

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL 2001-2002

VCU LIBRARIES

Vision of the Library

The university library is a vibrant community where ideas are generated, engaged, and shared. It is a dynamic center of culture and knowledge, servicing as a conduit for recorded information in all its forms.

Mission of VCU Libraries

The VCU Libraries supports learning, teaching, research, health care, and public service at Virginia Commonwealth University by:

- Selecting, acquiring, organizing, and preserving information and recorded knowledge in a wide variety of formats;
- facilitating access to materials and information available at Virginia Commonwealth University and elsewhere;
- instructing and assisting users to identify, locate, and use its resources.

VCU Libraries strives for excellence in all of these endeavors, keeping uppermost in mind at all times the importance of the highest quality service to the students, faculty and staff of the university.

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Section I: Executive Summary

Following the framework established by the Operations Plan completed in September 2001 (based on the Strategic Plan completed in May 1999), the VCU Libraries concluded an exceptionally productive year in fiscal 2001-2002. The VCU Libraries advanced several major

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

EXPERIENCED over 27 million accesses to the VCU Libraries' Web site (www.library.vcu.edu), with 4.2 million separate visits and 1.5 million visits to the home page.

ADDED 39,430 titles and 57,791 volumes, the second highest number in VCU's history, bringing the total volumes in the collection to over 1.72 million.

EXPENDED nearly \$4.7 million to enhance collections.

WELCOMED over 830,000 visitors to the Library.

ANSWERED 110,135 reference/information requests.

CONDUCTED 561 instructional sessions and orientations for over 13,000 attendees.

LOANED 246,819 items to the University community.

BORROWED 8,990 items through our interlibrary loan program, and provided 25,069 items to other libraries.

DELIVERED over 1200 documents to faculty and graduate students the VCU Libraries' document delivery services.

EXPANDED offerings of electronic materials by adding over 7,000 electronic books to the collections.

SUPPORTED the University's teaching and research with more than 13,000 electronic and print serials and access to over 12,000 other electronic serial titles.

EXPANDED outreach and development activities for the VCU and Richmond communities at 23 events attended by nearly 1600 individuals.

initiatives that will continue to reshape the library system at VCU in coming years, ranging from dramatic physical renovations of both library facilities to significant new capabilities and offerings in digital collections and services.

Highlighting the year was the start of renovations in both libraries. During the fall semester, staff refined and finalized designs originally begun in FY00-01, selected furnishings and finishes, and established a schedule for the project. Construction began during the winter holiday, including creation of a temporary entrance for Cabell Library and relocation of collections in Tompkins-McCaw Library. Phase 1 of the TML renovations finished in June, and staff occupied new offices completed as part of the construction. Phase 1 in Cabell Library was on schedule to complete very close to the beginning of academic year 02-03.

Prominent in the Cabell renovations is a new coffee bar and café located in the main entrance area of the library. Staff completed negotiations with VCU Business Services on business arrangements for operating the coffee bar, including a process for selecting the coffee bar vendor that provided for a student taste test and other student input. The final contract

splits profits evenly between VCU Dining Services (operators of the coffee bar) and the VCU Libraries. Profits to the VCU Libraries will be invested in endowments for monographs, so that literally every purchase will strengthen collections in the VCU Libraries.

FY01-02 was remarkable for ground-breaking enhancements and additions to library information systems used by the VCU community. First and foremost, the VCU Libraries successfully acquired library management software to replace its aging NOTIS system, which is no longer being developed. With a purchase price of over \$400,000 spread over three fiscal years, this acquisition represents the largest single investment in information systems infrastructure for the VCU Libraries in 15 years. The successful bidder, Ex Libris Inc., will provide software in FY02-03 that touches every aspect of operations in the VCU Libraries, from acquiring and cataloging library materials to user access to collections through book checkouts and the Web-based catalog. The new product brings powerful new capabilities for management of digital collections, including electronic reserves and digitized library materials, as well as a reservations module able to broker advance reservations of materials from the media collections, equipment, and rooms automatically. The RFP process followed by the VCU Libraries included elements unique to VCU purchasing procedures. Foremost of these were extensive involvement of the VCU user community, open public demonstrations of candidate systems, and broad consultation and involvement of the staff of the VCU Libraries.

