UNC Libraries – The Past

A library has been part of the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) since its beginnings as the State Normal School. Although original plans called for construction of a library adjacent to Cranford Hall, a separate library building would be eighteen years away. Students and teachers donated the first books, and the hundred or so volumes fit in an eight- by sixteen-foot room in the east wing of Cranford Hall. The first School catalog, dated 1890-91, provides a paragraph that comes closest to the concept of a mission statement today. It reads:

For the delight and improvement of students and faculty the institution has connected with it an excellent Library and Reading Room. As a means of education this feature of a school is indispensable. It is a fountain of knowledge, a source of discipline, and a means of culture.

Although that mission is still worthy today, the early Library was quite different in several ways. For one, the president of the School selected all library books. For another, hours the Library was open were quite brief, probably because there was only a part-time librarian. As the book collection grew, the Library was moved several times to larger quarters within Cranford Hall. Finally, in 1907, the Library got its own building: a beautiful domed structure with a long reflecting pool. By the 1930s, it too was outgrown, and renovations produced the building known as Carter Hall, where the Library remained from 1940 until 1971.

Two major forces shaped the growth and development of UNC Libraries. First, the evolution of the University itself has always affected the collections. In the 1930s, for example, an expanding graduate program at UNC required more books and journals to meet increasingly specialized and scholarly needs. Similarly, UNC's attainment of university status in 1970 was concurrent with the planning and construction of the current library building, named after James A. Michener. The second force involved the development of the library profession; the American Library Association, chartered in 1879, began to provide guidelines and standards for the operation of libraries. Both forces necessitated more staff to carry out specialized functions: selecting and acquiring library materials, cataloging, providing reference and instruction, and, by the late 1960s, using computerized information technology.

In 1972, Michener was a guest speaker at the dedication of the new library building. That same year shipments of manuscript and research materials for his novel Centennial began to arrive; they formed the core of what would become the James A. Michener Special Collection. In 1997, Michener designated the Library as the primary repository for research materials related to all his works, and he provided an endowment to the Library to support it.

For most of UNC's history, larger institutional needs dictated one general library collection rather than multiple departmental libraries. The one early exception was a juvenile collection, which was available in the Laboratory School (formerly the Model School or Training School), where students did their "practice teaching." When the Laboratory School closed in 2001, its School Library Media Center collection was divided between Michener Library and University Schools. Plans for the Music Library as a separate unit began in 1968, roughly in tandem with the Department of Music's application for accreditation by the National Association of Schools
of Music. Prior to dedication of the new Music Library building in 1997, materials were housed in various locations in or near Frasier Hall.

**UNC Libraries – The Present**

The University Libraries (the Libraries) consists of the Michener Library and the Music Library. Each facility functions not only as a repository, but also as a locus within the campus community for people to meet and share ideas, as a place for individuals to find solitude, and as an information gateway for acquisition and integration of knowledge and wisdom. The Libraries’ personnel and programs work together to provide patrons with research opportunities and information literacy skills that build a foundation for lifelong learning and effective participation in a diverse and technologically advanced society. The mission of the Libraries reflects a strong commitment to the University’s mission and vision.

**Mission Statement**

The University of Northern Colorado Libraries serves the university’s mission by providing an environment and resources for learning, research, and problem solving in the academic community. Library personnel serve the entire range of scholarship through the selection, organization, retrieval, interpretation, and conservation of intellectual resources and provide instruction for faculty, staff, and students through courses, class sessions, and one-on-one consultations. The Libraries also extends its services beyond the university community through outreach activities.

In support of the University, which is Colorado’s statutorily mandated primary institution for undergraduate and graduate teacher education, the Libraries has uniquely evolved to deliver programs, resources, and services tailored to our research and curricular needs. Although several academic libraries exist within the state of Colorado, they do not reflect our programs nor are their materials immediately available to UNC students.

