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October 2004: BI Program Strengthens Student Learning

Dacus Library

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Focus

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BI program strengthens student learning

The Bibliographic Instruction (BI) program at Winthrop University is almost as old as the university itself. Its roots can be traced to the opening of the Carnegie Library in 1905. The library was constructed with a gift from Andrew Carnegie. Before construction began, D.B. Johnson, Winthrop's first president and a strong supporter of libraries, asked Carnegie for additional money in order to construct two classrooms in the library. Carnegie agreed to the request with the stipulation that a class be added to the university's curriculum that instructs students on the use of the library. Winthrop's first librarian, Ida Jane Dacus, began teaching library instruction classes in these rooms and submitted annual written reports about the classes to President Johnson. Though the Winthrop library has undergone many librarian changes and a name change, the emphasis that formal library instruction is an important part of the Winthrop education has never waned.

There are three general goals that the BI program attempts to accomplish. First is to acquaint students with the physical layout of the library. As early as 1962, students participated in a required, taped tour of the library. While the structure of the tour changed through the years, the purpose has remained the same: have students physically walk through the library and see the locations of materials and departments. An online tour accessed through the Dacus Library Web site replaced this brief walk-through in 2000. The idea of a physical tour was not dropped, however. At the beginning of the fall semester, the library hosts an open house for new and returning students. One of the activities at this event is a self-guided tour that takes the student to different departments in the

library. Students must learn the physical layout of the library before the next goal can be met.

The second goal of the BI program is to introduce the students to the resources available through Dacus Library and how to use them effectively. The heart of the BI program is providing formal instruction sessions for classes. Library instructors tailor their sessions, often consisting of two parts, to the needs of a specific class. During the first part of class, a librarian will present and demonstrate the material. The second half of the session is devoted to letting the students practice what they have just learned. The librarian will work with students individually at this time. Dacus Library faculty provided library instruction sessions for 178 classes (3,441 students) during the 2003/2004 academic year. A large number of these sessions included Writing 101 classes. The English department has incorporated a research component into the Writing 101 curriculum and requires each Writing 101 class to attend a library instruction session during the semester. This means that almost every freshman will have attended a session in Dacus Library by the end of their first fall semester — important because teaching students the basics of using the library during the Writing 101 sessions leaves more time for subject-specific instruction during the sessions for upper-level classes. The library also provides instruction sessions aimed at faculty and staff. These sessions most often introduce Winthrop faculty and staff to new resources that the library has acquired. In addition to group sessions, Dacus Library faculty provide one-on-one instruction to faculty, staff and students by appointment. Also, various tutorials and research guides

are available on the Dacus Library Web site, providing students an opportunity for library instruction from any Internet connection at any time of day.

“Too embarrassed to ask for help, they often will take the first source they can find even though it may not be the best for their needs. Or worse, they walk out completely frustrated, vowing never to return.”

The final goal of the BI program is to make the student feel more comfortable and confident in using the library and its resources. In a recent article, Ross LaBaugh of California State-Fresno compared a freshman entering the university library for the first time with a homeowner going to a home improvement store looking for a washer to fix his leaking shower. The inexperienced homeowner thinks he knows exactly what he needs, but when he gets into the store he has no idea where to find the plumbing section. After trying to follow signage with terms that he doesn't understand, he finds the right aisle but is overwhelmed by all the choices of washers. Too embarrassed and frustrated to ask for help, and unable to figure out what he needs, the homeowner grabs a pack of assorted washers, quickly pays for them and leaves the store. The libraries that freshmen used in their high schools are not nearly as large or comprehensive as Dacus. Often when freshmen walk into Dacus for the first

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Christopher papers outstanding addition to archives

Author Matt Christopher is most well-known as a prolific writer of sports-oriented children's books. His works are geared to reluctant young readers (ages 4-10 years old), and generations of fans credit Christopher for igniting their desire to read. He did so by creating characters who find the inner strength to overcome difficult physical and emotional traumas with which his readers could identify. He often used sports as the setting but subtly incorporated real life challenges that kids are forced to deal with in their daily lives.

Perhaps Christopher will always be known for his sports books, but his works expanded into other fields as well. While the emphasis of his most well-known works is geared toward the sports fan, he interweaves adventure, science-fiction and mystery elements which appeal to an even larger audience. Matt Christopher maintains that writing mystery novels in the adult field was his first love, but as he wrote in his biographical article, "The Write Life," "It just happened that my work in the children's book field has been more successful." Matt Christopher's writing career can, without reservation, be designated as a success, for he has published more than 100 children's novels and nearly 300 short stories and articles. His works are so popular that his primary publisher, Little, Brown and Co., continues to publish ghostwritten books under his name.

