

## CHAPTER 10

# Research and College Libraries

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**M**ost colleges and universities describe their three major missions as teaching, research, and service. Information feeds research, and research produces discoveries that improve our quality of life. We are in the midst of an information explosion. Those who want to keep up, to participate, and to succeed in college, career, and community have to acquire the basic research and critical-thinking skills needed to make sense of the vast amount of information available at our fingertips. It means developing information literacy.

#### IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL LEARN

- What the Information Age is about
- The differences between research and simply “finding stuff”
- The threats posed by GNI—galloping new ignorance
- Why information literacy is the survival skill for the 21st century
- How to focus on a topic, narrow it, and shape it
- Specific search strategies
- How plagiarism can doom a paper, a course, even a career!

## • The Information Age, the Information Explosion, and the Information Society

During the agricultural age most people farmed. Now only a tiny fraction of the U.S. population work the land. During the industrial age we made things. We still do, of course, but we have automated industry so that fewer people can produce more goods. In addition, we have shipped much of our manufacturing overseas to cheaper labor markets. Now we live in the Information Age, a label that signifies the primacy of information in our everyday lives:

- Information, having overtaken *things*, is the new commodity.
- America’s gross national product (GNP) is substantially information-based.

- Information doubles at ever-shortening intervals. This abundance has not made information easier to get, although the abundance creates that illusion.
- Because abundance and electronic access combine to produce prodigious amounts of retrievable information, people need highly developed sorting skills to cope.
- Most of the American workforce is employed at originating, managing, or transferring information.
- Information has intrinsic value; one can determine its benefits in dollars, and one can compute the cost of not having it.
- In the corporate world, information and knowledge combine to form *intellectual capital*, which represents the value of what people in the organization know.
- Information literacy is the survival skill for this millennium.

## The Information Society

Here is an IBM-developed definition of the information society:

*A society characterized by a high level of information intensity in the everyday life of most citizens, in most organizations and workplaces; by the use of common compatible technology for a wide range of personal, social, educational, and business activities, and by the ability to transmit, receive, and exchange digital data between places **irrespective of distance** [emphasis ours].<sup>1</sup>*

A student in Butte, Montana, can access the collections of the British Library in London *in seconds*; a doctor in New York can read the EKG of a patient in Brussels in *real time*; a client's computer in Hong Kong can communicate with a manufacturer in Oslo *while the company is closed for the night*. Not only is the communication instantaneous; so is the need for current, accurate, sorted, interpreted, and packaged information. Soon you, too, will need skills to compete and thrive in this fast-paced world. You also will have to make sense of a bewildering array of information.

<sup>1</sup> IBM Community Development Foundation in a 1997 report, "The Net Result—Report of the National Working Party for Social Inclusion."

## Making Sense of It All

Not all examples of the mishandling and misjudging of information are as dramatic as Pearl Harbor, the Oklahoma City bombing, and September 11, 2001. Yet in each case, the right information failed to reach the right people at the right time. Lives were lost, peace was threatened, and economies were damaged.

How does one cope with the daily challenge of finding the right information to solve a given problem before it defeats us? Which airline or travel service really offers the cheapest airfare? Which variety of poisonous serpent bit the patient, and which antivenin is required to treat the victim? Which is likely to give me better service, a Subaru or a Toyota? Who steals most from a chain store, the customers who lift displayed products or the employees who help themselves to inventory?

Even though some of these questions are “academic” and others are down-to-earth questions that people ask as part of their jobs, they share a particular common characteristic. The answers are available in information agencies and/or in electronic formats.

## Information Literacy

The right information in the hands of resourceful people can be an instrument of great power for them. If it just lies there, however, it is not powerful at all. Furthermore, if information is outdated, ignored, misused, or misinterpreted, it can be a source of great *unpower*. An information center with five million items has no power at all, but when you retrieve relevant sources from that center, sort them, interpret them, analyze them, and synthesize them into a well-organized project, you will knock your teacher’s socks off. *That’s* power! Galloping new ignorance (GNI) siphons off power. By “galloping new ignorance,” we mean the assumption that the huge amounts of manageable information available at the press of a button confer knowledge. Put another way, if it is electronic, it is considered gospel. Conversely, if it is in print, it is considered obsolete. The newly ignorant rejoice at the discovery of 12,456 hits on fossil fuels. Then *abundance shock* takes hold if they realize their discovery is totally unsorted, and they frequently respond by *settling*—using the first five hits, irrespective of quality or authenticity. The reason this galloping new ignorance is so commonplace is that it infects smart people, decision makers—people who should know better but do not and whose decisions suffer as a consequence.

Confusing *information* for *understanding* is a common GNI symptom. People marvel at the information explosion and conclude that they are or can

easily become informed. Many are unprepared for the blurring of lines between disciplines, the prodigious assault of publications, and the unsorted, unevaluated mass of information that pours down upon them at the press of a button.

The antidote for galloping new ignorance is learning to be information literate.

