

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL 2003-2004

VCU LIBRARIES

MISSION

VCU Libraries promotes the academic success of our students, invigorates research and scholarship, and advances the health care and outreach missions of the University with exemplary collections, services, spaces, and staff.

VISION

VCU Libraries opens doors to learning and discovery. Our welcoming environment inspires scholarship, creativity, and the exchange of ideas. We anticipate the needs of our community and work to exceed its expectations. We dedicate our expertise to building the best libraries for the VCU of today, and we are committed to growing in partnership with the VCU of tomorrow.

VALUES

As members of the VCU Libraries Staff, we:

Place the VCU community at the forefront of everything we do;

Believe that higher education transforms lives;

Affirm that a great university is built upon a great library;

Bring a commitment to excellence and a record of innovation to the teaching, research, and health care mission of VCU;

Serve as stewards of the University's information resources and contribute to the world's repository of knowledge;

Celebrate the diverse ideas and cultures that enrich our community;

Respect and protect the privacy of individuals;

Abide by principles of intellectual integrity and academic freedom.

ANNUAL REPORT 2003-2004

VCU LIBRARIES

Section I: Executive Summary

Following the framework established by the Operations Plan completed in September 2003, the VCU Libraries concluded an outstandingly productive year in fiscal 2003-

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

ADDED 44,476 titles and 53,935 volumes, bringing the total volumes in the collection to over 1.7 million.

EXPENDED over \$4 million to enhance collections.

WELCOMED 1,315,296 visitors to the Libraries.

ANSWERED 50,653 reference/information requests.

CONDUCTED 710 instructional sessions and orientations for more than 24,325 attendees.

CIRCULATED 194,859 items to the University community and provided over 115,000 electronic reserve accesses.

BORROWED 6,352 items through our interlibrary loan program, and provided 22,918 items to other libraries.

DELIVERED over 1,825 documents/items to faculty and graduate students via the Libraries' document delivery services.

EXPANDED offerings of electronic materials by adding over 18,000 electronic books to the collections.

SUPPORTED the University's teaching and research with more than 13,700 electronic and print serials and access to almost 12,000 other electronic serial titles.

EXPANDED outreach and development activities for the VCU and Richmond communities at 81 events attended by over 5,126 individuals.

2004 in the face of continued budget challenges and profound staffing constraints. VCU Libraries accomplishments included substantial enhancements of physical spaces that extended the success of renovations completed in 2002-03; innovative advances in information systems and collections; a staff-driven, creative, and inspired VCU Libraries Mission-Vision-Values statement; continued strong investment and success in collaborations across VCU, the Commonwealth, and the Southeast; and the best year ever in cultural and community programming.

The activity highlights summary (left) gives a quantitative snapshot of the year. Visits to library facilities continued their year-over-year pattern of growth, up 12.5% from FY02-03. Most other measures, including circulation of books, reference consultations, and acquisitions of digital collections, grew from FY02-03. Cultural and community programs reached a new high point during FY03-04, with well over 100% growth in attendance.

Setting the tone for the year's

accomplishments was the creation of a new Mission-Vision-Values statement for the VCU Libraries. Undertaken in fall 2003 at a time of great challenge in funding and staffing, the new statement reflects inspired thinking by staff confronted with the need for maximum creativity in the face of extremely adverse fiscal conditions. The new Mission-Vision-Values statement established the foundation and created the energy and focus for accomplishments throughout the year. The new statement appears on the cover page for this report.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) re-accreditation

VCU underwent its regular SACS re-accreditation during FY03-04. In response to VCU's re-accreditation compliance report completed in August 2003, the SACS Off Site Review Committee identified three issues affecting the library system at VCU:

1. Adequacy of library funding with respect to VCU's current programs, enrollment, and anticipated growth in programs and enrollment.
2. Documentation of the VCU Libraries' process for reviewing new course and program proposals.
3. Faculty and student involvement in policy and program development of the VCU Libraries.

VCU's Focused Report to SACS, submitted in January 2004, responded to each concern raised by SACS. As part of the Focused Report, university administration requested and received from the University Librarian a five5-year funding plan to strengthen the VCU Libraries. The plan targeted a budget for VCU's library system commensurate with enrollment, programs, and research enterprise at VCU, and consistent with its role in Virginia, the Southeast, and among its peer institutions. The plan raised investment in VCU's library system as a percentage of the E&G budget to 5%, the median for Virginia institutions as reported by the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia in its May 2003 report "Condition of Higher Education Funding in Virginia". The plan also raised VCU's library funding to the median for university research libraries in the Southeast, defined by membership of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL).

