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November 2000: Seeing is Believing, Library Changes Since Opening of Dacus

Dacus Library

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Focus

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Seeing is believing

Time and technology have altered the building

Recent issues of Dacus Focus have addressed the myriad changes taking place in the library. Modifications include painting and recarpeting, installing new furniture, updating the library classroom to a technology room, and putting reserve articles online. Rapid change continues at the library with the renovation of the old typing room into a conference/seminar room and the conversion of the library tape tour to an online “virtual” tour.

Reading about improvements gives some sense of the progress but seeing is believing. That is why this issue of Dacus Focus is devoted to *showing* the enhancements you have read so much about.

For those who remember the “old days,” vintage photographs of the library from the Winthrop University Archives provide a chance to reminiscence. For those who have only become acquainted with Dacus recently, this issue offers a visual overview of the past thirty years.

When Dacus library opened in 1969, about 3,600 Winthrop “girls” (there were only about

200 “guys”) used the library, though in somewhat different ways. The library had just started staying open until 11:00 P.M., and Larry Mitlin, then documents librarian, now associate dean, remembers it was several years before the students seemed to realize it.

“I remember working until eleven at the reference desk and never seeing a soul. We kept track of the questions after ten o’clock; we had one all year, ‘Where’s the restroom?’ Needless to say, reference desk hours were changed back to closing at ten o’clock.”

The computer hardly played a role in 1970. The only computer on campus was an NCR “main-frame” with the magnificent memory of 64K. The library considered itself progressive because it used the computer to print a paper list of periodical holdings. WISL, the Winthrop Serials List, was modelled after a similar project at Chapel Hill. Eventually the list grew so large it was tying up the college’s computer printers. The then-new technology of COM (Computer Output

Microfilm) was substituted for the paper, and microfilm readers sprouted around the library.

Today computers are a mainstay at Dacus. Students perform most of their research using special online databases which the library purchases. These online databases have essentially replaced old standards like Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature. They are accessible from off-campus so students can do research from their apartments or from home during Fall Break.

The following pages offer a chance to see how time and technology have altered the building (and the people.)



Larry Mitlin
Associate Dean of Library
Services
(1981)

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This picture was taken in the early 1970's. The two reference librarians are using books to look up information. Dot Barber, an employee who began work in 1970, recalls that the reference librarians stayed busy helping students use and understand the card catalog. She notes that it took much longer to find information because everything was in paper.

The reference librarians today often use the computers in research. Several newly-acquired databases offer a gold mine of information. FIS Online is a major tool for business majors while Education Abstracts allows education majors to find articles in their subject quickly and efficiently. They can e-mail the articles to their home computers.



This student is finding books using the card catalog. It was phased out in 1989 and replaced with an online catalog, DOC. Patrons can now connect directly from DOC to Internet versions of resources. Ellen Owens, who began work in 1970, called the old card catalog the "brain" of the library. "Everything flowed around it."

Dacus Focus

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www.winthrop.edu/dacus

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Thousands of students have attended library instruction sessions in the library classroom. In the past, students had to leave the classroom halfway through the session to go upstairs to use computers. This unwieldy arrangement had the unfortunate effect of disrupting the classroom session and displacing people already using the upstairs computers.

This summer the library classroom was renovated and equipped with 24 state-of-the-art computers. Now students can search the databases along with the instructor. This hands-on learning environment allows students to begin their research right in the classroom.



Another recent addition to the Dacus Library homepage is a link to an online tour of the building. The tour features Winthrop University mascot Big Stuff and his roommate Little Stuff. By following Little Stuff around the library, students familiarize themselves with locations and learn about the library. This virtual tour replaces the old tape tour. Writing 101 and 102 students have an enhanced version of the tour which includes an explanation of Dacus Online Catalog (DOC) and tips on doing research.

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This 1970's era student may be checking out a reserve book at the Circulation Desk. In the past students had only a limited time to use items that their professors had placed on reserve. Now an exciting new development at Dacus allows students to retrieve reserve materials from their dorm or home computers. They can take as much time they need to read the material. This has proven very popular with students.

Facilities change, mission unchanged

Clearly the building and technology have changed over time, but the function of the library remains the same. Dacus exists to help students find and assess information just as

it did when the building opened in 1969.

Of course not all students are serious about research all the time. Ellen Owens remembers streakers following the 1970's fad of running

naked across campus. More than one streaker ran through the library parking lot (pictures not included). She also remembers when the building was more spacious, before additional

books and a growing student population caused the crowding the library has experienced in recent days. Today's students still get together in the refurbished group study room to study or simply to chat.

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