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WKU Libraries: Where Knowledge Unfolds

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Three words come to mind that capture the essence of WKU Libraries over the past 5 years: Innovation. Involvement. Impact.

This five-year review allows a way to step back and consider improvements to WKU Libraries, to validate a response to “tired” buildings by providing new and improved spaces and innovative furnishings for a variety of study needs; to recognize our impressive, collective faculty scholarship, and to acknowledge vital donor support. Blending the old with the new is an age-old challenge. Turning a gymnasium into a library in 1965, and retaining the original jump circle, and erecting a book tower and offices in 1971 reflect the origins of Helm-Cravens Library. Miss Margie Helm retired in 1965 after 45 years and Dr. Raymond Cravens, who came to WKU as a professor in 1958, officially retired in 1991, although he has remained involved in campus life to this day.

Let me quickly point out that WKU Libraries exists beyond these two buildings: Library Special Collections in the Kentucky Building, Educational Resources Center in Gary Ransdell Hall, and our three regional campus locations at Glasgow, Owensboro, and Elizabethtown-Fort Knox. And, of course, our digital assets with electronic journals, databases, and TopSCHOLAR®.

In April 2011 my dean’s message carried the theme of windows of opportunity because the Helm Library had just been retrofitted with 99 replacement windows. On June 30, 2017, I finish 41 years at WKU, with 6 as a dean. I trust that these “windows” will remain clear for envisioning a bright future for WKU Libraries. New leadership will create, rearrange, or increase services and staffing that address student needs, and propel WKU Libraries into the best student-focused physical and virtual place. Best wishes to all of you in support of this growth and transformation.

Connie Foster
WKU Libraries Dean
June 2017

In response to surveys and obvious needs, student learning spaces have been improved in Helm-Cravens for buildings with lifespans that approach or exceed the fifty-year mark. Most dramatic was the renovation of Cravens 4th floor in January 2013 to become The Commons at Cravens, a one-stop information commons for research, technology, and writing support, and a new configuration for Circulation Services. Success was immediately discovered in the high patron count, services used, computer login numbers, and research transactions. A special collaboration with students in Kristina Arnold’s art installation class resulted in two projects using surplus books: “Flying Books” in The Commons at Cravens and “Book Tapestries” in the Helm Reference area on the first floor of Helm.

Other enhancements include:

- full-view doors in group study rooms on Cravens 8-9, new tables and chairs; new group study room on Cravens 7
- recent renovation of Helm 100 with carpet, paint, art, and new doors
- relocation of Leisure Periodicals to The Commons as a natural fit with the nearby Leisure Book collection
- four new colorful and flexible seating areas on Cravens 5 to address “weary building” comments, plus movable “Hub” outlets for power distribution
- additional study areas in Helm Reference as print collections yield to online resources, expansion of opening into Helm from Cravens to improve connection between buildings
- new half-glass door in Distance Education Library Services in Helm 104 for user-friendly access

Library Technical Services realized a multi-year plan for a new work environment with individual office partitions that greatly reduced noise and increased work efficiencies and brought consistency and customization to the three basic areas of cataloging, acquisitions, and continuing resources.

Renovation of the Glasgow Library with private funds over 2 years involved a redesign including more computers, a circulating book collection, new welcome carpet and doors, improved lighting, and commissioned student art (October 2015).

The Reading Room within Library Special Collections in the Kentucky Building now has roller shades instead of draperies; new carpeting and chairs, including enhancements to the Robert Penn Warren Room and the Harry Jackson Gallery (plaque, paint, lights, roller shades, exhibit cases).
Created in May 2012 as the direct result of a consultant’s report, the Library Systems Office is a unique blend of Information Technology’s Academic Technology staff who are guided by priorities set by the Dean of Libraries. This organizational structure allows for best practices in analyzing library technology in the areas of equipment and services, while challenging everyone to dream of what can be by pushing boundaries with mobile applications, system improvements, and continuous website revisions.