During their visit to VCU in March 2003, the SACS On Site Review Committee found that the Focused Report fully addressed all issues raised by the Off Site Review Committee. For the VCU Libraries, the SACS findings paved the way to an improved library system budget in the FY04-05 budget.

Budget developments

The dominant fiscal theme for FY03-04 remained budget reductions and their impact on collections and services. Reductions implemented throughout VCU units in FY02-03 continued in FY03-04. Acknowledging the core role of the VCU Libraries in VCU's academic life, the University extended its 2002-03 commitment to hold library system

budget cuts to a smaller percentage than for most units. In addition, in actions similar to those in 2002-03, the University offset some library cuts in FY03-04 with supplemental funds. The University also reduced the photocopy revenue obligation of the VCU Libraries for the second time in 5 years, bringing revenue expectations in line with declining photocopy revenue caused by rapid growth in Web-accessed journals.

Personnel and collections budgets remained at their reduced FY02-03 levels throughout FY03-04. To meet budget targets, the VCU Libraries maintained vacancy rates at about 20% of staff and faculty positions throughout most of the fiscal year. Changes to services and fees implemented in 2002-03 continued into 2003-04. In September 2003 staff began to prepare for a second round of reductions in scholarly journal subscriptions, targeting April 2004 to finalize a list of titles for cancellation. Many research-oriented titles previously identified for cancellation in FY03-04 were restored following an infusion of funds from Facilities and Cost Recovery (FACR) in June 2003. Since these were non-permanent funds, most of those titles, along with others, likely would be targeted for cancellation again.

Partially in response to the difficult budget situation, the Monroe Park Campus Student Government Association (SGA) sent a letter to President Trani in May 2003 recommending a student library fee to support longer hours, improved services, and stronger security in library facilities at VCU. The VCU Libraries worked with university administration in fall 2003 to develop this request into a proposal for consideration by the Tuition and Fees Committee for the 2004-05 academic year. Among other changes to tuition and fees, the Committee's final report recommended a student library fee for 2004-05. If implemented, VCU would have become one of the only library systems in North America with such a fee.

The overall dire funding profile for the VCU Libraries – pending journal cancellations, a student library fee to support hours, reduced staff – experienced a remarkable turnaround in spring 2004. Budget development for the 2004-05 academic year at VCU centered on implementing actions in the Focused Report that addressed concerns raised by SACS. The University placed a high priority on library funding and took strong measures to implement that priority. Prior to any announcements regarding 2004-05 State funding for VCU, the University allocated \$1.34 million in new funding to the VCU Libraries, using a mixture of E&G, FACR, and one-time monies. The new funding represented an increase of about 14% over a base 2001-02 budget of \$10 million, with about 56% of the funding directed to collections and 44% directed to personnel and operations.

As a consequence of these strengthened budget resources, the VCU Libraries cancelled plans to reduce journal subscriptions in 2004-05 and 2005-06. In addition, the VCU Libraries will extend building hours, strengthen building security, and expand reference services in 2004-05, matching the service profile of most other academic libraries in Virginia.

Facilities and physical plant enhancements

With very constrained fiscal resources in 2003-04, the VCU Libraries implemented only modest physical renovations in its facilities. Three changes are noteworthy.

- **Skull & Beans:** The Skull & Beans Coffee Café opened in Tompkins-McCaw Library in August 2003, complementing the existing Java901 in Cabell Library. A partnership of the VCU Libraries and VCU Dining Services, Skull & Beans steadily grew its sales during the year and has become a vital asset for TML and the MCV Campus. Together, Skull & Beans and Java901 returned nearly \$9,000 to the VCU Libraries, funds dedicated exclusively to purchasing books for library collections.
- **International Newsroom:** The VCU Office of International Education approached the VCU Libraries in fall 2003 about creating a facility in Cabell Library dedicated to viewing televised news and other programming from outside the United States. A partnership of International Education, Academic Technology, the VCU Libraries, and the Office of the Provost unveiled the International Newsroom in Cabell Library in April 2004. Chief users of the facility include international students, students in World Studies, students studying international politics and those interested in the culture of other countries, and students in Mass Communications interested in comparative journalism.
- **Cabell Library Mural:** In Spring 2004, students from the School of the Arts, working under the direction of faculty member Janet Gilmore-Bryan, designed and painted a mural in Cabell Library celebrating the diversity of Virginia Commonwealth University. The mural is located on the walls above the stairwell at the entrance of the building that connects the first and second floors of the library, a central location easily visible to nearly everyone who enters the building. Visually rich, the mural's brilliant color and images of people, places and things capture and reflect the soul of the University, its unique location, and its role in the community and the City. It also affirms the VCU Libraries' central place in the academic and cultural life of VCU and its role as a bridge between the two campuses, serving both the Monroe Park Campus and Medical Center constituents. A public dedication for the mural is planned for September 2004.