- 1. Know that information matters.** It helps empower people to make good choices. The choices people make often determine their success in business, their happiness as partners, and their well being as citizens on this planet.
- 2. Know how and where to find it.** If we are sick, we must know whose help to seek. If we are poor, we need to know where to get assistance. If we want to study chemistry, we need to know which schools offer degrees, how much they charge, if there are scholarships, and who will hire us when we graduate.
- 3. Know how to find and retrieve information.** Once we find where to go and whom to ask, we must possess the skills to ask good questions and to make educated searches of information systems such as the Internet, libraries, and databases. We must cultivate relationships with information professionals—the librarians. We must be able to identify and define our need and to use the kinds of inquiry terminology that will give us hits instead of misses.
- 4. Learn how to interpret the information you find.** While it is very important to retrieve information, it is even more important to know what to do with it. Is the information accurate? Is the author/provider a reliable source? How can you determine this?

**Is it introductory?** Introductory information is very basic and elementary. It does what its name implies—it introduces and provides a first impression. It often neither assumes nor requires prior knowledge about the topic. Example: *A snake is a long-bodied, legless animal.*

**Is it definitional?** Definitional information provides some descriptive details about a topic. Example: *Snakes are either venomous or nonvenomous. The venom may be of three types: neurotoxic, hemotoxic, or a combination of both.*

**Is it analytical?** Analytical information supplies data about origins, behaviors, differences, and uses. Example: *While some snakes are shy and prefer to retreat when disturbed, some are aggressive. People who mistake venomous varieties for harmless ones suffer deadly consequences.*

**Is it current or dated?** Is it someone's opinion, or is it a rigorously researched document? Can you lay it out in a logical sequence? Can you conclude anything? Use the "So what?" test: How important is this discovery?

**Whom are you going to tell about your discovery, and how?** Will you write a report? What guidelines for construction will you follow? Will you respect the intellectual property of others by giving appropriate credit to sources? Will you give your report orally? If you transfer this information orally, how should you prepare for your presentation? Information literacy has many facets, among them:

**Computer literacy**, the abilities associated with using electronic methods (search language), both for inquiry and for constructing presentations for others of what you have found and analyzed.

**Media literacy**, which is about facility with various formats: film, tape, CDs, and the machines that operate them.

**Cultural literacy**, keeping up with what has gone on and is going on around you. If someone refers to the Great Bambino or a feat of Ruthian proportion, you have to know about George Herman (Babe) Ruth, or you will not get the point. You have to know the difference between the Civil War and the Revolution, U2 and Y2K, Eminem and M&Ms, or you will not understand everyday conversation.

## Researching and Presenting an Assigned Topic

Today when you tackle an information problem, you will probably consult the staff and holdings of the library at your campus as well as search the Internet. Tomorrow when you tackle an information problem, you may well consult a knowledge manager at your organization's information center and/or the Internet. In both cases you will apply the same information skills.

If you are fortunate to have an instructor who understands that information literacy skills are best practiced and learned when an inquirer has a reason for gathering information, that instructor will have given you an assignment to discover, interpret, organize, and present some findings to your classmates. What steps should you take to execute your assignment? If you are willing to practice information literacy, the survival skill you must acquire if you are to prosper in the information society, you must take these steps:

You have a topic, an inquiry task, and a product to produce:

TOPIC	INQUIRY TASK	PRODUCT
Political ethics	Definition Introduction Some examples Current Historical Problems, if any Important aspects to report Conclusions to draw	Paper and/or oral report

**Step 1. Define the topic in general terms.** Any respected general dictionary can define ethics for you, but it would be a good idea to get your topic defined in context. Since your topic is *political* ethics, consult a political dictionary and an encyclopedia that would consider the political aspects of your ethics topic. For example, you will find a great article on lobbies in *The Encyclopedia of American Political History*.

**Step 2. Specify and narrow your topic.** After you have retrieved a definition that you determine to be complete and understandable, you are ready to search for a good introduction. What aspects of political ethics will you pursue? Even if you launch the most general of inquiries, you will very quickly discover that your topic is vast and that there are many related subtopics.

Here's where the narrowing comes in, for when you consult political ethics in the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (LCSH) or when you check political ethics in the library's electronic catalog, you will discover some choices:

Civil service, ethics	Judicial ethics
Conflicts of interest	Justice
Corporations—Corrupt practices	Legislative ethics
Ethics, modern	Political corruption
Environmental ethics	Political ethics
Fairness	Social ethics
Gifts to politicians	

Note two things. First of all, your topic is broad. Every one of these headings leads to books and articles on political ethics. The good news is there's lots of information; the bad news is there's lots of information. For your sanity's sake, narrow your topic; get specific. In the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* you will encounter some abbreviations that may help you with your *search* and *narrow* mission. In this valuable volume, BT means *broader term* and suggests that you can get more specific. NT means *narrower term*; you *are* getting specific. RT means *related term* and identifies an additional related topic. UF means *used for* and tells you that the subject heading you have found is the standard term used by many finding tools.

