

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL 1999-2000

VCU LIBRARIES

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VISION

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

GOALS

CREATE a renewed sense of vitality and enterprise in the VCU Libraries that is visible throughout the Virginia Commonwealth University community

DESIGN and deliver programs and services that support an information literate population by committing to a service philosophy grounded in teaching, learning, and research.

DELIVER collections and services across the Internet using systems that are integrated, intuitive, and responsive to users, wherever those users are located.

INVIGORATE information services by developing a continuous process of service evaluation, redesign, implementation, and promoting.

DEVELOP a productive, motivated, and skilled workforce who participate in shared decision-making.

DEVELOP a comprehensive facilities plan that recognizes the value of the Library "as place" and that addresses individual campus, user, and staff needs, as well as programs and collections.

CREATE a funding and development program to position the Library as a dynamic social and intellectual force in the University.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the framework established by the Strategic Plan completed in May 1999, the VCU Libraries forged ahead with major advancements during fiscal 1999-2000. In particular, the VCU Libraries addressed program areas important to off-campus learners and other time- and place-independent University programs; began planning for major renovations in both library buildings that will significantly improve the resources for the on-campus community; greatly strengthened internal management procedures and processes; established new and clearly articulated goals for its budgets and collections; and began to educate faculty and staff regarding an appropriate budget growth path for the VCU Libraries in the context of overall University growth.

December 1999 marked an important milestone in the history of library services at VCU with the renaming of University Library Services to VCU Libraries. The new name is a plural noun

used in singular number, i.e., “The VCU Libraries is...”. The name change had no effect on the names of the individual libraries within the library system, which will remain unchanged: the James Branch Cabell Library and the Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences. Names are important to a sense of identity, for institutions as well as individuals; a name change is therefore a simple but highly symbolic and meaningful act. The new name underscores the mission of the VCU Libraries as a university-wide resource for scholarly pursuit throughout Virginia Commonwealth University. It also has the effect of broadening and reinforcing the sense of Virginia Commonwealth University as a single university.

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

EXPERIENCED over 24.4 million access to the VCU Libraries’ site on the Web (www.library.vcu.edu), with 4.4 million separate visits and over 2.2 million visits to the homepage.

ADDED 31,000 titles and 47,000 volumes, bringing the total volumes in the collection to over 1.62 million

EXPENDED \$4,701,796 to enhance the collections

WELCOMED over 1.9 million visitors to the Library

ANSWERED over 81,000 reference questions and conducted 596 instructional sessions

LOANED over 222,000 items to the University community

BORROWED over 10,000 items through our interlibrary loan program, and provided over 25,000 items to other libraries

Particular focus during fiscal 1999-2000 fell on programs and initiatives supportive of time- and place-independent learning. In response to the Student Computing Initiative, new digital content and services such as electronic journals, new index and abstract services, and the MyLibrary service, were created and acquired as Web-based resources whenever possible, equally accessible in library buildings, anywhere on campus, anywhere in Virginia, or anywhere in the world. In addition, the existing proxy service for off-campus access was expanded and strengthened. The VCU Libraries remains the only VCU unit providing comprehensive proxy support for time- and place-independent access to all of its services

Implementation of the new collections plan developed in 1998-1999 moved into full swing during the year. In close consultation with faculty and the VCU Libraries Advisory Committee, an RFP was completed and contract issued for a

document delivery service featuring strong support for research journal literature in all disciplines. A significant corpus of new digital journal titles along with several powerful new index and abstract services were added to the electronic collections available through the VCU Libraries’ Web site. The VCU Libraries’ technology and processes for cataloging of digital journal titles, making these titles much easier to find and use, became the source for a parallel effort in the State-wide VIVA consortium, further strengthening VCU’s high leadership profile in VIVA.

Funding for the VCU Libraries’ first significant renovations in many years was confirmed during the fiscal year and intensive planning was initiated in October 1999. Instead of starting with architectural scenarios, the effort began by creating a set of guiding principles for the renovations which focused the design effort on creating maximum user benefit from the modest funding available. Final architectural renderings were completed by the end of the fiscal year, and include more user space, a coffee bar and accessible restrooms on the first

floors of both library facilities, and stunning visual impact that will enhance the attractiveness of the facilities and help with University goals in recruitment and retention.

