Reimagining research services as part of major academic library renovations: A tale of two research departments (University of Central Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University) No Title

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Reimagining Research Services as Part of Major Academic Library Renovations or Changes: A Tale of Two Research Departments (University of Central Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University)

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Reimagining Research Services as Part of Major Academic Library Renovations or Other Changes: A Tale of Two Research Departments  (University of Central Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University)  June 1, 2018

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ABSTRACT
Two academic library Research Service managers discuss changes and innovations that they have coordinated in their respective libraries (University of Central Florida serving 60,000+ students [http://library.ucf.edu/21st/) and Florida Gulf Coast University serving 15,000+ students (http://library.fgcu.edu/admin/renewal.html) due to major building renovations or other changes that their respective libraries are conducting.

These changes and innovations include significantly downsizing print reference and other collections, relocating and redefining service points, reconfiguring public services, re-thinking staffing models, adjusting Subject Librarian face-to-face activities, stepping-up online services, communicating with stakeholders, and keeping students and faculty in the loop so that their voices are heard and their needs met.

UCF Libraries overview
The University of Central Florida (UCF) is a research university that serves more than 66,000 students, making it one of the largest universities in the nation. UCF is home to 13 colleges that offer over 200 majors. It offers 95 bachelor’s, 86 master’s, and 31 doctoral degree programs, and ranks first among public universities in the nation for the annual number of baccalaureate degrees awarded and for the number of overall degrees conferred. UCF Libraries’ collections include over 1.6 million print volumes. The John C. Hitt Library is UCF’s premier library facility and is located on the main (Orlando) campus.

UCF’s building renovation plan
Construction work on UCF’s 21st Century Library Project has been underway since Fall 2016. The transformation of the John C. Hitt Library building includes the expansion and complete renovation of all five floors as well as improvements that include renovated elevators, stairwells, rest rooms, electrical outlets, and sprinkler systems. Renovations also will provide more group study rooms and graduate student areas, a digital commons, an expanded special collections and exhibits area, and a new main entrance. (architect’s rendering on page )

An especially exciting element of Phase One (Fall 2016 –Fall 2018) of this project is the construction of a four-story Automated Retrieval Center (ARC) on the north (Student Union) side of the library building (photo on page ). At full capacity, the ARC will hold 1.25 million volumes of the library’s print collection. Books stored in the ARC will be requested with the click of a button in the online catalog, retrieved by one of the ARC’s five robotic cranes, and be available for pickup at the Circulation Desk in minutes. Transferring books from the Main Library into the ARC will free up space for up to 1,600 additional user seats and student programming areas in the Main Library.
Many libraries worldwide, including over twenty in the United States, also have installed automated retrieval centers, including University of Chicago, North Carolina State University, University of Missouri Kansas City, and Georgia Southern University. Dematic Inc., is the company which installed UCF’s Automated Retrieval Center. The following videos demonstrate how this type of automated retrieval system is used in other academic libraries.

- Zach S. Henderson Library’s ARC (Automated Retrieval Collection) (Georgia Southern University)
- Santa Clara University Library - Automated Retrieval System (ARS)
- How RooBot the UMKC Libraries’ Robot works (University of Missouri, Kansas City)
- Macquarie University Library - Automated storage & retrieval system (Australia)
- The New J. Paul Leonard Library: Book Retrieval System (San Francisco State University)
- Automated Book Delivery System & Virtual Browse (North Carolina State University)

Along with the completion of the ARC, a temporary library entrance with a temporary covered bridge will be created, at the ARC side of the existing library’s Main Floor. This temporary entrance and bridge will provide a route through which books and other resources will be transported into the ARC during summer/fall 2018.

In the next phase of the 21st Century Library project, a building connecting the ARC to the existing library building will be completed and the top floor of the ARC will house a beautiful new student reading room.