The VCU Libraries implemented several new and powerful Web-based services in FY01-02. ILLIAD, an advanced interlibrary loan management system, provides a powerful Web-based interlibrary loan and document requesting service for users, including the ability for users to check the status of their requests anytime, anywhere. The new MyLibraryRecord service, which complements the nationally-recognized You've Got Books! and MyLibrary services, provides users the ability to determine anytime, anywhere books they have checked out, due dates, and any fines or fees that are due. A new Web-based federated searching technology provided users for the first time with the ability to search any combination of library catalogs at institutions in the Richmond area, Virginia, and across the Southeast. Users enter a search request in the library catalogs of any or all of dozens of research universities, colleges, and even the Virginia Community College system, and receive back a list of institutions which own the books or journals of interest. The Kudzu network, a collaboration of libraries throughout the Southeast which the VCU Libraries helped found as a charter member in FY01-02, provides expedited delivery of library materials located through such federated searches from selected research libraries across the Southeast.

Off-campus access to library collections and services, as important to the Richmond VCU community in dorms and homes as to VCU programs from Northern Virginia to Qatar, boasted dramatic new advances in FY01-02. The purchase and implementation of the EZProxy system by the VCU Libraries eliminated clumsy proxy configuration for access to most Web-based resources. Proxy configuration had been the single greatest difficulty for the off-campus user community, and accounted for a significant portion of help calls to reference desks from those users. The VCU community outside the Richmond area took immediate advantage of the new 1-888-VCUBOOK toll-free reference hotline implemented in FY01-02. The LiveHelp Web-based reference service, which provides Web-based interaction with a reference librarian to help VCU users anywhere on the Internet with Web-based research, grew steadily after production implementation in fall 2002 – with many sessions initiated from on-campus computers! VCU Libraries staff provided leadership in a experimental Web-based reference networking effort in the Southeast to explore how collaborative institutional efforts might be used to extend online reference hours.

The creation of the Community Health Education Center (CHEC) deserves special mention as a unique outreach and service initiative. Initiated by the VCU Health System and the MCV Hospitals Auxiliary, the CHEC was founded as a collaboration between the VCUHS, the Auxiliary, and the VCU Libraries. Staffing and support is supplied by all three units. The partners sponsored a formal opening gala on February 16, presided over by President Trani, as well as a dedication by First Lady Laura Bush on March 11, 2002. As the fiscal year closed, the partners had agreed to draft a Memorandum of Understanding to clarify and formalize the partnership and funding arrangements.

The VCU Libraries made steady progress in addressing structural administrative and managerial obstacles to efficiency and program advancement. The government documents department was absorbed by another division and staffing reassigned in that area, while simultaneously strengthening service to users. The Tompkins-McCaw Library was reorganized with new staff assignments to take better advantage of available staff talents and to reassign staff into new roles in TML and Cabell. Faculty recruitments initiated in FY00-01 concluded with notable success in FY01-02. The VCU Libraries attracted enviable candidate pools even in the midst of a shortage of qualified librarians, and successfully hired six outstanding library faculty into key leadership positions. As requested by the Faculty Senate in May 1999 and again in May 2001, the VCU Libraries developed a comprehensive five-year plan to attain Association of Research Library (ARL) status for the VCU Libraries. The plan, delivered to the Senate and the Provost in October, was endorsed by many campus governance bodies.

Partial restoration of the photocopy budget deficit from university funds continued in FY01-02, and the university allocation of Facilities and Cost Recovery (FACR) funds to the VCU Libraries grew modestly from 0.5% of total FACR income to about 0.9% of income. These small but very important advances in library funding and status are indicative of highest-level support for the library system. Unfortunately, a mid-year budget reduction erased much of those gains. Planning for much deeper budget reductions in FY02-03 began in February 2002. Projected steep cuts in journal subscriptions and library hours to implement the reductions elicited a strong request for library support from the students and faculty. In response, university leadership restored about one-half of the project reductions for FY02-03.