Your library's catalog probably has InfoTrac® College Edition, an electronic indexing tool. *Social Science Citation Index* carries the actual words used in the titles of articles so that searchers can inquire, electronically or in print, in everyday language. Be on guard; some indexing tools, such as *The New York Times Index* and *ERIC*, have their own legal subject terms and their own thesauri or lists that you should consult before searching.

Because you may know about the efforts of lobbyists and political action committees (PACs) to influence legislation, and because this sub-topic interests you, you may decide upon *gifts to politicians* and *political corruption* as your target topics.

Encyclopedic sources will help you craft an introduction to your three-pronged topic: gifts to politicians, political corruption, and lobbyists. For instance, two editions of the previously cited and very useful specific subject encyclopedia, *The Encyclopedia of American Political History*, can supply some interesting information. If an encyclopedia has an index, use it. Your chances of finding something useful are increased manyfold if you check the index first.

**Step 3. Launch your search.** It is decision time. Are you going to search print or electronic sources? For best results, decide to do *both*. Where you begin is up to you. You may go after books or periodicals. Let's say you decide on periodicals, journals, and magazines first.

Your library may still subscribe to the following print indexes: *Readers' Guide*, *Social Science Index*, and PAIS *International Political Science Abstracts*. Even if the library has discontinued the current print subscriptions in favor of electronic ones, check out your subject headings in a three-to-five-year-old print version:

- You will see full-page displays of multiple listings.
- You will see some retrospective (historical) coverage of your topic.
- You will see titles of some articles that will further inform you.
- You may encounter some useful *see also* subject headings that may help you home in precisely on your target.

Get the serial *Editorials on File* for some real point-of-view observations. Everything you find in *Editorials on File* will be opinion. Check the indexes bound at the end of a yearly volume. You may not find *gifts to politicians*, *political corruption*, or *lobbying*, but under *politics* you can find gems like these: "Bradley/McCain soft money rejection," and "Campaign contributor limit," each of which leads to numerous columns of editorial reporting.

In searching articles, you should be aware that there may be a heavy dose of bias or point-of-view in some of them. Although nothing is inherently wrong with point-of-view, or with having a personal agenda, it is dangerous for an inquirer not to know that the bias is there. A great source for keeping you informed about this is *Magazines for Libraries* (LaGuardia, 2002), which will tell you about a periodical's editorial leanings. Here are some examples:

PERIODICAL TITLE	PERSPECTIVE
<i>America</i>	Jesuit/Catholic
<i>Church and State</i>	Historically Protestant
<i>Commentary</i>	American Jewish Committee
<i>Commonweal</i>	Catholic perspective
<i>Time</i>	Major news weekly; not opinion-free
<i>New Republic</i>	"Even-handed"
<i>National Review</i>	Conservative

## Let's Go Electronic

Online periodical databases, online catalogs, and the World Wide Web allow you to quickly locate materials in the vast universe of electronic information. First, know the difference between searching online catalogs or periodical databases and the World Wide Web (WWW). Online catalogs and online periodical databases such as InfoTrac College Edition or *LexisNexis* are accessed via the Internet; the WWW only acts as a “host” to disseminate the information. Information for a database is usually stored in a single location or server owned by a company such as Gale Research. Remember, much of the information found in online periodical databases may also be found in print. Being careful to search terms relevant to your investigation will help you retrieve stuff you can use. Hence, searching InfoTrac College Edition is a lot like searching the print version of *Readers' Guide*—only much quicker.

Searching the World Wide Web, on the other hand, is a totally different story. You get different results from those you retrieve in a database. The information you seek on the WWW is not found in a single location, but is an aggregation of information from the vast universe of servers across the globe. To search the WWW, you need to use a commercial search engine such as Google, Yahoo, AltaVista, or Northern Lights. Anybody and his mama can have a Web site on the WWW, so the information you retrieve may be written by anyone—a fifth grader, a distinguished professor, a professional society, or a biased advocate! The super search engines send out little spiders, or “bots,” to find key words in posted Web sites, and they may include in their files what their little electronic snoops find in the way of hits. So Joe Blow's uninformed comments on smoking and health could be right next to results from a rigorous scientific study. After a few assignments, you will quickly learn when to use a database and when information from the WWW is authoritative and sufficient.

You should know that an *index* and a *catalog* have completely different uses. A catalog—OPAC (online public access catalog)—tells you what books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and other materials your library owns. An index such as InfoTrac College Edition, *Readers' Guide*, or *America History and Life* allows you to search for articles within periodicals such as newspapers, magazines, journals, or even book chapters. To become a successful and savvy user of electronic resources, you need to establish and follow certain guidelines that work well for you:

1. Write out your topic or problem as a statement or question. “Is it *right* for *politicians* to take *gifts* from *lobbyists*?” “The influence of *lobbyists* or *PACs* has dramatically changed American *political ethics*.” (Key words are italicized.)



