Library Focus

Transforming Libraries:
The Information Commons in Academic Libraries

—SHERRY LAUGHLIN, ASSOCIATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

I magine that you have just come from class and you stop into Starbucks for a cup of coffee. You still have half an hour before your reserved time for the presentation room where you will practice your speech assignment and then view a recording of your session. You came by last week for help writing the speech and finding your sources. Then you rolled a chair up to one of the many available computers, typed it, and even created a PowerPoint slide show as a visual aide. Now you can sit back on the leather sofa (next to your roommate, who is snoozing after an all-night study group) and instant message a librarian from your laptop for some last minute questions. All this has happened in the library.

In the library?
YES!

A Library Evolution

In the mid- to late 1990s, an evolution in academic libraries began, transforming them from traditional collection centered repositories to dynamic, student-centered, and service-oriented learning environments. Known as information commons or learning commons, these new library services and spaces were developed in response to several factors: 1) Advancements in instructional technology and the large scale adoption of that technology by university faculty; 2) The rise of the millennial generation of students who are technologically sophisticated and who have high expectations for services and resources; and 3) The shift in higher education from a teaching culture toward a culture of learning.

At the same time that these changes were taking place in higher education and in the

student population, academic libraries across the nation experienced declining entrance counts as libraries pushed more services and resources into the online environment. Students and faculty were using library materials, databases, and services in larger numbers than ever before, but much of this use was via the Internet. Librarians were forced to examine the impact of these new usage patterns on facilities, staffing, and budgets, and to determine what the role of the academic library of the future might be.

As librarians were studying the changes in the way their libraries were being used, they also noticed something else. Chain bookstores with coffee shops were always packed at nights and on weekends. Recognizing the "Barnes & Noble effect," librarians relaxed food and drink policies, began experimenting with the installation of coffee shops and comfortable furniture, and library entrance counts began to climb. Indeed, following the opening of Starbucks in January 2004, the entrance count for Cook

Library reversed a five-year decline with an increase of 17 percent during the following academic year.

Are they just here for the coffee?
WE DON'T THINK SO.

A stroll through the Southern Miss Cook Library during a busy week day will show a packed computer lab, usually with a waiting line, as students work on papers, complete assignments, and find information using the Internet. A quick look around reveals informal student/professor conferences, committee and staff meetings in the comfortable Starbucks space, and three or four students crowded around a tiny computer screen as they work on a project. There are often seven or eight students in a group study room designed for five. You can see film viewing sessions in the Reading Room, small groups watching CNN in the TV lounge, library orientation sessions, students asking questions and getting help, large class groups in the lobby, and many other activities. Your first impression is that this is a very busy place.

The Information Hub

The notion of the quiet, musty, and dignified academic library of the past, while remembered fondly by many, is as outdated as the card catalog. Today's – and tomorrow's – academic libraries are vibrant centers for learning, studying, socializing, and discovery. Open and staffed more hours than any other facility on the university campus, the academic library has become an informal hub of student life, the busiest information and referral operation on campus, and the university's de facto visitor's center, all while maintaining traditional library activities. Today's library is helping students, faculty, and staff find and interpret the information they need in an increasingly complex information landscape.

During the last year, there have been many informal conversations among Southern Miss faculty, staff and students about the role of University Libraries. A vision of a new kind of library is beginning to take shape: a library that not only fulfills its traditional functions, but also embraces a new role which integrates information, technology, and learning. Here are some ideas being discussed:

- **Enhanced access to basic technology.** Up to 150 student computers with Microsoft Office suite and Internet access. Computer workstation furniture configured to allow space for spreading out books and papers and for collaborative work.
- **Enhanced Information Desk services.** Technology help for Microsoft Office suite and Internet access software, chat or instant message help with library services and technology questions.
- **Extended hours.** Cook Library first floor hours extended to 24 hours per day/five days per week.
- **Writing Center located in Cook Library.** A centralized location for students to get help to improve their writing skills.
- **Speaking Center located in Cook Library.** An enhanced facility for the Speaking Center where students get help with speaking skills and can practice speeches with presentation equipment.
- **Comfortable, attractive space.** Upholstered furniture, ottomans, reading lamps and spaces zoned for particular activities will provide a more welcoming environment.
- **Reservable space.** Space for book talks, poetry readings, discussion groups, student and faculty presentations, and displays of memorabilia from the University archives.
- **Multimedia workstations.** Computers capable of creating and manipulating multimedia.
- **A printing/scanning/copying center** for in-library use
- **Reservable electronic classrooms.**
- **Your suggestions and ideas.**