Development of private funding accelerated rapidly in FY01-02. The Friends of the Library program was completely redesigned and a new and higher fee structure implemented. A new FOL Fall Luncheon & Lecture series was established. The VCU Libraries' traditional spring lecture programs had their highest attendance in 5 years. Annual giving rose more than 100% from FY00-01, and new major gifts made FY01-02 the most successful in private fund-raising in a decade. Finally, the VCU Libraries initiated a major capital campaign to fund renovation of the 4th floor of Cabell Library.

Looking to the future, it is notable that even the exceptionally productive FY01-02 year has barely advanced the assessment metrics of the VCU Libraries relative to qualification for ARL standing. The VCU Libraries remains at the very bottom of virtually every library-related metric among VCU's peer institution. With budget reductions in place for FY02-03 and more likely to come, achieving ARL standing within five years, as articulated by the Five-Year Plan to the Faculty Senate, is increasingly unlikely. Nevertheless, it remains an important goal for Virginia Commonwealth University, and core to VCU's ambitions to reach NSF top-75 ranking and U.S. News and World Report Tier 2 status. By strengthening core infrastructure, especially in information systems, staffing, and fund raising, FY01-02 has positioned the VCU Libraries in the best way possible to minimize the impact of budget reductions on long-term goals of the VCU Libraries and the university.

Section II: Objectives and Outcomes

The VCU Libraries operates each fiscal year under two coordinated plans. The Strategic Plan describes the longer-term vision and framework for initiatives each year. The Operations Plan is a detailed plan containing objectives and tasks supportive of the Strategic Plan.

The Operations Plan details objectives and tasks, and units or persons within the VCU Libraries responsible for them. The entire plan is completed at the beginning of the fiscal year and is not prioritized with respect to funding and assets. Instead, responsible units and persons agree that assigned tasks can be accomplished with funding and assets either in place at the beginning of the fiscal year or explicitly assigned to specific tasks as part of the Plan. Consequently there is a commitment to complete every task in the Plan during the fiscal year. At the end of the fiscal year, the VCU Libraries assesses progress towards each task. Tasks not wholly accomplished may be restated for the new fiscal year. An assessment is made to determine why an unfinished task was not completed; this assessment sometimes results in related findings for individual performance evaluations.

The full Operations Plan and the Operations Plan assessment for FY01-02 appear in Attachment 1.

Section III: Assessment of Outcomes

Assessment has improved during the past two fiscal years with the introduction of the Operations Plan. The explicit commitment to specific tasks, and the assignment of responsible individuals and units, motivates close and, wherever possible, quantitative monitoring by staff of progress towards goals. The requirement to document progress in specific tasks was new for FY01-02. It was implemented chiefly as an assessment tool to determine progress and to inform the performance appraisal process for both faculty and staff. It also anticipates SACS requirements and the growing focus on outcomes assessment at all levels of State government and higher education.

Although accountability in the Operations Plan is strong, assessment remains insufficiently quantitative and requires stronger connections to university goals. This is of particular concern as the university moves into the SACS accreditation cycle and adopts a quality enhancement plan. It also raises concerns about demonstrating the contribution of the VCU Libraries to university goals, such as U.S. News and World Report Tier 2 status and NSF Top-75 research standing. Consequently, in FY02-03 the VCU Libraries will undertake three initiatives to strengthen assessment processes.

1. Service quality enhancement: The library system will adopt several initiatives targeting quality at service points and in services delivered digitally. Service point quality enhancement will focus on improving the quality of user experience with staff, specifically addressing such issues as displaying a welcoming attitude, responsiveness to user concerns, and user satisfaction with outcomes. Enhancement of digital services will focus on turnaround, availability, and accuracy of responses, among other measures.
2. Strategic planning: The VCU Libraries will undertake in a 2-phase strategic planning process during fiscal 02-03. In the first phase, the entire staff will engage in a mission-vision-values discovery process that will restore a purpose-driven, staff-accepted foundation for action plans. In the second phase, the VCU Libraries, led by management staff, will develop a new strategic plan for the library system. The strategic planning process will use Balanced Scorecard or a related methodology that streamlines and accelerates strategic planning and provides a near-horizon plan looking out no more than 3 years.
3. Quantitative reporting: The library system will continue to strengthen its quantitative profiling capabilities. Specific goals include improved quantitative measures of building use; better assessment of

the use of digital format library materials; and developing a deeper awareness and use of quantitative profiles and tools in decision making by library management.