Information technology and digital collections

The VCU Libraries continued to bring new digital services and resources to the Web throughout 2003-04. Highlighting these enhancements was the expansion of the new Ex Libris library management software, purchased in 2002-03 and brought into production in June 2003. Significant upgrades to the system's catalog searching interface came online during the year, as well as new modules for circulation and electronic reserves. Overdue notices migrated entirely to email format, and users began to receive new email courtesy reminders for books near their due date.

During 2002-03, VCU Libraries staff led a ground-breaking initiative by the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) to create the nation's first

regional Web-based reference help service. The new Ask-A-Librarian service came online in February 2004, with 11 participating libraries in the Southeast providing 84 hours of service per week while requiring only 8 hours of staff time from each participant. VCU's leadership in this ground-breaking collaborative continued throughout the year.

Using Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund (HEETF) and Student Technology Fee monies, the VCU Libraries upgraded much of its public computer and server plant during the fiscal year. A number of public computers were equipped for the first time with Microsoft Office software. The software allows students to more easily integrate library resources into their class products, increasing the utility of library computers and offering students an alternative to crowded computer labs. The server and storage plant was expanded to support speedier interaction with the library catalog and expanded service offerings. In addition, staff relocated much of the server plant to the VCU Computing Center, which provides staff-efficient hardware support with backup power and network connections.

Library-provided digital content experienced ground-breaking expansions in 2003-04. Working in partnership with six other Virginia university libraries, VCU concluded a contract with Elsevier Publishers to provide the VCU community with access to over 1,800 scholarly publications. The contract builds on a previous three-year contract but increases by almost 50% the number of journals available at only a 5% increase in cost. A similar coalition of Virginia universities also forged a three-year contract with Wiley Publishers that provides access to 242 scholarly scientific publications. Access by VCU users was expanded from 98 titles to 242 titles, and the cost per title was cut by 56%. Both new contracts allow unlimited simultaneous access to all titles.

At the close of the fiscal year, the VCU Libraries committed to a reenergized vision for information systems and services. With anticipated new funding, two faculty positions were redefined to focus respectively on Web development and enhancement of locally-produced digital content. A new request for increased HEETF allocations to support this expanded vision was formulated by the close of the fiscal year.

Partnerships and collaborations

Active pursuit of partnerships and collaborations continued as a key strategic emphasis for the VCU Libraries in FY03-04. Such partnerships leverage the resources of participants for outcomes otherwise unattainable by any individual partner.

- Collaborative negotiation of contracts for scientific scholarly journals with other Virginia academic libraries. (See Information Technology section of this report.)
- Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) Ask-A-Librarian project. (See Information Technology section of this report.)
- The Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) continued to benefit from participation by VCU Libraries staff. In addition to other VCU Libraries' staff contributions, the

University Librarian led a small group of librarians from Virginia institutions in requesting new funding in the 2004-06 biennium for VIVA. Long-term advocacy efforts for VIVA initiated in 2001 by the University Librarian bore fruit in the success of this initiative: the 2004 legislative session increased the VIVA budget by 26%, adding approximately \$1.1 million permanent dollars annually to VIVA funding. The new VIVA funds will complement new VCU funds to strengthen significantly library support for the sciences and research enterprise at VCU.