Internal management underwent substantial change and renewal with the arrival of the new Executive Director of Libraries, John Ulmschneider, in September 1999. A new Administrative Council began weekly meetings in oversight of all aspects of the Libraries' operations, including budgets, personnel, and policy. The Executive Director carried out the first series of planned annual meetings with all Deans at VCU, and initiated regular meetings with internal management groups, departments, faculty, and staff. Intensive analysis and modeling of the budget led to a new budgeting process which distributes some budget authority previously retained by the Executive Director. The analysis also highlighted severe weaknesses in the budget, including the fact that the VCU Libraries has a negative operations budget as provided by the University at the beginning of the fiscal year.

The VCU Libraries can point to exceptional success in faculty recruitment during fiscal 1999-2000. Recruitments included VCU's first life sciences librarian and a new engineering and science librarian with particular expertise in engineering. In its most important appointment, the VCU Libraries attracted an outstanding candidate for the position of Director, Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences. Jean Shipman, formerly at the University of Washington Seattle, brings a prominent national reputation and exceptional program creativity to the position. She will begin her work with VCU on August 1.

In closing, it must be noted that budget allocations remained a constraint to the VCU Libraries' ability to build collections and provide services. Significantly, the VCU Libraries received the permanent budget increase in 8 years with the allocation of an additional \$100,000 for fiscal 2000-2001 in response to funding in the General Assembly biennial budget. Unfortunately this increase was more than offset by a \$105,000 permanent cut in the 2000-2001 budget as a result of University reallocations. The static budget means that continuing inflation in the cost of scholarly journals and higher salaries for new faculty recruitments will require subscription and service cuts beginning in 2000-2001.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ULS becomes VCU Libraries: The former University Library Services was renamed the VCU Libraries in December 1999, emphasizing its commitment to academic pursuit across the University community as a VCU-wide enterprise.

Time- and place-independent digital access to collections expanded: The VCU Libraries continued its aggressive program in migrating as much of its collections as possible to digital formats for access via the Web anytime, anywhere in the world. Electronic journal collections were greatly enhanced by:

- The online version of the premier journal *Science*
- Digital access to more than 500 existing print subscriptions in science, technology, and health sciences
- New electronic journals from Cell press and HighWire Press
- Expanded JSTOR with back issues of some of the most significant scholarly journals in the sciences
- Round-the-clock access to *SciFinder Scholar* for index and abstracts from the chemistry literature
- New electronic indexes, including
 - *Index to Black Periodicals Full Text*
 - *International Index to the Performing Arts*
 - *Art Index Retrospective*
 - *Bibliography of the History of Art*
 - *Columbia International Affairs Online*

The VCU Libraries' own collections of postcard images of Richmond were digitized and made available through the Web with powerful finding aids in spring 2000 as the *Rarely Seen Richmond* online exhibit. The exhibit was highlighted in a prominent article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Print publication of these images is under discussion with possible publishers.

The Libraries strengthened its proxy services for off-campus access to these rich resources through a more robust software foundation. Strategic purchases of searching and proxy software will have great impact after installation in summer and fall 2000, providing for single-interface searching of multiple databases simultaneously, and simplifying proxy services. The VCU Libraries remains the only VCU unit providing comprehensive proxy support for time- and place-independent access to all of its services, and has been consulted frequently regarding both internal and external application of proxy for other VCU units.

MyLibrary service upgraded: The widely acclaimed MyLibrary Web service was upgraded to add additional services in fiscal 1999-2000. In addition, work was nearly completed on a new publications alert service, which will alert MyLibrary users to new books and journals in their discipline areas through an individual interest profile created and maintained by the user. Personalization software such as MyLibrary has become increasingly available; the VCU Libraries' pioneering work in this area continued to be recognized and consulted in 1999-2000 through a number of regional, national, and international programs, publications and awards during the fiscal year.

Renovations project initiated: The VCU Libraries initiated its first major renovations project in many years, with construction scheduled to begin in fiscal 2000-2001. The effort began by creating a set of guiding principles for the renovations which focused on creating maximum user benefit from the modest funding available. By the end of the year, the VCU Libraries staff, working closely with the design and engineering firm selected by the University, had developed inviting, functional architectural plans that focuses nearly all renovations on the first floors of the two library facilities. The new design will provide more user space, an improved user environment including a coffee bar and accessible restrooms on the first floors, and a stunning visual impact. The new renovations will help advance University ambitions in recruitment, retention, and enhancing excellence in scholarship.