Section IV: Unique Contributions

VCU's Strategic Strategic Plan Phase II includes Section II, #17 specifically addressing the VCU Libraries (using its previous name, University Library Services, which was changed in spring 2000):

“University Library Services is integral to the teaching, scholarly, and public service missions of the University. The quality of a university is measured, in part, by the quality of its library resources and services. To achieve its vision of being an innovative leader among the nation's major research universities, Virginia Commonwealth University requires a library system capable of supporting this plan. Using Association of Research Library standards as well as characteristics of libraries of the University's peer institutions, the University Library Services will develop standards of excellence appropriate for Virginia Commonwealth University. These standards will guide future growth.”

In support of this goal, during FY01-02 the VCU Libraries developed a Five-Year Plan for growth to ARL-commensurate metrics. The Plan was submitted to the Faculty Senate in November 2001 and subsequently endorsed by that body and forwarded to University administration. The Plan has four components:

- 1 – An assessment of core metrics for the VCU Libraries against the SCHEV peer list, the VCU-identified subset of four focus peers, and ARL libraries in general.
- 2 – A definition of the overall goal of ARL-commensurate metrics.
- 3 – An articulation of the benefits to the University delivered by an ARL-competitive library system.
- 4 – A plan for financial growth of the VCU Libraries relying on five different and complementary funding streams.

The plan appears as Attachment 2 to this report. It satisfies the goal set forth in the University's Strategic Plan Phase II by creating quantified metrics for assessing the VCU Libraries' progress in developing a peer- and ARL-competitive library system. In addition, it lays out a road map for achieving those metrics.

In addition to the development of the Five-Year Plan, the VCU Libraries developed an aggressive plan to create highly visible improvements in academic environment and reputation, a major part of university rankings in the annual US News & World Report *America's Best Colleges* report. Specific actions included longer library building hours; more book purchases; expanded digital services and resources, especially for students outside library walls; upgrades to physical facilities that specifically target improved student life and educational experience; and planning and management inclusive of constituencies, including a unique process for purchasing new library management software that provided for input from the entire university community. Limited renovations, initially designed in FY00-01, were initiated in spring 2002. The renovations will create space and facilities, including coffee bars in each library, that provide a model for future renovations that aim to create space commensurate with the best library spaces offered at any university in the Southeast.

In contribution to university goals in recruitment and retention, the VCU Libraries expanded its presence in recruitment and retention efforts during the fiscal year. Beginning in 2001-02, the VCU Libraries participated in each Open House recruitment event and the VCU spring Block Party for admitted

students. Longer building hours and library materials purchased specifically to meet undergraduate needs strengthened the overall environment for retention. Space improvements will address student academic experience and quality of student life.

Section V: Important Challenges

The principal challenge for the VCU Libraries remains unchanged from FY00-01: achieving a funding profile commensurate with a top-75 NSF-rank research institution and comparable to focus peers identified by VCU. With such a funding profile, the VCU Libraries can provide collections and services appropriate for a major Carnegie Research Extensive university. The VCU Libraries lags far behind both ARL institutions and focus peer institutions in every assessment metric, including staffing size, collections expenditures, physical space for students and collections, and operations budgets. The overall goal of ARL-competitive metrics provides an excellent benchmark by which to assess progress towards achieving a research library system of national standing that VCU requires for its strategic goals.