2. Write down several terms or synonyms for your topic so that if one search does not yield any hits, you have some back-up terms on hand.
3. Understand Boolean operators: *AND*, *OR*, and *NOT* are the ones most commonly used. The *OR* operator retrieves all synonyms, as in "PACs or Political Action Committees or Lobbyists." The computer always performs the *OR* function first. The *AND* operator retrieves only those records that have *BOTH* sets of terms, as in "PACs and Political Action Committees." Searching for "foreign films not French" will lead you to hits on all foreign films except those from France.
4. Know the difference between *subject* and *keyword* searches. "Subject" searches a controlled vocabulary list, and you need to know exact terminology in order to get good results: *political corruption—United States—history*. "Keyword" searches the entire record, including the title, notes, table of contents, or perhaps the abstract or the full text as well as the subject field: *political corruption AND United States AND history*. You may use Boolean operators in a keyword search.
5. The first time you use any electronic resource, be sure to consult the *HELP* link provided by the catalog, database, or search engine to learn specific searching techniques.
6. Understand whether you need scholarly publications, popular magazines, or both.

**SCHOLARLY (REFEREED) JOURNALS**

Long articles  
 In-depth information on topic  
 Written by experts in subject/field  
 Graphs, tables, or photographs to support text  
 Articles reviewed by peers in field  
 Documented by works cited page

**POPULAR MAGAZINES**

Shorter articles  
 Broad overview of topic  
 Written by journalists or staff reporters  
 Lots of color photos of people and events  
 Articles evaluated by editor  
 No bibliography provided, but sources credited

7. Select the correct database for your particular subject or topic. Most libraries subdivide their databases by broad general categories such as Humanities, Social Sciences, Science and Technology, Business, Health and Medicine, and Government Information. Each library loads its subscription list onto its electronic resources page. Under "Social Sciences," for example, one might find *International Political Science Abstract*, *America: History and Life*, and over 20 other databases. Then there are multidisciplinary databases, such as InfoTrac College Edition, that provide excellent material on most topics you encounter during your first years of college. If you are not sure which database to use, check with a librarian.

## Looking Elsewhere

What if the library does not have the journal or book you really need for your research or project? The interlibrary loan department will be happy to borrow the materials for you. Most libraries allow you to submit your interlibrary loan requests online. Ask about this free service at your reference desk.

Are you a distance education student who cannot come into your college library in person? Libraries provide proxy access to their electronic materials to distance education students. To learn how, email or call the reference desk.

Be sure to use the handouts and guides available in print at the reference desk or online. You will also find online tutorials and virtual tours of the library that enable you to become familiar with the collections, service points, and policies of your library.

## Ask a Librarian

Librarians are information experts who are trained to assist and guide you to the resources you need. The librarians assigned to reference work or the ones who patrol the computer stations may look busy. That's because they are! But they are busy helping students with projects just like yours.

You will not interrupt them when you ask for assistance, and 99 percent of them will help you promptly and ably.

Today, you can contact a reference librarian in several ways. You can email a reference librarian and receive a quick reply. Or you may call the reference desk to ask a question such as “Do you have a copy of the report *Problems with the Presidential Gifts System?*” You can have a “live chat” online with a library staffer in real time. Or you may come to the reference desk in person.

## About Plagiarism

When ideas are put on paper, film, screen, or tape, they become intellectual property. Using those ideas without permission and/or without saying where you got them, and sometimes without paying for them, can cost you a grade, a course, a degree, maybe even a career. Plagiarism can mess you up big time. And it is so easy to avoid.

Just remember: If you use somebody else's exact published words, you have to give that person credit. If you use somebody else's published ideas, even if you use *your* words to express his or her ideas, you must give that person credit. Your instructor will indicate the preferred method for doing this—

with footnotes, or parenthetical references embedded in the text of your paper, and/or endnotes of some kind.

Most instructors and most college officials consider plagiarism cheating. They seldom accept “I didn’t know” as a defense. They may not acknowledge that plagiarism can be inadvertent or an *oops!* thing. The Internet, which can be a tempting repository of ideas to pilfer, now offers programs that help instructors identify plagiarized assignments! Turnitin.com and Plagiarism.org are examples of Internet help available to teachers.

Buying and then submitting a term paper from one of the many thriving *term papers ‘R’ us* electronic mills invites one to:

1. Miss out on the genuine thrill of discovery and analysis that information literacy activities provide.
2. Give a false impression that the student knows something he does not, a fakery that will catch up with him, in school and certainly on the job.
3. Flunk out.
4. Get by, if the ruse is successful, but learn little or nothing.

As a student, your task will be to manage information for projects and presentations, oral and written. In a few years, as a technical writer for IBM, a teacher of English at a school or university, or a campaign manager for a gubernatorial candidate, your task will be the same. The information literacy skills you learn and employ as a student are the same ones that will serve you well as a successful professional.

## YOUR PERSONAL JOURNAL

Here are several things to write about. Choose one or more. Or choose another topic related to libraries and research.