- Multicultural Resource Center Reading Room: Plans for the new physical location of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA) included a Resource Center and a Reading Room. The VCU Libraries worked closely with the OMSA leadership to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that describes the contributions and roles of the VCU Libraries and OMSA in purchasing materials and operation of the Reading Room. The new OMSA offices and the Multicultural Resource Center Reading Room opened in April 2004.
- School of the Arts Visual Resource Center: The Visual Resource Center (VRC) in the School of the Arts is one of the nation's largest collection of slides and other materials supporting art history, architecture, and related disciplines. As part of budget reduction actions, the VCU Libraries and the School of the Arts agreed in November 2003 to share operating costs of the VRC, with each partner contributing one-half the salary of a full-time professional librarian assigned to the VRC. This initial collaboration was expanded to include the transfer of the VRC to Cabell Library, freeing up much-needed space in Pollack Building and providing improved access and service to the VRC's collections. At year's end, the School and the VCU Libraries were negotiating the final form of the transfer.

Cooperative ventures by Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences (TML) in consumer health information highlighted the fiscal year. Significant efforts include:

- NLM Associate Fellowship Program Institutional Host: The VCU Libraries hosted NLM Associate Fellow Ms. Shannon Jones from September 2003 – August 2004. The NLM Associate Fellowship program is a postgraduate training program for outstanding health sciences librarians early in their career. Because of the talent and distinguished contributions of Associate Fellows, competition among institutions to host Fellows is intense. During Ms. Jones' time with the VCU Libraries, she was selected from a very competitive pool as the successful candidate for a position on the faculty of the VCU Libraries.
- The Community Outreach Information Network (COIN) planning proposal grant was awarded in September 2003 to a partnership of health care organizations led by TML. The grant supported a needs assessment and partnership development to create a proposal for COIN in Central Virginia. The final proposal for funding was completed and submitted to the National Library of Medicine in June 2004. If funded, COIN will expand significantly access to highest quality health information for low income, underserved, multilingual and minority Virginia community populations in urban and rural areas.

- Women's Health Network (WHN): The Women's Health Network (WHN) for Consumer Health Outreach contract successfully concluded in June 2004. The initiative was funded through a National Library of Medicine contract with the VCU Institute for Women's Health, which worked collaboratively with TML and CHEC, among others, to provide health education to women in ways that meet their cultural and linguistic needs.
- TML actively participated in the Virginia pilot of the American College of Physicians Foundation (ACPF)/National Library of Medicine (NLM) Information Rx Project. Among other contributions, TML encouraged and supported participation by health professionals, trained public librarians about MedlinePlus, and published articles to promote the project. The Virginia pilot project was recognized by the U. S. National Commission on Library and Information Science (NCLIS) Blue Ribbon Consumer Health Information Recognition Award.
- TML hosted and acquired funding from the NN/LM SE/A Regional Medical Library for charter meetings of the Virginia Health Information Outreach Planning Group (VHIOP). These meetings brought together librarians from all types of libraries across Virginia to partner in providing Virginia citizens with access to reliable health information and training. TML faculty played a major role in implementing several of the groups' strategic directions.
- A diabetes resource center funded by the Urban League of Greater Richmond was created within CHEC. The center includes a diabetes-related web page featuring national and localized links to diabetes specific information as well as a print collection of selected resources. CHEC continues to serve as the official resource center of the VA Central Care Connections.

Service improvements

As part of the University's WEAVEonline assessment initiative, the VCU Libraries committed to much stronger service assessment and service quality improvement in 2003-04, an initiative that will carry over into 2004-05. Two surveys were conducted to provide a baseline for fostering service excellence throughout the VCU Libraries.

First, the VCU Libraries participated in the 2004 LibQUAL+ survey during spring 2004. LibQUAL+ is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. The chief tool is a broad-based survey sent to over 2,000 randomly-selected VCU faculty and students. The LibQUAL+ final report was delivered in June 2004 and will form a basis for actions related to service quality improvement in 2004-05.

Second, the Tompkins-McCaw Library conducted a separate survey focused on user services to the Medical Center community. Complementary to LibQUAL+, the survey was completed and results compiled by May 2004.

Together, these surveys identify the most effective actions to create a climate of service excellence for the VCU Libraries. A major focus for budget investment in FY04-05 is significantly more responsive and improved services, particularly through service desks, to VCU faculty, staff, and students at every level.

Private funding and promotion

Private funding continued to grow in FY03-04. The Friends membership roll (and consequently, annual giving) grew significantly, with an average of 35 new members each month. By years' end the FOL membership stood at nearly 500. Annual giving rose very modestly from FY02-03, but an impressive start was made in capital giving. The year saw maturation in the FOL programs, organization, and membership, and the program now appears to be on solid, sustainable ground.