Events and awards keep WKU Libraries connected to campus and community:

- the Southern Kentucky Book Fest, moving toward its 20th year, draws thousands of people of all ages for Teen & Children’s Day, Kentucky Writers Conference, and general author signings
- Kentucky Live! and Far Away Places, the long-lived series held at Barnes & Noble continue to engage community and college audiences
- Faraway Flix, featuring international films, provides facilitated dialog and a common viewing experience in Cherry Hall
- The Kentucky Literary Award and Evelyn Thurman Young Readers Book Award spread recognition to Kentucky authors or authors having Kentucky-based themes

Library marketing and social media efforts have garnered national awards for two years (2015 and 2016) for our public relations and social media campaigns from the Academic Libraries Advancement and Development Network (ALADN). The public relations campaign, displayed in various library locations, features a student and his/her major in a poster that has a tag line “@ WKU Libraries.”

Philanthropic support for academic libraries is a difficult landscape. Libraries lack traditional alumni but outreach and cultivation is a necessity for today’s campus leaders. The Library Advisory Council, a community-based board, advises, drives actions, and yields results for fundraising. In 2015 WKU Libraries established the University Libraries Dean’s Fund for Excellence with a major gift from an anonymous donor. The Friends of WKU Libraries in concert with the Library Advisory Council support the following:

- two library student assistant scholarships annually for $500 each towards the next semester’s expenses
- an area middle/high school library $1000 grant based on a competitive process
- the Undergraduate Research Awards for Library Skills in collaboration with University Experience classes in University College’s School of Professional Studies each semester.

Involvement
TopSCHOLAR®, launched in May 2007 with a little over 100 honors theses, is the openly accessible database for Research & Creative Activity at WKU (digitalcommons.wku.edu). From 2012 to 2016 the download activity increased 56% and as of May 2017, total downloads exceeded 2.6 million with more than 25,000 scholarly works in the database. A newly created position of Scholarly Communication Specialist brings a new dimension to the outreach efforts and database enhancements, assisting faculty, staff, and students to better utilize the system and showcase their achievements.

In addition to WKU’s intellectual works, faculty, staff and students can access more than 60,000 eBooks and more than 50,000 online journals, magazines, and newspapers through the One-Search Library Catalog. WKU Libraries has more than 250 databases in all subject areas and has expanded databases in all areas, including full-text Applied Science & Technology Source, PsycARTICLES and JSTOR.

With the acquisition of ten laptops for Library Special Collections, 309 students in 17 classes have experienced simulated searches of the collections for history, political science, consumer/family science, folk studies, English and education classes.

Library faculty and staff are involved in new instruction techniques based on changing practices in library and information science. For example, an embedded librarian is a library faculty who partners with a specific instructor to embed information and converse with students through course management software or in the classroom. In fall 2016 Brian Coutts and Sue Lynn McDaniel, with the research assistance of Ryan Dowell, collaborated with Professor Selena Sanderfer to create a LibGuide for her History 390 course “Blacks in the American South,” and Sue Lynn McDaniel attended the class as a resource throughout the semester. This participation was also part of a larger national History Matters: The Colored Conventions Project, based at the University of Delaware.

Overall, the Libraries offers 212 LibGuides for specific research areas that were accessed more than 200,000 times over the past five years.
FRIENDS of WKU Libraries

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your continued support of the Libraries!

In 2012-13, the Libraries had a number of accomplishments:

- Creation of the Margie Helm Library Fund
- Funding for the Connie Mills Special Collections Internship
- Kentucky Library Acquisition Fund
- Funds for BRAMS (Book Retrieval and Management System)

The Libraries are grateful for your support. Here are a few ways you can help:

1. **Creativity and Innovation by Designation**: Simply designate your gift to WKU Libraries online at wku.edu/library.
2. **Connect with Us**: Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.
3. **Volunteer**: Get involved in library events and initiatives.
4. **Gifts of Stock**: For more information, contact the Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations.

To contribute, please visit wku.edu/library.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jane Owens
 WKU Libraries
The faculty of WKU Libraries take pride in their scholarly accomplishments, including books, book chapters, journal articles, presentations and other intellectual contributions. In the past five years, library faculty have published 11 books, 14 book chapters, 102 articles, and 296 presentations at local, national, and international levels.

The following is a sampling of scholarly works contributed by library faculty.