**Effects of the new 5th Floor Quiet Zone on the Main Floor Knowledge Commons**

The 5th Floor Quiet Zone (photos on page ), also part of the initial phase of the 21st Century Library project, opened on April 16, 2018, just in time for Spring 2018 Finals Week study. This long-anticipated Quiet Zone, an area dedicated to individual study, research, and reflection, was the first area of the new library to open for student use. The space accommodates 170 seats, 85% of which are within an arm’s
length of electrical power. Each seat is designed for individual work and, to preserve an atmosphere of quiet, there is no group seating. Furniture selection was based on student testing and rating.

Even with a low-key “soft opening” of the new 5th Floor Quiet Zone during the week before Spring Final Exams, students quickly filled every seat of this area from day one. By day two, students were arriving at the library at 7:30am and camping out in the new area for the entire day.

When a fire alarm went off during the afternoon of the second day, students were reluctant to leave their seats in 5th Floor Quiet Zone. Students correctly deduced that the fire alarm was a false alarm (due to construction work being done in some of the library’s electrical closets) and they didn’t want to give-up their hard-earned seats, for fear of not regaining them when they were allowed back into the building.

What effects did the 5th Floor Quiet Zone opening have on the walk-in main level of the library, where the collaborative study Knowledge Commons (KC) is located? Almost immediately, there were far fewer students occupying KC seats than usual at this busy time of the semester. Unless students had collaborative projects underway that required them to remain on the KC main level, the students seemed to vote with their feet and migrated to the new 5th Floor Quiet Zone.
Reference Librarians staffing the Research Services Desk in the Main Floor Knowledge Commons area reflected that this spring 2018 Final Exam Week was the smoothest, calmest, and least stressful that they’d experienced in the KC for many years. Due to the timely April opening of the Fifth Floor Quiet Zone, we had the perfect solution for our over-crowded Knowledge Commons that usually was packed with students jammed shoulder-to-shoulder at tables or sitting on the floor. Also, there were few, if any, student complaints about noisiness in the Knowledge Commons, because now there was a perfect place for students seeking quiet study. A few Facebook student responses to the opening of the 5th Floor Quiet Zone included: “UCF keeps getting better and better; introvert’s paradise; it’s a very nice study place!”

5th Floor Quiet Zone Now Open!

The 5th Floor of the John C. Hitt Library is now open for quiet study. Enjoy the peace and quiet! The new space now has over 160 seats, over 320 electrical outlets, and 40 brand new desktop PCs.

Please help keep this new 5th floor Quiet Zone clean. Thank you.

- No Food
- No Open Beverages
- Lidded Beverages Permitted
How the building renovation and ingestion of items into the ARC will affect the current Main Floor
Knowledge Commons where the Research Services Desk and Department currently are located

The plan is to begin the process of ingesting library collections into the ARC from the existing library building in August 2018. When the ingestion begins, there will be a constant caravan of book trucks moving through the student-filled Main Floor Knowledge Commons - past the busy Research Services Desk, the Research Consultation cubicles, the Writing Center help cubicle, and student collaborative areas. Even though the book truck wheels will be treated with WD-40, it is anticipated that the movement of collections through the Knowledge Commons will create noise and commotion that will disrupt patron and staff activities.

In addition, the book truck routes through the Knowledge Commons and the creation of construction walls within the Knowledge Commons will infringe on space that previously had been devoted to student seating, student collaborative areas, and Research service points. It is estimated that the Library will temporarily lose a total of 504 seats. To partially compensate for this, the renovated 5th floor Quiet Zone, opened on April 16, 2018, added 170 seats.

Also, the Research and Information Services Department has been working to significantly downsize the Main Floor print reference collection. Since Spring 2017, each Subject Librarian has been weeding the print reference collection areas within his/her assigned LC call numbers, with a goal of reducing the print reference collection by 75%. Most of these weeded reference volumes will be moved into the ARC. In the long term, the downsized print Reference Collection will allow more space for Main Floor student seating and collaborative activities.