Cultural programs continued to raise the profile of the VCU Libraries among the donor community in FY03-04: programs reached a new high point in visibility and attendance. The annual Brown-Lyons Lecture broke the FY02-03 record attendance with another largest-ever audience. The annual Cabell Lecture attendance was disappointing in part due to weather, but the audience count remained respectable. A reception for author Tom Robbins on October 5, 2003 marked the first use of the renovated Bocoock House for VCU development events. Turnout was strong and the VCU Libraries raised over \$7,000 from the event. Especially noteworthy was *The Road to Brown: The Prince Edward County Student Strike, April 1951*, a panel discussion program on February 24, 2004 developed in recognition of the anniversary of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court. The program explored one of the foundational events of the Brown decision, the student strike in Prince Edward County schools by African-American students in 1951. Over 180 people attended and participated in lively discussion with the panelists.

The success of cultural programs contributed to a wide variety of media recognition. The VCU Libraries continued to enjoy appearances in mainstream media. A National Public Radio news feature focusing on the Java901 coffee bar in Cabell Library aired nationally on the radio show *All Things Considered* in August 2003.

The VCU Libraries established a strong program and giving identity for the Campaign For VCU, the University's major capital campaign that kicked off in April 2004. In addition, Web pages related to the FOL and private supported were completely redesigned. The new Web pages integrate support for credit card donations.

Section II: Highlights

- 1. Budget enhancements:** SACS re-accreditation and the needs of library users throughout VCU combined in FY03-04 to create a heightened awareness of the library system's strained budget, which had been virtually unchanged for the previous 10 years. This new awareness led University administration to take the first step in a multi-year effort to strengthen the VCU Libraries by increasing its budget for FY04-05. If fully implemented, the multi-year budget plan will establish a library system that is commensurate with VCU's enrollment size, program scope, research stature, and ambitions.
- 2. Mission-Vision-Values statement:** The new Mission-Vision-Values statement of the VCU Libraries is a masterpiece among such statement nationally. Developed entirely by the staff of the VCU Libraries, the new statement establishes a strong foundation on which to build a VCU Libraries appropriately sized for VCU.
- 3. Collaborations:** The VCU Libraries continues to embrace the program benefits and financial value of collaborations across VCU, the Commonwealth, and nationally. Among other benefits, new collaborations during FY03-04:
 - expanded access to scientific scholarly journals by adding over 2,000 titles at significantly reduced per-title cost
 - garnered grants and nurtured cooperative projects that expanded the availability of consumer health care information in many settings throughout Virginia
 - created the new Multicultural Research Center Reading Room and the International Newsroom
 - paved the way for the transfer of one of the nation's largest slide libraries from the School of the Arts to Cabell Library
 - established Skull & Beans Coffee Café at Tompkins-McCaw Library
 - designed and crafted the stunning Diversity Mural at Cabell Library
 - provided cost-effective expansion of Web-accessible reference service through the regional Ask-A-Librarian service, developed with leadership by VCU staff
- 4. Service culture:** A renewed vision for service excellence energized many changes in services to faculty and students in FY03-04. New services such as Ask-A-Librarian complemented important changes in service policies, delivery of overdue and courtesy notices, ILL services, and the like. The new emphasis on service assessment in FY03-04 will continue to refine service excellence in FY04-05.
- 5. Private funding and cultural programming success:** The Friends membership roll (and consequently, annual giving) grew significantly, with an average of 35 new members each month. By years' end the FOL membership stood at nearly 500. Cultural programs reached a new high point in visibility and attendance. The annual Brown-Lyons Lecture broke the FY02-03 record attendance with another largest-ever audience. A well-attended fund-raiser featuring author Tom Robbins in October 2003 marked the first use of the renovated Boccock House for VCU development events.

Section III: Learning Outcomes

The VCU Libraries operates each year under an Operations Plan that details objectives and tasks and units or persons within the VCU Libraries responsible for them. The full Operations Plan for FY03-04 describes over 250 tasks in 6 strategic areas. As of July 31, 2004, the complete assessment of performance on the FY03-04 Operations Plan was still underway. A completed assessment document will be available by September 30, 2004.

In addition to the Operations Plan, the VCU Libraries fully participates in documenting assessment activities in WEAVE. The FY02-03 Assessment Summary Report appears below.