Matthew Frederick Christopher was born the first of nine children on Aug. 16, 1917, in Bath, Penn., to Mary and Fred Christopher. His mother and father were hardworking people who put the needs of the family above all other concerns. They always made sure there was enough food on the table for their large family. They made sure that young Christopher went to school and did his chores, but they fed his appetite for reading and furnished him with whatever he desired, within reason. Matt was a voracious reader (his favorites were detective and mystery magazines) who read anything he could

get his hands on and studied the stories inside out to figure out what made them so engaging. Eventually he felt he had learned enough and told his father that all he needed was a typewriter and he would become a successful writer. For a struggling immigrant family during the depression, such an expense was not taken lightly; but Christopher's father relented and his young son's career began.

As a 14-year-old sophomore in high school, Christopher began writing, which eventually blossomed into his hugely successful writing career. His first writing endeavors were drafts of poetical verses and some short stories, many of which are housed in the Winthrop University Archives. By the time Christopher turned 18, he was ready to enter a Writer's Digest short-story contest. Of the thousands of entrants Christopher placed 191st of 200 winners. Inspired by this success and eager to make a name for himself, Christopher submitted a one-act play titled "Escape" to Greenberg publishers in 1940. He was rewarded with a contract and a hefty check for five dollars.

Christopher continued to write but found it difficult to procure more sales. He wrote in a variety of different genres early in his career, searching for his niche in the writing field. Matt decided to concentrate on a particular type of story he enjoyed the most. While splitting his time between a full-time job and playing semi-professional baseball (the highpoint of which was getting a single against the Major League Baseball's New York Giants in an exhibition game), Matt endeavored to write a 4,000- to 5,000-word detective story a week. His endeavors culminated a year later in 1943 into his first short story sale, "The Missing Finger Points," which netted him the lucrative amount of \$50.

During the next few years Christopher was able to get a few more articles published but realized that he could not make a living just writing short stories and articles. It took more than two

years, but Christopher was able to write a mystery novel titled "Lay the Body Anywhere." It was published by Phoenix Press in 1952 under the title of "Look for the Body." The two years of work only netted him \$150; however, it was the first novel that Christopher was able to get published.



Matt Christopher (2nd from left) with Allen-Wales Adding Machine baseball team

Matt Christopher realized that \$150 for two years worth of work would not enable him to concentrate solely on his writing career and decided to try a different literary field. In the fall of 1953, on Thanksgiving weekend, Christopher wrote a 60-page children's baseball book and submitted the manuscript to Little, Brown and Co. In the spring of 1954 Little, Brown and Co. published the story that became "The Lucky Baseball Bat" and launched Christopher's successful writing career as a sports-oriented children's book author. While Christopher continued to write short-stories and articles, "The Lucky Baseball Bat" proved to be the first in a long line of sports novels he would publish through Little, Brown and Co., which eventually enabled him to quit his job at the National Cash Register Co. in 1963 and become a full-time writer.

Unlike the majority of people, Christopher knew early on what he enjoyed most and made it his life's quest to mold his own life around these enjoyments. Christopher loved to write and so he did. As simple a statement as that sounds, it was anything but. The literary field is a tough nut to crack, so to speak, but he kept writing. Early in his writing career he received nearly 10 rejection slips for every story he published (in his short autobiography,

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“The Write Life,” Christopher mentions that he submitted one short story 16 times to different magazine publishers before it was finally published), and that ratio did not improve much even later in his career. Despite the rejections, he continued to write. He made himself into one of the most prolific and well-known authors in the children’s book field. While many of us live passively, Christopher made his life the way in which he envisioned it as a mere young man and willed himself to a successful career, delighting millions of young readers in the process.

Matt Christopher, finally finding his niche, never looked back. He published as many as four novels a year for the rest of his life, but for every story idea accepted by his publishers there were two that were not. Many of these unpublished drafts are housed in the Winthrop University Archives and are truly one of a kind. Most are non-sports related and span across such genres as science fiction, mystery, adventure and drama, as well as the fields of poetry, screen plays, short stories, non-fiction articles and novels.

Andrew Johnston
Archives Assistant

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time, they are overwhelmed by the amount of material available to them. Too embarrassed to ask for help, they often will take the first source they can find even though it may not be the best for their needs. Or worse, they walk out completely frustrated, vowing never to return. Library instruction sessions help make more confident library users, not only by introducing them to the library and its resources, but also by introducing them to a librarian. Very often students will feel more comfortable seeking out the librarian who taught their class rather than asking a “stranger” at the reference desk for help. The fall open house provides a relaxed, casual atmosphere for freshmen to make their first library visit. Refreshments are provided and prizes are given. Students who attend the open house have assured themselves that

their first library visit won’t be one filled with stress.