Beyond WD-40, ear plugs, and aspirin…Knowledge Commons/Research and Information Services
Main Floor contingency plans

What will the Research and Information Services Dept. do if the 150+ day ingestion process winds up becoming too noisy to conduct reference conversations with patrons at the current Research Services Desk or to conduct one-on-one research consultations with patrons in the consultation cubicles adjacent to the Desk? What if the noise is too loud for librarians to conduct Ask A Librarian virtual reference service within the Main Floor Research and Information Services Dept. office area, or too noisy for librarians to work in their own offices?
To date, Library Administration has decided to take a “wait and see approach” with several contingency plans in their back pocket for reconfiguring public services, relocating and redefining service points, re-thinking staffing patterns, adjusting Subject Librarian activities, and stepping-up online services, if needed, during the periods that collections are being moved into the ARC.

For example, if needed, Library Administration is amenable to: moving the main Research Services Desk service point away from the center of the Knowledge Commons, to a desk shared with Circulation Services near the legacy Main Floor library entrance; moving research consultations into the Library’s enclosed Main Floor classrooms; moving the Ask A Librarian (AAL) virtual reference service into enclosed office spaces on another floor of the library or for AAL staff to temporarily work out of their homes; moving librarian offices into 3rd Floor Group Study Rooms

Taking UCF’s Subject Librarian outreach model to a new level…..possibly out of the library altogether

Since UCF’s Subject Librarian program began in spring 2013, the Subject Librarians increasingly have been acting as their own CEOs with regard to outreach, research consultations and library instruction. Currently most Subject Librarians only are assigned four-six hours per week of Reference Desk duties, with the rest of the desk slots being assigned to highly trained part-time Adjunct Librarians.

The Subject Librarians no longer are as tied to the Research Services Desk or their library offices as before, and their cell phones and newly issued lightweight Dell laptop computers are enabling them to be increasingly mobile. Some Subject Librarian strategies for avoiding the noisy library renovation areas include: embracing more online activities (such as increased embedded librarianship, skyping, online research guides and tutorials) to reach their students and faculty, or, getting out of the library altogether and working from other places on campus, such as the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning or classroom buildings that house their assigned academic programs. Several of the Subject Librarians have created short “Subject Librarian welcome videos” to embed in their e-newsletters, research guides, database web pages, and emails

Getting the word out about renovation matters to our constituencies

With so much change taking place in the Library, we know that it is important to keep faculty and students in the loop so that their voices are heard and their needs met during the long renovation period. Some of the communication strategies we are utilizing include conversations with stakeholders at Faculty Library Advisory Board and Student Library Advisory Board meetings, news updates on the Libraries’ website and social media outlets, signage on whiteboards at the Library entrance and in the library elevators, “Installments Newsletters” in library restroom stalls, Subject Librarian e-newsletters and emails to academic departments, announcements at library instruction classes and workshops, and print flyers at service desks. A “21st Century Libraries” link http://library.ucf.edu/21st/ at the bottom of the Libraries’ home page provides a general overview and updates on this project, with tabs for “Recent News,” “Renderings,” “Plans,” and “FAQ.”

Also, one of the Subject Librarians has created a customized LibGuide titled “Automated Retrieval Center” http://guides.ucf.edu/arc that provides detailed updates on this project with sections covering: about the ARC; videos about ARC; construction information; currently; during initial move; after initial move; document delivery services; browsing online; current locations.

At each weekly Library Management meeting and at each monthly Research Services Dept. meeting there are detailed updates regarding the progress of this project in which information is given to the librarians to pass on to their assigned academic departments, faculty, and students.
Sometimes a little humor in library signage helps to smooth over Renovation inconveniences:

Please check this page for updates on dust, closures, and noise:

Information is posted at the entry to the library building, on signs in the elevators, and on signs throughout the building. When it has been indicated that an area is closed, please stay out. There are risks associated with entering those areas that are not immediately visible. Employees and work crews typically enter wearing hard hats and other protective gear.

Your cooperation enables the library project to progress as quickly as possible. We appreciate your understanding and offer a sincere apology for your inconvenience.

The Circulation Desk, at the entrance to the building, has earplugs if you are challenged by the noise.