VCU WEAVEonline
Assessment Summary Report [2002-2003]

SUMMARY COMMENTS ON STRENGTHS CONFIRMED THROUGH ASSESSMENT

Major initiative success in the face of unprecedented resource constraints demonstrate a consistently productive and creative staff. Particularly demanding successes: implementing a new library management software system and new interlibrary loan management software; carrying out cuts in scholarly journal subscriptions; completing and bringing online major building renovations; establishing an electronic theses and dissertations option. Efficient operations were made more so during the fiscal year through major reorganizations and introduction of new information systems. Expanded consortial partnerships such as KUDZU for interlibrary loan enriched the library resources available to VCU. Strong education and outreach initiatives were coupled with well-designed assessment of these initiatives. Overall, the VCU Libraries is poised for the most effective possible use of additional funding in the future.

SUMMARY COMMENTS ON ASSESSED AREAS THAT NEED ATTENTION

Service assessment and service quality remain a concern. Budget reductions created a 20% classified staff vacancy rate in FY02-03, leading to reductions at service points and consequent reductions in service hours and quality, particularly services to undergraduates. Service assessment included focus group initiatives, better complaint tracking and response, and stronger quantitative profiling of service activity, but more needs to be done. Focus group initiatives will continue in FY03-04.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS IN RECENT YEARS WITH KEY REASONS FOR CHANGE

Education and outreach: strategic emphasis and managerial commitment to new cultural programs, community health programs, and educational outreach has strengthened both number of offerings and successes. Much improved quantitative assessment of these programs as well as service programs stem from stronger management focus on assessment. Improved private giving directly results from development officer recruited in FY01-02, strengthened in FY02-03 with a publications coordinator. More efficiencies from creative reorganization of staffing and operations. Focus on information systems development for user community has led to impressive gains in personalization technologies and Web-based services.

The Assessment Summary describes key program areas of education and outreach, services to undergraduates, information system enhancements, and staffing that are targeted to improve student learning outcomes. These key program areas carried out

several actions to improve student learning outcomes in 03-04. The supporting actions are clustered under Outcome/Objective 1 in WEAVE online, reproduced below.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Objective/Outcome 1:

Expand education and outreach into VCU's academic programs, clinical instruction, research enterprise and the greater metro Richmond community.

Short Description: Expand education and community outreach

A Student Learning Outcome? Yes

VCU Strategic Plan Initiatives:

- II-17: Library Services

Other Strategic Plans:

VCU Libraries 2003-2004 Goals item 1.7

Related Measures:

- M. 2: Offer instruction for VCU 101 through Blackboard
- M. 14: Assess educational programs
- M. 15: Services to off-campus programs

Nearly 1,500 students registered for the VCU 101: Library Experience module offered through Blackboard. The course focused on a virtual tour of the Libraries and scholarly Web searching. The Library Experience website received 6,859 hits during the 10 week course with one-third of the hits in the discussion forum and the majority of hits in the main content areas. Evaluations of the course were completed by 11% of the students with 97% of the respondents rating the course content as excellent or good. The VCU Libraries also used Blackboard for a 1.5 credit hour Honors Module on Google. As a convenience to users, a tab to the Libraries Home Page was added to all VCU BlackBoard pages. In addition, staff developed the VCU course LIB600-001-002, Incorporating Library Resources Into Blackboard, a model site demonstrating how library resources can be incorporated into Blackboard.

Services to off-campus programs were strengthened by expanded virtual reference service, improved digital course reserve service, enhanced resource discovery and delivery services, and course specific sessions from instruction and outreach services librarians. The Ask-A-Librarian service, a cooperative project among 11 members of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) that came into production in spring 2004, provides real-time chat reference service 12 hours per day/7 days per week to any VCU student anywhere in the world with an Internet connection.

The VCU Libraries delivered more than 600 instruction sessions to over 20,000 students during FY03-04. Instruction programs from the VCU Libraries incorporate

assessment and evaluation measures. Evaluation of assessment data was underway at the end of the fiscal year; a full summary of results will be available in September 2004.

Section IV: Important Challenges

The WEAVEonline Important Challenges report for FY02-03 identified two strategic challenges for FY03-04.

1. Improving the resource base for the VCU Libraries in order to serve VCU needs.
2. Assessing and improving services for VCU Libraries users regardless of location.