Michener Library is located on West Campus and currently occupies slightly more than 75% of the 145,591.7 square feet of the library building. The Music Library, with 11,754.6 square feet, is located on Central Campus next to Frasier Hall (Appendix A). Michener Library houses specialized collections such as the Youth Collection, one of several collections that support the College of Education programs; Government Publications, a collection of resources produced and distributed by the various federal and state departments, bureaus, and agencies; Archival Services, the repository for historically significant UNC publications, artifacts, and photographs; and many unique collections, most notably, the James A. Michener Special Collection. The Music Library, UNC’s sole branch library, specializes in curricular support for the School of Music and Musical Theatre programs.

Increasingly, the Libraries strives to function as a gateway to information, providing seamless access, regardless of format. The Libraries’ collections consist of physical materials and an array of electronic resources. In addition to more than three million books and journals in print and micro formats, the physical collections also include music scores, maps, kits, video and sound
recordings, and other formats (Appendix B). Electronic resources include indexing and abstracting databases, some with full text, as well as collections of online journals. The Libraries’ personnel develop and maintain an online catalog that enables users to efficiently find resources. The catalog also aids access to course materials placed on reserve by instructors for student use. For items not available at UNC, the Libraries facilitates borrowing from other libraries regionally and worldwide via cooperative interlibrary loan networks that the Libraries has partnered in creating.

In addition to 295,270 library materials checked out from the Libraries’ collection in 2002-03 (see Appendix B for all statistical references in this paragraph), UNC users also borrowed more than 15,000 items through collaborations with other libraries. In only four months (July-Oct. 2003), users accessed more than 181,000 items from 64 of the Libraries’ databases. In addition to this spectacular online use, gate counts indicate that in-person use of the Michener Library increased by nearly 90,000 visits between 2000-01 and 2002-03. The Music Library gate count in 2002-03 was remarkable at 101,677, with 25.5% of the Libraries’ total circulation attributed to the Music Library collections.

For FY 2003-04 the Libraries received $4,162,221 in state fund allocations, which are dedicated to Personnel, Other Current Expenses, and Learning Materials; and $369,550 from endowment accounts (Appendix C). The Libraries does not receive any state funds for capital expenditures. From Learning Materials funds, the Libraries builds a collection of resources to support the curriculum and research needs particular to UNC. Today’s widespread Internet use encourages the misconception that all library resources are available online. Although an increasing amount of digital information is now accessible, physical formats have not disappeared, nor will they in the foreseeable future. Indeed, in many subject areas, the tangible physical format still predominates. Also, copyright law prevents digitization of many valuable resources. Hence, the Libraries must constantly scrutinize the Learning Materials Budget in order to acquire the best mix of resources for the least cost.

Nevertheless, collection inadequacy has been noted both in annual assessment surveys and complaints registered at the reference desk. This is most noticeable in areas serving graduate programs, for which there is basic, but not thorough or comprehensive, support. After the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) visit in 1995, the evaluation team reported:

The major issue for accreditation at the doctoral level is that the library currently can only support core course needs for doctoral-level work, and even this is being attenuated with the severe serials reductions currently being managed by the library administration. Clearly, dissertation and project work cannot be supported by the library.

In the 1998 NCA focused visit, reviewers reiterated the Libraries’ inability to adequately support doctoral research. After the Libraries completed another serials review in 2002-03, more titles were cancelled due to lack of funds in the Learning Materials Budget. Subscription costs for periodicals and databases continue to escalate at a rate far exceeding inflation.
The Libraries provides 141 public computer workstations; standard computer programs; networking; and wireless technology, which enables use of lap-top computers, including 10 that are available for check-out. The 300+ computers and peripheral equipment found in the Libraries are of varying age (Appendix D). The median age of the public workstations is three years, with the average age being slightly newer. An average of 20 public computers (or 17%) is replaced annually with money from student technology fees. No specific budgets exist for replacing staff computers, classroom equipment, or audiovisual and media equipment. The Libraries has valuable materials in a variety of formats, from obsolete to cutting-edge; it must, therefore, maintain the equipment necessary to use them.