1. Look over the following list of common concerns and misconceptions about libraries and librarians:
  - I should automatically know how to use the library.
  - I’ve never had to use the library. I can get what I need from the Internet.
  - Librarians look too busy to help me.
  - The library is too big, and I never find what I need.
  - Librarians haven’t helped me in the past.
  - Doing research usually requires having to talk to someone and ask for help. I don’t like to do that.

Do you identify with any of these statements? Of the items listed above, are there any that you would consider misconceptions? Think about your own experiences using libraries, both the rewarding ones and the challenging or frustrating ones. What are some of your concerns or feelings?

2. Zora Neale Hurston described research as “poking and prying with a purpose.” How would you describe it?
3. What behaviors are you willing to change after reading this chapter? How might you go about changing them?
4. What else is on your mind this week? If you wish to share something with your instructor, add it to this journal entry.

## READINGS

### Drawn to Knowledge\*

By Kevin Havens

By most definitions, a library is the heart of a campus. Students gather there to research information and study quietly. The library is not just a repository of books; it symbolizes the very treasure-house of knowledge, history, and wisdom that defines the institution and the value of education.

But times have changed, and so have the perceptions of the library and its relevance. Most campus librarians report a significant decline in circulation figures, but a tremendous increase in demand for online media. Many campuses have responded by removing bookshelves and providing as many computer stations as possible. But how is this affecting meaningful learning and quality research? Is the book simply an old-fashioned “container” of information, easily replaced by the more efficient Internet?

The essence of the debate calls into question the evolving mission of the academic library. Once an institution that acquired and organized information, a library now frequently is viewed as an access point to a much greater selection of media and information that resides electronically and not physically. Most students embrace this understanding, but many faculty members are unsure of the ramifications of so radical a shift.

“College libraries can no longer be simply a repository of books and journals, nor can librarians serve only as information managers and clerks,” says Michael Bell, dean of faculty at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Ill. “But increased information without interpretation produces more noise than

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knowledge, and librarians who merely manage the information flow are likely to foster more ignorance than insight.”

### **A BALANCING ACT**

School administrators and facility planners are searching for the proper balance of technology and tradition. Making library facilities more attentive to student expectations is essential. But schools also must consider the need for high-quality scholarship and guideposts to lifelong learning. These needs must be mutually supportive.

To lure students back to the library, school planners and architects are exploring creative ways to redesign, renovate or build new library structures that meet the changing academic and social needs of its student body and faculty.

Many school administrators are embracing similar design goals as they consider modern library facilities:

- **Technology and information literacy**

Providing more computers without meaningful guidance improves neither student scholarship nor teaching effectiveness. The real differentiator seems to be harnessing new media to teach critical-thinking skills.

Several schools are providing information-literacy labs as core spaces in their new facilities. These teaching spaces allow librarians to help students develop organization and information-assessment skills. This formal guidance nurtures a student’s ability to discover, sort, and integrate information, and evaluate it critically. Students use the library most effectively when they understand how to navigate through the storm of information.

Some schools are enclosing these classrooms in glass so people can view the technology-enhanced instruction space and have uninterrupted views throughout the library without compromising acoustic containment.

Many students use laptop computers to research, write, and communicate with their peers and professors. A new or remodeled library facility should incorporate a robust network environment “painted” with wireless access to the campus network and Internet. A fiberoptic backbone connecting the library to the world is seen as the best “future-proofing” strategy for these evolving technologies.

- **Librarians as research collaborators**

As the mission of the academic library is re-examined, so is the role of the librarian. If information literacy training is essential to the success of a student’s experience and lifelong learning habits, the library staff must assume primary responsibility to provide this training.

Librarians are moving from their traditional role as information managers to become teachers of critical-learning skills, research collaborators, and technology leaders.

Librarians no longer work behind reference counters; they try to form research partnerships with students. They teach research techniques as they help find and evaluate information.

New library interiors often incorporate workstations configured in a collaborative setting. This allows students to work individually with a librarian or in small groups.

- **Reconfiguring collections**

Library collections are expanding rapidly. Librarians have been integrating non-print formats—video, DVD, and sound recordings—into their collections for years while removing hard-copy materials that are available electronically. But the interest in electronic media and declining enthusiasm for print material have driven books off the main levels of many libraries. Stacks frequently are relegated to lower levels, and in some cases, are situated in a remote part of the campus, with a system in place to retrieve requested volumes.

But most librarians agree that the book will not become extinct. Despite the proliferation of electronic media, much information is available only in print. Training students to mine this source of knowledge and not only online data is part of the mission.

- **Social and academic center**

For a library to regain its role as the center of a college's intellectual community, it must provide venues that attract students.

Spaces that incorporate both quiet reading and discussion can become alternative hangouts for students to relax and build friendships. Many libraries create private rooms for study groups to discuss assignments or prepare class presentations.

One of the more conspicuous departures from the traditional library paradigm is having a cafe or snack area inside the library. These limited-menu coffee bars become between-class gathering spots. They frequently serve as a cyber cafe with desktop and wireless laptop capabilities.

