced to our various service points and our resources. For returning students, this is a valuable means of introducing them to new resources and services. As we now write, plans are being made for the expansion of this

experience, an event called the “Library Extravaganza.” Using the model of a carnival, tables will be set up in various parts of the library, showcasing the services and resources that we offer. Food, games, prizes, and music will also factor into the event.

Another means of attracting users to our library is through creating a comfortable study environment. One means of achieving this will be through the creation of an onsite coffee shop. Through the collaborative efforts of the library and a local coffee shop (The Coffee Grounds), our users will soon have a place to enjoy a good cup of coffee, a sandwich or pastry, and a good read. In addition, we are now expanding our first floor browsing collection to include current periodicals and “popular” media materials such as video games, DVDs, and CDs. Further, new furniture is being selected to enhance this area and to create a more relaxing study environment.

In conclusion, we believe that not only is our campus unique and attractive, but that our library is a terrific place to work and explore our ever-changing world. This is due, in large part, to the dedicated individuals who work in this environment, librarians and users alike, who make the Cunningham Memorial Library truly a “gathering place.”

ENDNOTES

1 The historical background of the library has been principally derived from the “History of Indiana State University Libraries” found in Indiana State University Library, *Indiana State University Library Staff Handbook* (Terre Haute: Indiana State University, June 26, 2000). Online. Available: <http://odin.indstate.edu/level1.dir/staff.html#HISTORY>. Accessed: May 28, 2003.

2 Rare Books and Special Collections Department, “Collection Development Policy CDP-14: Cunningham Collection” (Terre Haute: Indiana State University, March 30, 1995/rev. April 27, 1995). Online. Available: <http://panther.indstate.edu/irdac/documents/SpecialCollections.htm>. Accessed: July 10, 2003.

3 Indiana State University Library, “Library Vision Statement” (Terre Haute: Indiana State University, January 28, 2002). Online. Available: <http://odin.indstate.edu/level1.dir/library.dir/vision.html>. Accessed: July 10, 2003.