Bibliographic instruction, library instruction, information literacy, information fluency— some people use these terms interchangeably; yet some would argue they all have different meanings. But one thing they all have in common is the goal of teaching students how to find and use the information they need. And that is the reason the BI program at Dacus Library exists. Any professor who wishes to schedule a session for his class should contact David Weeks, Library Instruction Coordinator, at 323-2319 or weeksd@winthrop.edu.

David Weeks
Library Instruction Coordinator

Library instruction expands Dacus’ outreach

While the majority of library instruction efforts are focused toward Winthrop faculty, staff and students, Ida Jane Dacus Library does provide services for other clientele.

“This experience...prepares them for the transition to the academic libraries they will be using when they begin their college careers.”

The largest of this non-Winthrop-affiliated group is area high school International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement students. IB and AP classes are college level classes that high school students take to receive college credit. Because of the advanced level of these classes, high school media centers often do not have the resources the students need to complete their assignments.

Dacus Library has stepped in and provides these students not only with the use of our resources, but also instructional sessions on how to use them. Last year IB and AP classes from both Northwestern and Rock Hill high schools attended library instruction sessions at Dacus Library.

This experience not only allows these high school students to complete their assignments, but also prepares them for the transition to the academic libraries they will be using when they begin their college careers.

David Weeks
Library Instruction Coordinator

New fee set for copy cards

Just when you thought it was safe to make copies....we have changed the procedures again!

Patrons will now be charged 50 cents for each copy card they acquire from the circulation desk. The only exception will be Courtyard residents who received single-stripe Winthrop IDs. These students will be issued *one* complimentary copy card. Patrons who use their Winthrop ID cards to make copies will not be charged the additional fee.

The 50 cent surcharge should help encourage students to bring their ID cards with them when they come to the library, cut down on wasted/lost cards and help defray the cost of purchasing higher quality copy cards that will be more compatible with our card readers.

Nancy White
Head of Circulation Department

Dacus Focus

is published by the faculty and staff of Dacus Library, Winthrop University.
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Jean Wells, Co-Editor
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Focus What is JSTOR?

JSTOR, the scholarly journal archive, is a new database at Ida Jane Dacus Library. This unique database provides electronic access to scholarly journals from the very first issue of the journal, many from the 1800s. These PDF files are an exact replica of the original article, and are available both on and off campus to Winthrop faculty, staff and students. The titles are as diverse as the 1895 issue of the American Historical Review and the 2001 issue of The Journal of Labor Economics. Since the mission of JSTOR is to provide access to the back issues of journals, the database does not include the current issues of the journals, typically the last three to five years, depending on the contract with the publisher.

Our subscription to JSTOR includes more than 350 electronic titles. This database, accessible in the alphabetical list of databases, is searchable by journals grouped in disciplines or by selected journal titles. The search scans the full text of the journal articles, looking for the specific terms. If a journal is available in JSTOR, the Dacus Online Catalog record for the journal title will link the user to JSTOR. If you want to learn more about JSTOR, stop by the reference desk in the library.

Susan Silverman
Head of Public Services

Dacus

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BI changes in technology

Perhaps the greatest change in the Bibliographic Instruction (BI) program throughout the years has been the use of technology in the library classroom. Before 1994, the tools for a BI presentation consisted of an overhead projector and a stack of transparencies. In 1994 the library installed a computer and multimedia projector in the classroom. This added a new dimension to teaching BI classes. The instructor could now show the class live searches from the Internet, CD-ROMS and Dacus Online Catalog.

“Today the electronic classroom includes not only computers, but VHS and DVD players as well, making it a true multimedia classroom.”

While far superior to the overhead projector and transparencies, this setup had its limitations. The students could still only learn by watching and listening. Also, the instructor was “stuck” sitting behind a computer cart during the demonstrations. These two problems were solved in the spring of 2000 when the technology in the classroom took another jump forward. The library installed 24 student work stations, along with an instructor computer incorporated into a podium at the front of the class. When the aging

projector from 1994 was replaced with a new one, the library classroom officially became the “electronic classroom.” For the first time students could not only learn by watching and listening, but also by doing — and this is the real reason for continually updating the classroom with the latest technology.

It is universally understood today that students each have their own learning style. Some are auditory, some visual, and some kinesthetic. Providing a wide variety of tools for the instructor to use in presentations makes it convenient to address the learning styles of more students. Today the electronic classroom includes not only computers, but VHS and DVD players as well, making it a true multimedia classroom.

Ironically, the latest technological addition to the library classroom is somewhat of a return to one of the first pieces of equipment – the overhead projector. In spring of 2004, Ida Jane Dacus Library added an ELMO document camera to the classroom. The ELMO allows the instructor to display handouts, pages from a book and, yes, even transparencies, onto the screen for the class to see.

David Weeks
Library Instruction Coordinator

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