The Libraries endeavors to increase the usefulness and number of public computer workstations, and to optimize library facilities and technology to meet student needs and support library services. In December 2002, the Libraries began to develop a long-range plan for improving Michener Library furnishings. With more group study areas, as opposed to individual study carrels, Michener Library’s new furniture plan helps to address the increasingly collaborative style of education. Though this initiative enhances the physical appearance of the Michener Library, it fails to address the critical need for additional space and for physical improvements to the Michener Building.

The Libraries has 49.5 FTE employees: 3 exempt administrative staff, 14.58 faculty, and 31.92 classified staff (Appendix B). Membership and leadership roles in campus and library committees and professional organizations provide faculty and staff with opportunities to engage in service and professional development, advancing their knowledge and enhancing their skills (Appendices E and F). Training is provided through in-house programs and other opportunities funded by the Library Special Projects Endowment or other sources (Appendix G). The extensive and diverse knowledge of Libraries’ personnel is demonstrated by their many activities, publications, performances, creative works (Appendix H), and grants (Appendix I). The Libraries’ personnel are a valuable resource for campus-wide professional enrichment. Though the Libraries is committed to maximizing personnel resources and offering services needed by patrons, external reviewers in the Program Review process identified extremely thin staffing as a concern. The Libraries provides laudable services to patrons despite some staffing shortfalls. Compared to other institutions, UNC Libraries spends relatively few dollars per student for library collections and staffing (see Appendix J for comparative statistics).

The Libraries is committed to acquiring external funding to enhance programs and services. In an effort to do this, the Libraries has established a Development Advisory Board comprised of local, regional, and national representatives. The Libraries is also exploring partnerships with other organizations that complement and support library services, including Directors of Greeley Area Libraries (DOGAL), a cooperative of deans and directors of the major Weld County library systems dedicated to library promotion, instruction, and grant writing. In 1977, the Libraries, along with four other institutions, founded the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, now a 12-member partnership, which consortially purchases databases and technology. This enables the Libraries to provide many services that would not otherwise be available to the University community.
The Libraries strives to provide exemplary service to the UNC community. Faculty and staff regularly review literature and integrate the best practices of other institutions into the Libraries’ policies, procedures, and standards. The Libraries conducts annual surveys in effort to measure success in meeting campus library needs. In 2002, the Libraries joined more than 300 other institutions in administering LibQUAL+™, a standardized nationwide survey sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries (UNC results available at [http://www.unco.edu/library/assessment/UNCLibQUAL.pdf](http://www.unco.edu/library/assessment/UNCLibQUAL.pdf)). Besides measuring user satisfaction at UNC, the survey will allow comparisons with peer institutions across the state and the nation. Though the LibQUAL+™ results expressed overall satisfaction with library services, scores from graduate students and faculty reinforce concerns about insufficient resources for research. Without increasing Learning Materials Budget funds, inflation in the cost of materials continues to erode the Libraries' ability to purchase books and maintain journal collections.

Another tool that the Libraries has recently acquired to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the monograph collection is the Automated Collection Assessment Analysis Service, which compares the Libraries’ titles to Choice “Outstanding Academic Books” lists.

Providing added value to users is not a concept that is new to libraries. Online library catalogs are model tools for the organization and retrieval of information. Librarians are adept at learning and using a broad array of reference search tools, both print and electronic. The use of these tools is taught to the University community via one-on-one consultations, class sessions, and credit-generating courses. Guidance in locating needed information is provided in person, over the telephone, or online. The Libraries also strives to implement innovative and cost-effective means of serving users, including the growing distance-education population. These initiatives include AskColorado, an around-the-clock online chat virtual reference service; a serials management system that comprehensively lists all journals from the Libraries’ print and database subscriptions, and links to articles when available; Prospector, a catalog that enables rapid, self-service borrowing of materials from participating libraries throughout Colorado; webZAP, an online Interlibrary Loan service; and a constantly evolving Web presence, including electronic readings. In the early 1970s, the Libraries began using computer and network technologies to help catalog and circulate resources. The Libraries strives to be on the forefront of using cutting-edge technology to benefit the UNC community.