VCU WEAVEonline™
Report on Important Challenges [2002-2003]

IMPORTANT CHALLENGES

Two principle challenges: improving the resource base for collections and staffing; assessing and improving services to all users regardless of location. Resource base: According to data from the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University allocated 3.6% of E&G income in library services in FY01-02. This places VCU second to last in percent of E&G expenditures on library services -- only Norfolk State University allocated less of its E&G funds on libraries. VCU stands at a turning point: what kind of library system does it want and need? A viable research library system requires significant enhancement of budgets over the next 5 years, including a higher percentage of E&G and FACR income, among other resources. Assessing and improving services: There is evidence that service quality is inconsistent. In addition, service offerings -- reference librarians, service desk and building hours, implementation of Web-based services, and the like -- are greatly diminished due to staffing reductions. A higher resource base will allow a ratio of expenditures normally found in a research university library system: 45% collections, 55% operations. (In FY02-03, the VCU ratio was 53% collections, 47% operations.) This will provide resources for services, but service assessment must be strengthened and services improved for responsible stewardship of new operations funds, especially for undergraduate services and off-site users.

The VCU Libraries tied specific actions in FY03-04 to each of the 7 outcomes defined in WEAVE for the year. Six of the seven outcomes supported assessing and improving services and one supported improving the resource base. Of the 19 measures the VCU Libraries developed for WEAVE FY03-04, 13 support the goal of assessing and improving services and 4 support improving the resource base. Despite a very challenging year of reduced budget support, the VCU Libraries successfully accomplished all desired outcomes as reported in WEAVEonline.

To address the challenge of service quality, the VCU Libraries undertook two major surveys and created a new initiative centered on service culture during FY03-04 (see Executive Summary.) The highest priorities for staffing investments in FY04-05 are service and outreach positions, both faculty and classified, to expand service and focus on quality improvements. Data from FY03-04 will be used as a baseline to measure improvement in FY04-05.

The challenge of an improved resource base was assisted by the SACS re-accreditation process, which (see Executive Summary) set the stage for the first serious consideration of budget enhancements in 10 years. Many other factors contributed.

The damage to research enterprise by continued reductions in journal subscriptions alarmed many faculty and administrators. A compelling factor was a new awareness of data demonstrating the poor standing of the VCU Libraries in relation to other Virginia libraries and VCU peer institutions. Overall, the chief element of success was education and awareness, aided by these powerful opportunities for testimony: the case for a stronger library itself has seldom been contested. The academy in general agrees that a great institution requires a great library.

Although increases in the FY04-05 budget signify progress, funding remains a very significant challenge. According to data from the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV), VCU is next-to-last in the percent of its E&G funding that it invests in its library system; only Norfolk State invests less. Funding proposed for FY04-05, while enormously helpful to the VCU community, is still far from the overall funding targets identified by the VCU Libraries as part of the SACS Focused Report. The improved funding still likely will continue to rank VCU with Norfolk State University as having the lowest levels of library investment, expressed as a percentage of E&G expenditures, among public universities in the Commonwealth.

Section V: International Activities

The chief focus of the VCU Libraries in international activities is supporting VCU's many international educational and outreach initiatives.

- VCU School of the Arts in Qatar: The VCU Libraries worked closely throughout the fiscal year with the new librarian at Qatar, who arrived in August 2003. Arrangements were made to provide access to most digital resources available through the VCU Libraries to VCU Qatar students and faculty. The Qatar library and the VCU Libraries collaborated with the School of the Arts to purchase two important arts-related digital resources. The collaboration funds significant startup capital costs for these resources from SOTA financial resources, and covers ongoing subscription costs from the VCU Libraries' budget. The collaboration provided digital collections to the entire VCU community that neither unit could afford on its own.
- VCU MBA program in Egypt: The VCU Libraries worked with Dr. Van Wood from the School of Business to clarify support options for the School's new program in Egypt.
- International Newsroom: The VCU Libraries worked with the Office of International Education and Academic Technology to create the International Newsroom in Cabell Library to provide international students with access to television news programming from home. See Executive Summary.
- VCU Libraries faculty member Ngoc-My Guidarelli, a member of the Library Education and Assistance Foundation for Vietnam Advisory Board, assisted in the compilation of a handbook illustrating a recent Vietnamese translation of the

Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules. She will conduct workshops on the application of these rules in Vietnam in July 2004.