Redefining Reference services and staffing after the next phase of the renovation project is completed

The next phase of the renovation project (June 2018 – June 2019) will be devoted to constructing the connector building between the ARC and the existing library building. When this phase has been completed, the current Research Services Desk probably will be replaced by a “one-stop-shopping integrated services” Information Desk located in the center of the Knowledge Commons, with the Knowledge Commons space previously used for librarian offices converted into student collaborative areas, and librarian offices being moved to the 3rd Floor.

The new Information Desk will serve as the primary point of first contact for patrons and will employ a tiered or triage staffing model which will utilize highly trained Adjunct Librarians, support staff, and student workers. These frontline Information Desk staff will be cross-trained to assist patrons by answering directional questions, providing technology troubleshooting, initiating basic reference help, and making informed referrals to Subject Librarians or Learning Commons partners. Information Desk staff will provide expert guidance regarding a continuum or circle of services and will quickly and quietly skype the Subject Librarian on call when in-depth reference or other complex questions require the immediate attention of back-office professional staff.
Advantages of tiered or triage staffing

Within this new model, Subject Librarians usually will not be stationed at the service desk during their designated reference shift, but instead will remain on call in their offices, ready to step-in when in-depth research questions arise at the Information Desk. They will continue to provide scheduled one-on-one research consultations, library instruction classes, workshops, and outreach to their assigned academic departments and programs.

This tiered staffing triage model will add flexibility to the Subject Librarians’ schedules, allowing them to work on information literacy class preparation, course-embedded instruction, creation of online research guides, collection development, committee assignments, and other professional responsibilities, instead of being tied to a service desk and devoting their time to lower-level inquiries.

Staff training

Cross training will be the strategy through which the part-time Adjunct Librarians, support staff, and student workers will attain proficiency, across functional units, to serve at the new Information Desk. This training will be delivered in a variety of ways including staff meetings, shadowing, peer training, manuals, tutorial modules, and supervisor feedback. Also, easily available documentation (on the web or in desk manuals) will be important for troubleshooting the most common questions. An important part of the training will focus on when referrals are needed to Subject Librarians or to Learning Commons partners.

FGCU and Library Background

As you drive on the campus of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) in Fort Myers, Florida you will see a large sign saying, “It started with Land and a Grand Plan”. This summarizes the 20-year history of our university. In 1991, the former Florida Board of Regents recognized there was no state university serving Southwest Florida. Soon afterwards, the governor signed legislation authorizing the tenth state university. The following year, local landowners offered more than twenty locations before the current site was selected. In 1993, the founding president was chosen and plans for the campus were unveiled the next year. Our first student was admitted in 1997 and the first commencement ceremony was held the following year. The rest, as they say, is history.
Today we are a teaching university with 80% of our classes being taught by full-time faculty. FGCU has approximately 15,000 students with 92% from Florida. The university also has students representing 45 states and 85 countries. We have 54 undergraduate, 23 graduate, and 3 doctoral programs. In the past academic year, the top five awarded degrees were: Resort Management, Psychology, Mass Communication, Business Administration & Management, and Criminal Justice.

The library began as a two-story building. Because Upsala College in East Orange, New Jersey was closing, FGCU was able to purchase their library collection for the sum of one million dollars. In 2006, a wing with four floors was added to the existing building. Today, the library is nearly 135,000 square feet. However, the fourth floor, which houses classrooms and faculty offices, does not belong to the library organization. This area is scheduled to undergo renovations by converting all of the faculty offices into classrooms.

The library follows the traditional organizational model including departments such as Collection Management, Technical Services, Customer Services, Archives, and Systems. The Reference, Research, and Instruction Department, is home to seven Subject Librarians, an Instructional Technology Librarian, an Instructional Support Specialist and a Department Head. The current department head is the first person hired specifically to serve as the department head.

