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September 2000: Dacus Moves Ahead

Dacus Library

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the dean's corner

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Dacus moves ahead

A New Library Building. Yes, you read that right, a new library. Plans are still very much in the formative stages, but soon we'll be launching a drive to replace this library with a new, more modern facility, one ready to meet the needs of 21st Century students.

Late last spring, Dacus and the Development Office got together and brainstormed about what to do to position Dacus for the future. Faced with runaway inflation, spiraling costs in every category, and more needs than the old woman who lived in a shoe, the odds of getting Dacus back on top seemed next to impossible. Like Æsop's fable about the felling of the magical tree in which for every one chip that flew out, two grew in its place, it seemed that for every new book or magazine we purchased, ten stood outside our reach.

The good news, as I've reported elsewhere, is that Dacus experienced a huge growth spurt in just one year. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on everything: books, periodicals, new paint, new carpet, a new Technology Room, computers—you name it. Our attempt to make improvements in every area has not been in vain.

Moreover, the new budget this year looks better than ever. Reallocations made last year (whose full savings will be gleaned this year) provide much room for continued growth and improved service. Further, a new outreach program (about which more in another *Corner*) promises to provide unparalleled service to students, faculty, staff and the Rock Hill community in unprecedented ways.

Nevertheless, Dacus has to make another push in yet another direction if help is ever to be sustaining. Today's 21st Century library needs are so overwhelming that traditional means of support no longer suffice. I'm pleased to announce that change in this *Corner*.

Last spring and for most of the summer, Christy Mooney (Development Office) and I have been working feverishly to cobble together a Library Advisory Board to help us look for ways to meet 21st Century challenges. To date we have identified individuals who will help us clean another Augean Stable.

Until its formation, Dacus had only the Friends of Dacus who provided outside support. Dacus Friends is relatively new and its charter has only purpose: the purchase of books. When the idea to form the Advisory Board arose, naturally we turned to the Friends to inquire if its focus had changed from exclusively books to include other, larger initiatives. After some deliberation, the Friends chose to remain with books alone. So, while Dacus Friends fight the ever-good fight of buying Dacus users a few more books each year, the Library Advisory Board will pursue more ambitious initiatives. Here are some of them.

A New Library Building. Yes, you read that right, a new library. Plans are still

very much in the formative stages, but soon we'll be launching a drive to replace this library with a new, more modern facility, one ready to meet the needs of 21st century students. The challenge is a most formidable one.

Estimates for a new building range between \$22 (fully renovating the current Dacus) to \$27 million (for a completely new building at a different location), and that's just today's estimates. A new building means Winthrop students of the future will be as well-prepared as Winthrop students of the past.

The library has always been integral to Winthrop, dating as far back as 1896. Today's libraries, however, are highly sophisticated facilities that offer *both* print and electronic access. In order to meet future needs, we'll have to bring the library facility into the new Millennium. To give you some idea of how much things have changed, consider this. In 1965, four years before the completion of Dacus, not one penny was spent by businesses on computers. Today, more than \$1 billion is spent *annually!* The same electronic seismic shift has occurred in libraries.

Book and Periodical Endowment Fund. Dacus has no dollars for books and periodicals in endowment. Every year we must meet these awful challenges via our annual budget. This, of course,

means we cannot experience even one year of *modest* growth or we fall behind. Believe it or not we subscribe to journals that cost *thousands* of dollars *each*! Moreover, because we're a library, we pay three and four times more than individuals do *for the same magazine*. It's not something we want to do; it's something we have to do. To make the endowment work for us, protect what we have and allow for growth even during weak budget years, we'll eventually need to raise \$1 million.

Technology Endowment Fund. The library houses 100 computers, many of them reserved for public use. Unfortunately, when one of them breaks unexpectedly (and it's always unexpectedly), we must replace it somehow. That means robbing our general budget. One computer we can handle. Four or five and we have to rob *every* account to cover the cost. And it isn't just computers. There are printers, servers, and a host of other sophisticated equipment we must vouchsafe for the future. With such a fund, we could protect our book and periodical accounts while improving our technological infrastructure. Goal: \$150,000.

Archive Digitization. Winthrop and Dacus have one of the state's most treasured archives. It's filled with rarities owned only by us: Catawba Indian materials; early Americana; a rich Women's History collection, to name only a few. But in order to use it, you must be here, in the building, when the archives is open. For a mere \$75,000 we could digitize many of the most important collections and have them on the web for

all to use, anywhere, any time, any place. Think of the genealogy studies alone that could be done, the personal histories that could be written!

Makers of the Mind Lecture Series. Libraries are not only about books and bytes; if they are about anything, they are especially about ideas. We'd like to be in the habit of bringing the best minds we can find to talk about new ideas in science, medicine, law, philosophy, theology and literature. We've set a target goal of \$100,000 to fund this series in order to be able to bring to Winthrop, and the Rock Hill community, those women and men who are making a very important difference in our century. If college is, indeed, a place of the mind (and we think it is), then certainly corollary educational events such as this help round out anyone's education.

These are but a few of the initiatives the Library Advisory Board will be looking at now and in the future. As you can tell, we've got our work cut out for us.

In 1931, Ida Jane Dacus wrote in her annual library report, "We have kept the faith with Mr. Carnegie. We have lived up to the letter of agreement made with him in 1905 ... [of] gradual growth of which we are very proud...." No truer words could be spoken today. Winthrop's Dacus Library is every bit a model of library services and technology-savvy access. But Ida Jane Dacus concluded her 1931 annual library report with words that are painfully true today: "Our growth," she warned nearly seventy years ago, "cannot be continued unless we get help from outside."

That's where you come in. We'll be approaching foundations and businesses and really anyone who'll give us an ear. Perhaps something like this appeals to you and you'd like to join our Library Advisory Board. Why not? In his heart-rending account of the horrific Nazi War years, Victor Klemperer expatiates, in volume two of his *I Will Bear Witness*, some of the too-numerous tragedies the Jews were then suffering. In his own words, and with his own emphases, he writes:

The balance sheet of yesterday's house search for us: All bread was gone, an untouched two-pound loaf, a packet of matches, all the soap in the bathroom, almost all the sugar, a five-mark note from my wallet. Terrible! *But the really irreparable harm is the stopping of the lending library.* Now my possibilities of study have been further restricted than before. (Vol. 2, p.73)

Not to be comparing small things with great, but there may be a lesson in this for us. We face no foreign power threatening the removal or shutting of our libraries ... or do we? If culture is reading, as Matthew Arnold once pointed out, its balance remains a very delicate one.

"Our growth," Ida Jane warned, "cannot be continued unless we get help from outside." You are our help on the outside. Now we need your 'inside' help!

Mark Y. Herring
Dean of Library Services

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