Section VI: Community/public Service

The faculty and staff of the VCU Libraries compiled an outstanding record of service and contributions to the Central Virginia community in FY03-04.

The Road to Brown: The Prince Edward County Student Strike, April 1951, a panel discussion program on February 24, 2004 developed in recognition of the anniversary of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court, provided a forum for testimony by and dialog with regional community leaders about the lasting effects of school desegregation efforts in Virginia. The program explored one of the foundation events of the Brown decision, the student strike in Prince Edward County schools by African-American students in 1951. Over 180 people attended and participated in lively discussion with the panelists.

The 2004 Brown-Lyons Lecture, “The New Global Anti-Semitism – Is It Really New?”, addressed the challenging issue of anti-semitism locally, nationally and globally. The Lecture broke its FY02-03 record attendance with another largest-ever audience and engendered helpful and frank dialog by the entire community.

Through the NLM funded Women’s Health Network and Community Outreach Information Network (COIN) grants, the VCU Libraries partnered with several community agencies such as REACH (Richmond Enhancing Access to Community Healthcare), SeniorNavigator and the Richmond Region 12 Regional Literacy Coordinating Committee (RLLC).

Through the NLM/ACPF Information Rx Project, TML staff trained 50 public librarians in project particulars and MedlinePlus. Trainees included librarians from the Chesterfield, Henrico, Pamunkey, and Williamsburg Public Library Systems. TML staff also worked with public librarians through the COIN planning grant.

The Community Health Education Center (CHEC) participated in 24 outreach activities that reached 1,426 people. These activities included exhibits at health fairs, displays at meetings and sponsored health seminars. The Urban League of Greater Richmond selected CHEC to serve as its diabetes education resource center. CHEC also serves as the resource center for the Central Virginia Care Connection for Children.

Curtis Lyons, Head of Special Collections and Archives, served as Treasurer and adviser to the Virginia Civil Rights Movement Video Initiative, a non-profit group doing video oral histories with Virginia Civil Rights veterans.

John Ulmschneider, University Librarian, served on the Board of Directors for Richmond Public Library System and chaired its Finance Subcommittee.

Section VII: Objectives for FY04-05

Even with some success in FY03-04 in strengthening the budget for FY04-05, the principal challenge for the VCU Libraries remains unchanged from previous years: achieving a funding profile commensurate with a top-100 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 with an enrollment exceeding 27,000 students. A reasonable goal is top-100 standing among American research universities as measured by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Index. A key objective for FY04-05 is to achieve that goal by encouraging full implementation of the five-year plan proposed as part of the Focused Report. The plan will be considered successfully implemented based on two measures.

- Percentage of institution E&G allocated to the library system: According to data from the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV), VCU is next-to-last in the percent of its E&G funding that it invests in its library system; only Norfolk State invests less. Using data from the CARS system as originally developed by SCHEV, the goal for VCU is to reach the median for library funding as a percent of E&G for public institutions in Virginia. In 2001-02, the median was about 5% of E&G funding; VCU Libraries was funded at 3.6% of E&G. Funding proposed for FY04-05, while enormously helpful to the VCU community, will not reach the benchmark median for library investment in Virginia in FY01-02. Since budgets will increase across all Virginia institutions in FY04-05, the proposed funding will continue to rank VCU with Norfolk State University as having the lowest levels of library investment among public universities in the Commonwealth.
- Standing in the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL): ASERL is the largest regional research library consortium in the U.S. and comprises research libraries across the Southeast. It has a much lower membership standard than the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), but uses ARL's metrics to determine membership eligibility. Of its 37 members, 20 are members of ARL and 17 (including VCU) are non-ARL research institutions. The goal is a median standing for the VCU Libraries among this group. As of FY03-04, the VCU Libraries ranked in the bottom quartile, below institutions such as George Mason University, East Carolina University, Wake Forest University, and Georgia State University.

Achieving these two milestones will require a focused investment in the base budget for the VCU Libraries by the University. In turn, the VCU Libraries must create and demonstrate outstanding value from this strengthened 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.

The VCU Libraries will embark on a new strategic plan beginning in August 2004. The plan will utilize the Balanced Scorecard methodology and create a new framework, founded on the Mission-Vision-Values Statement, for initiatives and operations for the

VCU Libraries through FY05-06. Key goals in addition to funding and service quality will be identified through that process.