During the spring and summer, we will be asking for your ideas about how University Libraries can meet changing student needs. The annual library user survey conducted during the spring semester, an online survey, focus groups and other methods will be used to help us find out what you think our library of the future should be. For more information or to express an opinion, contact Sherry Laughlin at 601.266.4270 or sherry.laughlin@usm.edu.

MetaLib Coming Soon to the University Libraries

— STEVEN TURNER, LIBRARY WEB SERVICES MANAGER

Wouldn't it be convenient to perform a full-text search of the library's most popular databases at the same time? Or how about having a tool that provides the ability to perform a full-text search across all of the databases in a given subject area or current area of interest? The University Libraries will soon be able to meet those requests and much more with the introduction of the MetaLib metasearch tool from Ex Libris®.

A member of the same family of journal-linking tools as FindIt! (SFX), MetaLib is a software engine that connects to almost every library resource, allowing patrons to use a common interface. Much like Google, Metalib performs a single search that is distributed to multiple full-text electronic resources. For example, a user could log in to the MetaLib interface and choose a "set" of databases like "Arts & Sciences." This set could include anywhere from five to 15 (or more) full-text electronic resources from that particular subject area. After performing a search using a given set, users will be presented with full-text results from each of these databases in a simple-to-understand interface. Depending on the resource searched, users may be able to read entire articles from within the Metalib interface, or will be presented with a URL to that particular item or article.

Additionally, users will be able to search common University Libraries' database sets or groupings from the front page of the library Web site, similar to the current library catalog search. MetaLib is in use at hundreds of academic libraries worldwide and will make searching for resources at University Libraries easier and more efficient.

For more information on MetaLib, please visit www.exlibrisgroup.com/metalib.htm, or contact steven.turner@usm.edu.

The University Libraries Moves to New Authentication Method

— STEVEN TURNER, LIBRARY WEB SERVICES MANAGER

The University of Southern Mississippi Libraries has moved to a new authentication system for remote access to electronic resources and document delivery. This new system determines student, staff, or faculty eligibility for access using the university's central authentication server, providing University of Southern Mississippi Libraries patrons with the convenience of a 'single sign-on' solution that is compliant with other university systems.

The library can now also authenticate patrons in real-time. Previously, the University Libraries used an internal system in which patron information took up to 24 hours to circulate to all library systems, resulting in considerable lag time between patron registration and patron access to resources. However, using the new system, patrons who register with Southern Miss can use the library's resources at the same time they can access any other centralized university service (including SOAR, Southern Miss Web mail, and WebCT). Users will now experience improved utility as the University Libraries shares the same username and password for all university services. For more information, please contact the Library Web Services Manager at steven.turner@usm.edu.

The Gulf Coast Library and Media Center After Katrina

— EDWARD McCORMACK, INTERIM UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

The Southern Miss Gulf Coast campus, located in Long Beach, Mississippi, suffered tremendous damage from Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005. The entire first floor of The Gulf Coast Library and Media Center was wrecked by storm surge. The estimated total cost of lost or destroyed materials and equipment is approximately $598,000.

Immediately after Katrina, Southern Miss University Libraries established a facility at the temporary Gulf Coast campus in Gulfport, Mississippi. By October 2005, library services resumed and a courier began operating between Long Beach and Gulfport to retrieve requested materials.

Recovery efforts, largely through gifts and grants, are on-going. Recently,University Libraries was awarded a $25,000 grant from the SOLINET Academic Library Hurricane Recovery Project. These funds are being put to good use replacing books and media that were lost or damaged.

Lawmakers in Jackson also gave assistance to the devastated library when the Mississippi Legislature approved a credit line of $150 million for the campus which will be used to repair the building pending FEMA and insurance settlements.

