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the dean's corner

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Increased support and new technology are inseparable and complementary

LIBRARY HOPES FOR 1994/1995

Basically, there are two approaches to increasing the extent and effectiveness of library support on our campus. One is to increase funding for the program, and the other is to encourage all reasonable projects involving electronic access and interlibrary cooperation. These two approaches are inseparable and complementary and both are addressed in this brief essay. The former is essentially an on-campus activity linked to the library's efforts to buy books and periodicals, acquire essential equipment, and maintain what is widely recognized as one of the best academic library staffs in the state. The latter activity is closely linked with the efforts of the Commission on Higher Education and its new body, the Library Director's Forum, to expand and encourage library networking in the state.

In the next few months, the budget decisions crucial to the success of the library program will be made. I remind you what that program is. It is quite simply to support the curriculum and research needs of Winthrop students and faculty at a nationally recognized level of excellence. The only nationally recognized and widely accepted standards for academic library support are those of the Association of College and Research Librar-

ies, an affiliate of the American Library Association. The standards they have established are minimal standards, but they are the ones that are looked to by accrediting groups, the Commission on Higher Education, and our peers among colleges and universities. A cornerstone of the ACRL standards states:

The library's appropriation shall be six percent of the total institutional budget for educational and general purposes. . . . The library's appropriation shall be augmented above the six percent level depending upon the extent to which [the library] bears responsibility for acquiring, processing, and servicing audiovisual materials and microcomputer resources.

At present the Winthrop library's share of the University E and G budget is 3.79% (FY 1992). Not since the early 1980s has it even remotely approached six percent. We often hear that the pie has shrunk in higher education, but this issue has nothing to do with the overall size of the pie but rather the % of any size pie given over to supporting what is the faculty's most important instruc-

tional resource on campus.

Lest this be dismissed as a simple and instinctive reaction of an academic unit that merely wants more money, it might be well to ponder some of the data. Since 1983, the inflationary costs of library materials have outdistanced every other cost on campuses. Indeed, the only other cost that even approaches library costs is staff benefits. Periodical subscription costs alone have increased more than 10% annually over the last decade. The 1993 subscription prices amounted to about an 8% increase, but even this increase resulted in a massive cut of subscriptions at Winthrop. The 1994 increase in periodical prices is estimated at this point to be 9-10% and the "easy cuts" (many in fact were far from easy) have already been made. At the same time that this has been happening, book prices have reached an all time high of \$45.74 for hardbacks and \$18.81 for paperbacks. (1992 averages). Without a significant increase to the library base budget (not a one time transference of funds), there may be yet another major cut—this one into the heart and soul of both the periodical and book budgets.

Since the problems Winthrop's library faces are not new or unique, it is reason-

able to assume that the best minds have been at work seeking solutions to control costs and at the same time meet the information needs of our knowledge-based community. There is some good news on the horizon, but unfortunately, the operative words are "on the horizon."

The way out of this dilemma, say some, is the creation of the electronic or virtual library, i.e., an individual library that has access to a vast range of library materials through a technologically advanced system of computer connections with other libraries and commercial suppliers of digitized information. In short, this is the dream of a faculty member or student having virtually immediate access through a computer to any article or book in existence. For those who see this prospect as an unmixed blessing, I recommend "The Treason of the Learned" by Michael Gorman in the February 15, 1994, issue of *Library Journal*. Even in its less fanciful guise one speaks about this quest with the greatest hesitancy, if one is wise, since the technology changes daily, and the attendant problems to be worked out, including copyright and leasing of software, are immense. Merrily Taylor, University Librarian at Brown University, writes:

Often overlooked in discussions of the "electronic library" is the vast amount of investment required in order for an institution to make computer-based information accessible. Workstations, high resolution monitors, networks, network connections, software, printers, and other equipment must not only be acquired but maintained and updated.

But if we leave fantasy aside for the moment, we can report progress in South Carolina on some of the real

information issues. In 1993, the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) created the Library Directors' Forum (LDF) consisting of the library directors from the thirty-three public academic institutions in the state. Since its creation, I have served on the executive board of the LDF and our top priority has been the South Carolina Higher Education Library Network. This project will enable the state's academic libraries to link each other's online catalogs and will eventually provide access to online periodical indexes and locally loaded and remote information sources. The *book*, I am happy to say, remains alive and well, but, as one recent authority on information retrieval noted, "The stand-alone workstation for CD-ROM periodical indexes, the single purpose online searching machine, and the online public access terminal that connects only to the home library's catalog are dead, or at least dying."

This statewide project now known as the Library Automation Consortium Project has been developed and pushed through the state bureaucracy in record time thanks in large part to Lynn Kelley at CHE, Joe Boykin at Clemson, and Patrick Calhoun at USC, who headed up a small task force which included Larry Mitlin of the Winthrop Library faculty. It is not too much to say that, if funded, it will represent the single most important advance for academic libraries in South Carolina since the creation of the national OCLC computer network.

At the same time of this statewide activity, Winthrop's library on its own is pursuing a grant that would pay for access to the Carl Uncover 2 periodical database and document delivery service. This is in direct response to the continuing crisis we face in meeting periodical costs. If funded, the project would give us direct electronic access to a large number of key scholarly

journals that we do not presently subscribe to or that are in immediate danger of being dropped as hard copy subscriptions. Quite frankly the attempt to get grant support for this additional project is a very long shot but one that we feel is worth pursuing as an essential supplement to the Library Automation Consortium Project.

Finally, the state has established a small working group called the Funding Guidelines and Incentives Committee. Its members, of whom I am one, are charged with devising ways to encourage the adequate funding of public academic libraries throughout the state. It is likely that this committee will emphasize the carrot rather than the stick in setting up a formula that will reward those institutions and libraries that are conscientiously trying to meet all the standards of the Association of College and Research Libraries.

So where does all of this leave us? First of all, I hope this update on library efforts to improve access to collections has been helpful. It is a logical response to the crisis of scholarly communication that was outlined in our last *Dean's Corner*. The good news is that help is on the way to improve access to library resources in the state.

In the meantime the library will welcome the support of administrators and faculty in moving the library closer to the 6% share of Winthrop's E & G budget, so that we can address the immediate information needs of our students and faculty. Without this help to achieve additional support in the year ahead, the library will not be able to meet the expectations of its students and faculty nor of the accrediting and evaluative agencies that assess our effectiveness.

Paul Z. DuBois
Dean of Library Services

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