- **Looking to the future**

Most academics believe that the library still is significant and should not be discarded prematurely. In fact, many campuses are attempting to restore the vitality once common in these buildings.

The core issue is not books vs. computers, but rather the nature of learning and the quality of human discourse.

Designing a modern library environment to enhance a student's experience may involve an array of initiatives that address both academic and social issues. But the question of what form this venerable institution will take in the future is still evolving.

The most enduring vestige from the past may be that comfortable armchair in the corner, perfect for curling up with a good book.

## A NEW VISION

Size doesn't matter when renovating a campus library—it's how you use the space you're given. Take for example the vision of Michael Bell, dean of faculty at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Ill. He envisioned a library that would meet the intellectual needs of students and faculty in today's changing information environment. Yet, he saw a library that maintained its traditional responsibility to teach the critical research skills central to intellectual life.

In 2002, this liberal-arts college welcomed its 2,800 students to an expanded and reconfigured library. The \$1.4 million expansion at Buehler Library added an information-literacy laboratory and a cyber cafe, complete with food and beverages and TVs for students to catch up on the day's news. The reconfiguration of the library moved books from the first level to the basement; new layouts and furniture complemented the increased role librarians would have in collaborating with students.

Elmhurst College uses the information-literacy classroom and computer lab to conduct more than 200 instructional sessions per year for students and faculty, turning the librarians into an integral part of the teaching staff.

Since the library's renovation, library traffic has increased significantly. Elmhurst College's students are embracing the concept of a library that caters to their desire for study, socialization, and information literacy.

## Deserted No More\*

*After years of declining usage statistics, the campus library rebounds*

By Andrew Richard Albanese

Few articles caused as much of a stir among academic librarians as Scott Carlson's November 2001 *Chronicle of Higher Education* piece, "The Deserted Library." But for Tjalda Nauta, Carlson's piece caused more than a stir. It helped end her 19-year tenure at the Bentley College library (Waltham, MA). "I won't blame [my departure] directly on the article," says Nauta, who was then the director of libraries at Bentley. "But the timing was bad."

Not long after the *Chronicle* piece appeared, Nauta says she had a memorable meeting with an administrator at Bentley. "His first announcement to me," she recalls, "was basically 'I don't believe we need libraries.'" Less than inspired by that level of support from her administration, Nauta ultimately

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\**Library Journal*, April 15, 2003, v128, i7, p. 34(3). Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information. Reprinted with permission.

resigned. Now director of the library at Rhode Island College (RIC) in Providence, Nauta, like many of her fellow librarians, disagreed with what she then saw as the *Chronicle's* underlying premise—that the advent of the Internet had diminished the need for the campus library. But Nauta concedes that her views on the article have softened over the past year.

“I remember how indignant I was—how indignant we all were,” Nauta recalls. “I look at that article very differently now. When it came out it was as if [the *Chronicle*] was saying this is the end of the library. . . . It was [really] saying that the orientation of libraries is going to be different. And that’s absolutely right. We are adapting.”

## REBOUND

On a Tuesday in February, the Monroe Library at Loyola University in New Orleans is almost completely deserted. Of course, that’s because this particular Tuesday happens to be Mardi Gras, and the library is closed. Every other day the Monroe Library is the most popular place on campus. We’ve seen a tremendous increase in the number of students coming into our building and an increase in book circulation,” says Mary Lee Sweat, dean of libraries at Loyola.

Indeed, after years of declining traditional usage statistics appeared to chart the nadir of the campus library, at least in the eyes of some observers, the rising numbers at Loyola now tell a different story. Despite some gloomy prognoses for the campus library during the 1990s Internet boom, the campus library appears to be experiencing a renaissance.

At RIC, for example, annual gate count at the library had declined steadily during the early years of the Internet, from 331,530 visitors in 1993–94 to a low of 240,948 in 1998–99. But since 2000, gate count at RIC has increased. Gate count for 2001–02 was back up to a healthy 282,501, its highest point since 1995–96. Figures thus far for 2002–03 put gate count on pace to rise again. Circulation figures, Nauta says, are also on the rise. And RIC is not alone.

According to a report in the March 2 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, Illinois academic libraries, from research institutions such as Northwestern University to small private colleges like Elmhurst College, have also booked rising gate counts and usage statistics. At Illinois Wesleyan University, which opened its new Ames Library last year with more computers, more books, and a variety of instructional space, Library Director Sue Stroyan told reporters that weekly visits to the library have tripled, now up to 1,200 a week, an impressive figure for a school with an enrollment under 2,000.

At Loyola, the spacious new Monroe Library offers users five times as much space as its predecessor. Sweat says there has been no trouble filling the space with students. “Physically, the library is at the center of the campus,



and it has literally changed traffic patterns on campus,” she notes. “It has become a real social as well as intellectual center.”

## A RENAISSANCE

Brian Coutts, dean of libraries at Western Kentucky University (WKU), has also seen an increase in gate counts and circulation. “We don’t think it happened just because it happened,” Coutts says. “We took some proactive steps to make that happen.”