JOURNALS FROM THE GUNTER RESEARCH LIBRARY

Exciting plans are in progress to convert the new first floor of the Gulf Coast Library into an Information Commons. A current trend in academic libraries, the Information Commons is a student-centered, collaborative environment that integrates the services of information technologists, librarians, instructional technologists, multi-media producers, and others to serve a wide range of student and faculty needs. This is a wonderful opportunity not only to recover from the ruin of Hurricane Katrina but to move Southern Miss Libraries into the future.

Additional plans to update the damaged building include the housing of the Katrina Research Center (KRC). Instituted by The University of Southern Mississippi in late 2005, the KRC will be established on the third floor of the library. The Gulf Coast Library and Media Center will collaborate with the KRC to promote community awareness and provide access to scholars and the general public.

The projected date for completion of repairs to the Gulf Coast Library and Media Center is Fall 2007.

LONG BEACH CAMPUS

The 40th Annual Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival

—ELLEN RUFFIN, DE GRUMMOND CURATOR

Every spring, The University of Southern Mississippi and the city of Hattiesburg host the annual Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival. The festival, begun by University Librarian Warren Tracey in 1967, brings in top authors and illustrators in the field of children's literature.

In the Beginning

Dr. Lena de Grummond, a professor of children's literature in the School of Library and Information Sciences, had a vision of making children's publishing come alive for her students. De Grummond thought that as future librarians and teachers their knowledge and experience with children's books would be enlivened by viewing original materials from authors and illustrators. So she began writing letters to those authors and illustrators, asking them for page proofs, galleys, original renderings, editorial comments, etc. She would often tell them, "Whatever you think you might throw away, send it. If you have already placed it in the wastebasket, send us the wastebasket." And they did.

When Warren Tracey saw how the de Grummond Collection was developing, and when he considered the treasures that were coming in, he suggested having a children's book festival, both to showcase the treasures and to introduce premiere authors and illustrators to librarians and teachers.

The first year of the festival a medallion was not given, but in the second year, Lois Lenski was the recipient of the first University of Southern Mississippi Medallion, an award given to an author or an illustrator for significant contributions to children's literature. The Children's Book Festival was renamed in 2001 in honor of Fay B. Kaigler, a retired school teacher and native Mississippian who was an ardent advocate of instilling the importance of reading in students.

CHILDREN ENJOY A PUPPET SHOW AT THE FESTIVAL

40 Years of Children's Literature

This year's event, held in late March, marked the 40th anniversary of the festival. Several former medallion recipients returned, as did many participants who attend year after year. This year's Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival was held in the new Thad Cochran Center, with the autographing sessions in the new Southern Miss Barnes & Noble bookstore.

This year's recipient of the medallion was author Eve Bunting. Mrs. Bunting has written over 100 books for children in almost every genre, including picture books and non-fiction. Her title *Smoky Night* was

EVE BUNTING

awarded the 1995 Caldecott Medal, an honor given annually by the American Library Association to the illustrator of an outstanding American children's picture book. Bunting's other awards include the Golden Kite Award from the Society of Children's Book Writers, the PEN Los Angeles Center Literary Award

for Special Achievement in Children's Literature, and the Edgar award, given by the Mystery Writers of America for *Coffin on a Case!*

Highlights of the Festival included:

- Russell Freedman, the 1999 medallion winner, returned for the 40th anniversary celebration. Freedman won the Newberry Medal in 1994 and was selected by the Association of Library Services to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to deliver the prestigious Arbuthnot Honor Lecture in 2006.

- The festival's Ezra Jack Keats lecture was delivered by noted children's literature scholar Leonard Marcus. A leading critic and historian in the field of children's literature, Marcus is the author of many biographical works of children's book authors. His titles include *Margaret Wise Brown: Awakened by the Moon* and *Ways of Telling: Conversations on the Art of the Picture Book*.

- Janet Stevens, a 1996 Caldecott honor recipient for *Tops and Bottoms*, was also a part of this year's festival. Stevens has most recently collaborated with Coleen Salley, a longtime supporter of the festival.