Improved State general fund support, which makes up two of the funding sources identified in the VCU Libraries' Five-year Plan, is unlikely. Instead, the VCU Libraries likely will rely on three other revenue streams identified in the Plan:

- 1 – Increased allocation of Facilities and Cost Recovery (FACR) funds, targeting at least 1% of FACR income and ideally matching the negotiated Federal overhead rate contribution of 1.4% as of July 2002. In FY01-02, the VCU Libraries received less than 1% of FACR income.
- 2 – Funding from tuition increases and from non-resident tuition. None of these funds is currently allocated explicitly to the VCU Libraries.
- 3 – Improved private funding. The recruitment of a Development and Community Relations Office in June 2001 is expected to continued a graduate strengthening of private giving to the VCU Libraries. As noted earlier, significant improvements were recognized in FY01-02.

In all three areas, creative and compelling presentation of the VCU Libraries' role in academic pursuit and research enterprise is key to improvements. In addition, the VCU Libraries must create and demonstrate outstanding value from investment. In particular, the library system's strengths in digital collections and technologies must become an even greater focus, along with improving the library's visibility as a destination for students and researchers seeking the very best physical setting for academic work.

To achieve economies that free up assets for investment in new areas, the VCU Libraries must refine its current service and staffing commitments. The VCU Libraries will need to overcome faculty resistance and skepticism, both internally and campus-wide, regarding the elimination of physical service points and contraction in front-line physical services of all kinds. In addition, decisions related to anticipated budget reductions, especially reductions in scholarly journal subscriptions, will require the strongest possible decision process, wide university involvement, and excellent data models to satisfy questions and challenges by the university community.

Section VI: Reflections and Directions

The Five-year Plan for the VCU Libraries provides a very strong framework for its gradual improvement to an institution of national standing. By maintaining its vision for achieving ARL-commensurate metrics and by presenting a solution-focused plan to fund that achievement, the VCU Libraries has provided the best possible vision and guidance for future development. The key challenge will be to maintain that

vision and guidance in the face of declining budgets anticipated over the next one or two biennial budget cycles.

New renovations scheduled for completion in FY02-03 set the stage for heightened awareness of the centrality of the library's physical assets in academic life. Library buildings provide a unique capability on campus to bring together people, digital materials, and print materials in one place designed specifically for academic endeavor. Experience at many academic libraries has shown that in the evolving digital age, the unique capabilities of library buildings have become more valuable to university communities, and particularly to undergraduate students. By supporting the broadest range of academic work, library buildings and the services they offer advance academic accomplishment and contribute in significant ways to the student academic experience and thereby to retention and graduate rates. With the completion of limited renovations, the renovated areas likely will highlight the age and problems of the remaining un-renovated library facilities. Most furniture throughout both library buildings dates to the 1970s; the majority of floor space has not been upgraded since construction in the mid-1970s. An important goal for the university, even in an increasingly digital environment, is refurbishing library space to meet new expectations from the university community.

Exceptionally high faculty and staff productivity continues to be a hallmark of the VCU Libraries. By formal assessment measures of all kinds, such as contributions to scholarly journals in the discipline, presentations at conferences, contact hours with students, and the like, faculty of the VCU Libraries consistently outperform faculty at other, larger research institutions. The VCU Libraries will continue to encourage and support to the fullest extent possible a high level of faculty involvement in the profession. The contributions of VCU's library faculty raise and highlight the profile of VCU and the VCU Libraries, building a foundation of recognition that will contribute to ultimate acknowledgement as a library system of national standing.

During 01-02, the VCU Libraries enjoyed high-profile exposure through several articles in local and national press, including the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, that highlighted its innovations and accomplishments. Clearly, this recognition redounds to the benefit of the library system and to VCU as a whole. The VCU Libraries must continue to seek out such opportunities in the coming year.

The current and anticipated budget downturn will greatly challenge the VCU Libraries' core mission to the university. It is important to weather the down cycle with an eye to its potential for improvements, as well as with forthright acknowledgement and understanding of the serious consequences to collections and services. It is equally important throughout the process to preserve energy and imagination that will make best use of an eventual return to healthier budgets. To those ends, leadership and staff must work openly together in the coming year to ensure a positive and exemplary management of budget reductions.