Document delivery: The VCU Libraries completed the Request-for-Bid process for its new Rapid Document Service (RAPDS), which will provide quick delivery of journal articles from periodicals not owned by VCU. Two companies were selected to provide services beginning July 1, 2000: Canadian Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), with particular strengths in science, technology, and health sciences; and UnCover, with particular strengths in humanities and social sciences. These services will partially compensate for the decline in periodical subscriptions caused by static budgets combined by continued high inflation in periodical publications (12% for fiscal 1999-2000). The VCU Libraries will subsidize these services within certain guidelines as endorsed by the VCU Libraries Advisory Committee in May 1999.

Web-accessible course reserves: The VCU Libraries initiated development of its new Web-accessible, digital course reserves system scheduled for initial use in fall 2001 for distance education and other classes. Development was well underway and on schedule by the end of the fiscal year. The new system will make many course reserve materials available to students anytime, anywhere in the world.

Redesign of key services for greater efficiencies: The VCU Libraries initiated several task forces to address high-profile services and issues affecting all users, including

- Redesign of service points in Cabell Library
- Review of policy and guidelines for dealing with the homeless
- Redesign of the VCU Libraries' Web presence
- Distance education services
- Hours of operation, including extended hours
- Revised food and drink policy

These efforts are part of an overall revitalization of activity within the VCU Libraries aimed at increasing internal efficiencies, modernizing policy and practice, and improving the user experience of services and facilities.

Successful lectures and programs: A very successful lecture and program series marked the fiscal year. The 20th Book Art Symposium, conducted in cooperation with the SOA, drew over 100 attendees to the Grace Street Theater in October. The 15th Annual Selma and Jacob Brown lecture featured Dr. Jack Spiro speaking on “*The Merchant of Venice* and Shylock’s Christian Problem”, while the 14th Annual Cabell lecture featured eminent novelist Sherri Reynolds. Both events exceeding attendance expectations. For the Brown lecture, a second showing of the accompanying movie was scheduled for July 2000 to handle an overflow crowd. In addition to successful programs, the Libraries’ newsletter *Library Online* resumed its

publication schedule with two outstanding issues widely complimented by campus and community for their excellence in editing and content.

Outstanding progress in staff appointments: A number of critical professional faculty vacancies were filled during the fiscal year. Recruitments focused on new specialists for disciplines important to VCU's goals and ambitions, including VCU's first life sciences librarian and a new engineering and science librarian with particular expertise in engineering. In its most important appointment, the VCU Libraries was successful in attracting an outstanding candidate for the position of Director, Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences. Jean Shipman, formerly at the University of Washington Seattle, brings a prominent national reputation and exceptional program creativity to the position. She will begin her work with VCU on August 1.

New aspirational vision: The new Executive Director of the VCU Libraries worked closely with faculty, staff, and students to define a new peer group and identify new aspirational peers for the VCU Libraries. With new financial and peer group models, the VCU Libraries has identified a goal of meeting ARL membership criteria by 2006 as the best measure of a library system commensurate with VCU's current standing and projected growth in programs, enrollment, and research. While the goal will be difficult to attain, articulating the goals has brought the University to a new understanding of the VCU Libraries in relation to its peer institutions. The process has been invaluable in creating a new energy for expansion of the Libraries, and a new awareness throughout the University of the importance of the Libraries to meeting the University's goals. In addition, the Executive Director has initiated State-wide efforts to reshape and improve funding for research libraries in Virginia, and at year's end was leading a group charged with such an effort through the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia's (SCHEV) Library Advisory Committee (LAC).

Scholarly communications initiative: Working closely with the VCU Libraries Advisory Committee and others, the VCU Libraries in spring 2000 initiated a planning effort to address scholarly communication and intellectual property issues at Virginia Commonwealth University. The planning group brought together representatives from the Faculty Senate, VCU Libraries Advisory Committee, Academic Technology Advisory Committee, and University Administration, including the Office of Technology Transfer and the University Counsel. The effort made substantial progress and was preparing recommendations for action by the Provost at year's end. The VCU Libraries created a Web site as a resource center and information clearinghouse for the initiative.