- Coleen Salley, known throughout the world for her love of children, storytelling, and the written word, has received wide acclaim for her *Epossumondas* series. An avid supporter of the Fay B. Kaigler book festival, Salley charmed the audience with her personality and wit.

- Scott Cook, a de Grummond Children's Literature Collection contributor, was also featured at this year's festival. He delighted his audiences with his energy, enthusiasm and marionettes!

- A new look was presented in the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection Exhibit Room in Cook Library and guided gallery talks were provided by the de Grummond curator and staff.

For more information about the de Grummond Collection or about the annual Children's Book Festival, contact Ellen Ruffin at 601.266.4349 or Ellen.Ruffin@usm.edu, or Karen Boney at 601.266.4510 or Karen.Boney@usm.edu.

BOOKSIGNING AT THE FESTIVAL

Finding a Voice in Cook Library: The QEP Speaking Center

—JULIE HOWDESHELL, QEP DIRECTOR

In February, the Speaking Center celebrated its first birthday! Housed in Cook Library on the Hattiesburg campus, the Speaking Center was initiated as part of the University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), named *Finding a Voice: Improving Oral and Written Competencies*. The Speaking Center provides assistance to the Southern Miss community for the development of students' abilities as competent and ethical speakers.

Under the direction of Dr. Susan M. Ross, trained peer consultants offer personal assistance to students at any stage of the composing process, from generating topics to delivering the presentation. In addition, a rehearsal room is available with the tools and space to rehearse, video record, observe, and discuss a presentation with a consultant.

Since its opening in February 2006, the Speaking Center has helped over 150 students strengthen their oral presentations. The Speaking Center also helps faculty design speaking assignments to foster course objectives.

Plans are underway for the Writing Center and Writing Lab to move to Cook Library later this year, creating a comprehensive student writing service in one central location.

By housing the Speaking Center, Writing Center, and Library together, students will gain easier access to relevant materials and research assistance in developing papers and presentations. In addition, it will allow greater opportunities for collaboration in developing students' research and communication skills.

For more information, visit the QEP: *Finding a Voice* Web site at www.usm.edu/qep or contact Julie Howdeshell at qep@usm.edu or 601.266.4525.

Reading for Fun!

Cook Library now has a collection of popular fiction and nonfiction books for leisurely reading. This collection numbers approximately 1,000 books, with new titles being added each month. Located in the Information Services room just outside Starbucks, the books are in an ideal location for browsing with a cup of coffee.

The Popular Reading Collection was established as a result of focus group sessions and student requests for books to read "just for fun." The collection rotates, with new books arriving each month that can be checked out for 30 days.

A recent order of 60 up-to-date travel guides should get here just in time for the summer vacation season. Current, general interest titles are also being purchased on topics such as human rights, morality of war, elections and politics, immigration, African-American history, the death penalty and many others.

Adjacent to the Popular Reading Collection is a small but growing collection of Southern Miss faculty publications. University Libraries is making a concerted effort to purchase copies of books written or edited by Southern Miss faculty.

Please contact Nancy Kaul at Nancy.Kaul@usm.edu or 601.266.5078 if you would like to suggest a title for purchase, or better still, if you would like to donate a copy of your book.

Library Receives Katrina Grants

University Libraries has received two grants of $25,000 each for the replacement of books and materials lost or damaged during Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. The grants, one for Gunter Library at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory and the other for the Gulf Coast Library in Long Beach, are funded by the SOLINET Academic Libraries Hurricane Recovery Project and the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Grants totaling $365,000 were awarded to 19 academic libraries in the Gulf South region during the fall of 2006.

New Portable DVD Players at the Library!

—TRACY ENGLERT, MEDIA LIBRARIAN

Cook Library now has portable DVD players available for 14-day checkout to students, faculty, and staff at the Reading Room Desk located on the second floor of the Library. Each player also has the ability to play CDs and is equipped with an 8.5-inch adjustable viewing screen, rechargeable battery, AC power adaptor, DC power adapter for use with vehicle cigarette lighters, AV cable for use with TVs, and remote control.

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