**The Collection Analysis Project**

As expected, the original collection continued to grow and expand. After 17 years, a long overdue evaluation of the collection was necessary. There were two goals in mind. First, we needed to determine how the collection was utilized to ensure our users had the appropriate materials to support their educational and research needs. We also wanted to respond to changing space requirements such as student study and learning spaces.

To accomplish this evaluation, in 2014, the Collection Analysis Project (CAP) began. The plan was to have Subject Librarians use their subject expertise and program familiarity to identify items that still had merit and flag those items that were no longer needed. Our Collection Management staff would prepare detailed reports for the evaluations. The reports provided the Subject Librarians with information such as when an item was added to the collection, whether it had circulated in the past five years, and format. Throughout the project, Subject Librarians would work with faculty to assure them nothing would be removed from the collection that was critical to their research and teaching. Our Dean also assured teaching faculty that if something was removed by mistake, we would repurchased.

**How CAP worked**

The CAP was accomplished over a two-and-a-half-year period with collection evaluations overlapping. For example, the Periodicals review happened parallel to the Reference collection review. The first collection reviewed was the VHS collection, which occurred during a two-month period. Because 82% of this collection had never circulated, we were confident in removing most of it and replacing the remaining items with streaming videos. Since the DVD/CD collection was very small, it only took two weeks to review. The next area was Periodicals, which took about six months to evaluate. Over the years we had switched many of our subscriptions to electronic versions, causing the print growth rate to slow to where we could consolidate two floors of bound periodicals onto one floor. The Reference collection also took six months to evaluate. During this review, our Subject Librarians determined what books would remain in reference, be moved to the General collection for circulation, transferred to remote storage site or be completely removed from the library. The review of the Microform collection was completed in stages over a year. The final collection evaluated was the General collection. During this review, which took
eleven months, the Subject Librarians determined what books would remain in the General collection for circulation, be transferred to remote storage site or be completely removed from the library.

With one final sweep of the Reference collection, the review was complete. We were able to consolidate and make a much smaller Reference collection. The General collection also was shifted and consolidated to accommodate the additional Reference materials.

**Mission Accomplished**

Our mission was accomplished. We reviewed the entire library collection to ensure it met the educational and research needs of our students and faculty. Overall, we removed 21% of the collection. Specifically, we removed 60% of the Reference collection with an additional 12% moving into the General collection. That was an overall reduction of 72% of the Reference collection. Our microform cabinets went from 50 cabinets down to 18. The remaining cabinets were moved out of the public area into Technical Services.

With all of these reductions, we opened large spaces throughout the building to create more student learning spaces. With end of year funding provided by the Provost, we made an initial purchase of new furniture. The new furniture created areas for students to work collaboratively or individually and created private spaces for subject librarians to conduct research consultations. After the installation of the initial purchase, we still had funds to obtain items we missed and more pieces of what the students liked and wanted. The additional furniture was chosen based on space requirements and student preference. The students are extremely happy with the new space designs. There’s rarely an empty seat!
Library Next: A Campus Conversation

This project was more than an analysis of our collection and opening spaces. It gave us the opportunity to reimagine the services we could offer. Therefore, we gave the entire project a more appropriate name, Library Next.
During the CAP, we wanted and needed input from our students and faculty. After all, we were creating the spaces for their use. A university-wide conversation was held which was called “Library Next: A Campus Conversation”. Librarians served as facilitators for three student themed topics. One topic was to determine what students wanted to work independently and collaboratively. We wanted to know how the library could support their need for a quiet place for study while at the same time providing space to engage interactively. Another topic focused on library and academic support services. We were interested in finding out what we could do to help with student retention. We questioned if collaborating with other campus services, such as the Writing Center and the Center for Academic Achievement (both located in the library building), could help retain students. Our last student themed topic focused on supporting new forms of learning and creating. We wanted to know what additional software or hardware was needed to support student learning.