Today’s campus library, Courts says, is more than just a place to get resources. It’s a destination that supports new, technology-driven teaching, learning, and research patterns, offering everything from books to digital databases to a social space for students to gather.

The basic idea, says Loyola’s Sweat, is to offer students “one-stop shopping.” At Loyola’s Monroe Library, not only do students get help with finding resources and doing research, but librarians also offer a range of instructional services. “If you want students to use your library,” Sweat explains, “you want to offer them everything they need. You don’t want to have to send them to other places on campus.”

## WHAT STUDENTS WANT

“What the younger students really seem to like,” RIC’s Nauta observes, “is to sit with a laptop plugged into our wireless network, with their feet up.” Other students, she notes, prefer a quiet place where they can spread out by themselves and not be disturbed. “Others like to sit in large groups and work together,” adds Nauta. The library at RIC, Nauta says, now accommodates all those various student preferences, including the installation of a wireless network, 30 laptops for loan, and new public workstations.

Libraries have also learned from their competition, such as bookstores and Internet cafes. Many have altered their policies and practices, permitting or offering food and drink and installing comfortable furniture and an array of leisure programming, as well as multimedia instruction rooms, group study areas, and atriums where students can talk and collaborate on projects.

At WKU, Coutts says the library’s resurgence is predicated on campus partnerships. For example, the library joined with the campus food service department to build a popular cafe. The library also partnered with student government to bring entertainment to the cafe and with the An Guild on campus to redecorate the lower part of the library’s lounge. Another venture with the campus counseling center offers special programs in the library on everything from relationships to stress management. Through an alliance with the English Department, the WKU library has also opened a writing center to help students with their papers—offering assistance with everything from grammar and style to proper research.

Coutts also struck a deal with the campus IT department. In exchange for a small space in the library, that partnership has given library patrons what they really seem to want in the digital age: free printing. “With all the databases available now, students like to search and print articles.”

What about the reference desk?

Unlike rebounding gate counts and circulation figures in campus libraries, however, reference requests, librarians say, have not gone up.

Michael Gorman, dean of libraries at California State University (CSU), Fresno, says that lower reference statistics could mean any number of things. “What’s a reference question today?” Gorman asks. “A reference question years ago might have been, ‘Do you have *Time* magazine?’” Today Gorman says such basic questions are easily answered on the library’s Web site. “There is a great drop in the most elementary reference questions,” Gorman explains, “but if you counted the more substantial reference questions—‘Can you help me with my paper on Heidegger,’—I’d argue that the number is probably about the same.”

Another key figure that has stayed down is the use of current periodicals. Since 1993–94, Nauta says that she has seen a 76 percent drop in the use of periodicals. “Extraordinary,” she says. “We were able to track issues by bar code, and we couldn’t believe how much use dropped.” Those figures are mirrored at CSU, says Gorman, where current periodical use is also down roughly 80 percent.

Some of that is certainly attributable to the increasing popularity of aggregated databases and e-journals. But part of that decrease, Gorman says, points to the need for more library instruction. “There is still a tremendous need for library instruction in general and critical thinking,” Gorman says. That, he says, would help students get away from the alarming practice of using the first online source that fits and help to foster better judgment when it comes to searching for, accessing, and evaluating sources.

## A POST-INTERNET BOUNCE

Librarians also say that the circulation of books is likely getting a boost from what one librarian called a “post-Internet bounce.” In the early days of the Internet, digital euphoria suggested that everything would soon be available at the click of a mouse, obviating the need for the traditional library. As the Internet has progressed, however, that has not happened. That realization is helping to drive traffic back to the library.

Nauta says book circulation is on the rise at RIC. And unlike the situation with e-journals, e-books have yet to take off among students. Gorman agrees. “We still circulate a lot of books,” he says. Librarians also report an increase in the number of faculty who are requiring students to use traditional resources and not just Web-based resources in their work. “Because of the convenience of the Internet, students will always turn there first,” says RIC’s Nauta.

“Faculty now are eager to impress upon them that the whole world of information is not on the Internet.”

## LEGACIES

Despite the resurgence of the campus library in recent years, the notion of “the deserted library” still casts a long shadow on many campuses. The decision throughout the 1990s, by many administrators, to back off on construction or capital improvement plans has left libraries short of space. Given the economic uncertainties facing the nation, it’s likely that at those schools whose administrators underestimated the future of the campus library during the Internet boom, librarians will have to make do.

On the other hand, many schools forged ahead with libraries designed to meet both the digital and traditional needs of students and faculty. The University of Arizona, which opened its Information Commons in 2002, offers a space that gives students and faculty access to traditional resources as well as computers, multimedia, and high-speed network connections. The space also hosts live “support specialists,” most of whom are librarians; meeting spaces; wired classrooms; and an environment that facilitates both private and collaborative study.