Librarians also facilitated for two faculty and staff themed topics. From the faculty and staff, we wanted information about instruction. The Subject Librarians were already using an integrated approach to teaching and assessing information literacy. We wanted to look for ways to work effectively with teaching faculty. We wanted to know if they were interested in holding office hours in the library so they could work directly with librarians and students who were conducting research. Our last faculty and staff themed topic focused on evolving the scholarly record and collections. We were interested in finding out what the library could do to make our virtual and electronic collections easier for faculty to integrate into their courses. We also wanted to promote and support Open Access and e-textbooks for our teaching faculty. As expected, we collected vast amounts of information from all who participated in our conversation.

Learning Commons Task Force

We also initiated an internal task force made up of library faculty and staff. The task force was charged with making recommendations on creating a learning commons. Along with information gleaned from the Campus Conversation, the task force surveyed the literature and interviewed leaders in the learning commons field. Their recommendations were presented to the Dean and the entire library faculty.

Where we are today

Since the inception of Library Next, the Subject Librarians have continued providing research and instruction services. At times, this was not easy. Staffing was an issue requiring immediate attention. Just after the CAP began, the Health Sciences Librarian departed. After a lengthy search, another librarian was hired. However, the gap left other librarians responsible for reviewing health sciences materials. In addition, there was not an Instructional Support Specialist. While this individual did not directly participate in the CAP, she did provide support to the subject librarians. Hiring people to fill those positions was important to reimagining and extending our services.

With a fully staffed department, our librarians only needed to staff the Reference Desk about four to five hours a week. Librarians from other departments and part-time adjunct librarians are able to staff the remaining desk hours. With less time on the desk, Subject Librarians are able to put more emphasis on our chat and texting reference services. With additional advertising, our virtual reference statistics have nearly doubled in the past year. We are finding more students are chatting from us within the library. They don’t wanted to lose that comfortable seat! For the subject librarians, less desk time also means more time for research consultations and working with teaching faculty.

A Mobile Librarian service was initiated. This program provides service at the point of need. Everyone in the library who was interested participates. With tablets, we walk around the library looking for students in need. We recently added a mobile podium that serves as a focus point for the service.
Students are directed to the podium from other service points when they need assistance in the stacks or other floors. We continue to enhance the service. We are working on a text feature that would allow service desk staff to directly contact the mobile librarian and tell them know someone is coming for assistance.

The Mobile Librarian

The Subject Librarians have also worked with faculty to integrate their Research Guides into Canvas, our Learning Management System. With this addition, students have access to a research starting point as well as immediate access to their Subject Librarian. Likewise, some teaching faculty are so impressed with the research guides they want guides specific to their courses.

One of the items we learned from the Campus Conversation was how collaborating with other campus services could assist our students. As the collections shifted and spaces opened, we created the Hub. This is an area where our Center for Academic Achievement holds tutoring sessions. We have also partnered with the Writing Center to hold drop-in research clinics at least twice a semester. To date, attendance has been good. Of course, the free pizza probably helps.

The Hub
Another item resulting from the Campus Conversation was the creation of a media production area. With more space, we were able to provide an area for this much-needed service. Collaborating with the campus radio station and Communications department, we now house equipment for students to create podcasts and other media activities. The Student Government recently approved additional funding for more equipment such as broadcast quality cameras, lighting, green screen frames and acoustic paneling and curtains for sound absorption. The media production room was opened for student use in the spring. Once students receive an orientation to the room and its equipment, they are able to reserve the room whenever it is available.

FGCU Final Thoughts

As was stated at the beginning, “It started with Land and a Grand Plan”. After twenty years as the only state university serving Southwest Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University and its library continue with the grand plan to provide the highest quality and most innovative services to our students and faculty. With the CAP creating smaller, more functional collections and new spaces waiting to be filled with eager students, the door to reimagining new services has been opened. The library listened to our students, teaching faculty, and staff to expand our services to meet their research and teaching needs. In the next twenty years, no one knows what type of library services will be available. What is certain is that highly skilled and innovative library faculty and staff will provide those services.

REFERENCES

Florida Gulf Coast University. The Library NEXT Project. http://library.fgcu.edu/admin/renewal.html (accessed June 1, 2018)