Other models are also emerging. At the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), administrators are now examining a plan that would place a network of smaller, computer-based libraries throughout the campus. Tom Wilding, director of libraries at UTA, said that the original vision for a new main library had been drawn up four to five years ago. Then one day, Wilding recalls, UTA’s president took him to lunch and floated an idea. “He said, ‘What if we went in a different direction?’ He wasn’t saying that libraries were not important, not at all,” says Wilding. “He just wanted to know how I felt about doing something different.”

“I thought a lot about what the library would be in the 21st century. I didn’t want to have a great 20th-century library in the 21st century,” says Wilding. Eventually the master plan that called a new main library the “highest priority project” was shelved at UTA, replaced by a model based on UTA’s popular electronic business library. Wilding says a network of similar libraries—situated within academic units—in support of UTA’s existing main library is now in the works. “It really makes you stop and think what the role of the library is in the 21st century,” says Wilding.

## THE MOST POPULAR RESOURCE

As technology continues to change the learning and research patterns of students and faculty, campus libraries are sure to look different in the coming decades. What they won’t be, librarians say, is deserted.

The real challenge now, librarians say, is not getting students inside library walls but marketing library services outside the library. “I’m not too

concerned with bringing people through the gate,” says Illinois Wesleyan’s Stroyan. “We don’t have a problem with that.” What Stroyan says she hopes to do through various marketing efforts is create better awareness of library services. “For first-year students [that means] letting them know that we can help them understand their assignments and what tools we have to help them. For seniors, letting them know that librarians are here to work with them, one on one, with their research assignments.”

Such sentiments serve to remind users of the most important resource found in any campus library: librarians. “If you look at student satisfaction surveys, the library is almost always ranked the top institution on campus among students,” says CSU’s Gorman. That’s not because of comfortable couches and lattes, he adds. “Any place you go in the library you can find someone who is looking to help you. You can’t find that anywhere else on campus.”

### **IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME**

For Mary Lee Sweat, dean of libraries at Loyola University in New Orleans, the increased use of the Edgar and Louise Monroe Library vindicates the vision of the robust academic library in a digital age. Throughout the 1990s, college and university administrators typically backed off on plans to build or renovate their libraries, convinced that with the dawn of the digital age, the need for the library as a place would likely diminish. However, for institutions such as Loyola that remained committed to library projects, both with dollars and vision, the library has proven an increasingly vital rather than vestigial entity. “On our campus,” Sweat says, “students appreciate the library as a place.”

Loyola’s Monroe Library, which opened in 1999, is an excellent example of how the campus library remains the very heart of the academy. It offers students and faculty the perfect blend of traditional services and digital resources, as well as an inviting space to gather, whether for classes, special events, or for social interaction. At Loyola, students find not only a vast array of resources at their disposal but also innovative instructional services, media labs, and teaching rooms, and librarians eager to help with anything from finding resources and general research to web-hosting to putting together a PowerPoint presentation. In fact, the entire first floor of the Monroe Library is designated an “active learning” space, where students and instructors can congregate.

The popularity of the library is readily apparent in its usage statistics. Gate counts at Loyola rose a whopping 13.4 percent last year, with more than 792,000 visits to the library for a student population of 5,500. Circulation of books and other media rose 13.8 percent. The library also held nearly 300 instruction sessions last year, for roughly 3,500 students. So strong is the library at Loyola that it won the 2002 Excellence in Academic Library Award for universities from the Association of College and Research Libraries. The

award, sponsored by Blackwells Booksellers, was presented at Loyola in a ceremony . . . , along with a \$3,000 check. “It’s a tremendous recognition of the library and the university and especially of the library faculty and staff,” Sweat told LJ [*Library Journal*].

More programs and collections are on the way, Sweat says, including a plan to improve library services for the College of Music and to implement more information literacy initiatives on campus—activities that will surely drive even higher library use. For now, though, Sweat says she’ll proudly enjoy the spotlight with her colleagues. “They are at the heart of what we do.”

## DISCUSSION

1. Carefully consider several topics you would be motivated to learn more about if you were required to do a research paper. Assume that you have total academic freedom for this purpose and are free to pursue anything that interests you. Share with fellow students your first and second choices. As a group, talk through how you might collect information on these topics. What sources would you use? Make sure you narrow your topic down to a manageable one. And remember: for this discussion it will not do to simply advise each other to “go to the Web”!
2. Share with fellow students some of your challenges and successes so far in using your campus library. Ideally, you should have your instructor arrange for a reference librarian to come to class as you discuss the exercise above so that she or he can react to the group reports and provide further suggestions.
3. In the reading “Drawn to Knowledge,” the writer states that college libraries are in a dramatic era of transition as a result of the information age revolution. Have you noticed differences between your college library and your high school and community public libraries? In what ways has your college library changed because of the Information Age?
4. The second reading, “Deserted No More . . . ,” describes a resurgence in student use of the library after a temporary decline in the first years of the Internet era. The writer calls this a “post-Internet bounce.” Discuss with a group of students the various ways you make use of your library, where, when, and with whom. How are your habits similar to or different from those of your classmates? Listen carefully and see if you can glean some good tips from your classmates that might help you use this critical college success resource.