In today’s competitive economy, graduates who can efficiently and skillfully retrieve accurate information will be more likely to succeed. Librarians have expert knowledge of information organization, retrieval, evaluation, and documentation and are highly qualified to teach students these concepts. Librarians teach credit courses (such as LIB 150) and subject-specific classes that focus on research strategies; these sessions are an excellent way to develop these skills. To meet increasing class demands, the Libraries used gift and state funds to create three technologically-advanced instructional centers equipped with 69 computers. The centers also contain audiovisual equipment, visual presenters, projectors, and classroom-control equipment or software. One instructional center takes advantage of Michener’s wireless environment.

Commitment to an ethic of intellectual freedom assures access to a broad spectrum of diverse thought. As an advocate for unfettered access to information from a wide range of voices, the Libraries is keenly aware of the importance of expressing its commitment to diversity. The Libraries actively networks with campus multicultural centers to recruit minority students for
work-study positions. Library faculty positions are advertised in minority-oriented library publications. Some sections of LIB 150 are reserved for learning communities in which students are drawn from at-risk or minority backgrounds. In partnership with the Disability Access Center, the Libraries houses an adaptive technologies room, which contains equipment that helps low-vision or blind students read materials.

The Libraries has a long history of collaborating with other University departments to ensure that campus needs are met. Subject librarians liaise with department representatives to support academic programs, including the selection of materials. The Libraries also receives guidance from the Faculty Senate’s Library Advisory Committee, comprised of college and student representatives. In order to facilitate day-to-day work, personnel also work closely with many campus entities, including the Office of the Provost, Department of Human Resources, Budget Office, Accounts Payable, and Purchasing. The Libraries’ work is further enriched by coordination with the University Information Technology Department, the Center for Professional Development, the Campus Web Advisory Committee, the UNC Card Office, the Disability Access Center, University Publications, Alumni Relations, and the UNC Foundation. The Libraries makes a conscientious effort to examine alternative campus resources in order to avoid duplication of services in the hope that the Libraries’ unique services will complement those provided by other University areas.

The Libraries also cooperates with outside entities including the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, the Colorado Academic Library Consortium, the University Press of Colorado, the Colorado State Library, the Colorado Digitization Program, Minitex, the Bibliographic Center for Research (BCR), and the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). The benefits to UNC from these endeavors include enhanced collection development, cooperative purchasing, and new technology initiatives.

By actualizing our mission statement, the Libraries affects the University community in significant ways: through our identity as gathering place for learning, research, and problem solving; through the research of our faculty members; through the Libraries’ function as a cultural center for displays, exhibits, and meetings; through our instruction and outreach to students, faculty, staff, and the community beyond UNC; and through our mandate as a repository for materials.

**UNC Libraries – The Future**

Information literacy is of increasing importance in today’s technologically-driven society. Finding ways to develop information literacy among students is emerging as a recognized method of encouraging an ethic of life-long learning and critical thinking. By fostering information literacy, libraries can help improve the critical thinking skills of students, and thereby help them to become civically engaged, intellectually curious, and well prepared to cope with the information-saturated professional environments of the future.

With this in mind, we recommend a University-wide shift from viewing library functions and classroom teaching as separate. Instead, the Libraries recommends restructuring its relationship
with the academic departments into a collaboration for achieving our shared educational objectives. Because information literacy is a collective responsibility, the Libraries is prepared, in a spirit of partnership with other campus units, to more fully transform itself into a “Teaching Library” that will be a center for collaborative teaching and learning on campus. Following this model, the University will capitalize on the Libraries’ physical environments, which facilitate learning, and the uniquely valuable academic expertise of librarians as guides in the theory and organizational structure of information.

A Teaching Library, indeed any library, requires foremost a collection of resources, which serves the curricular and research needs of undergraduates, graduates, and faculty. Yet, providing appropriate support for the University’s academic programs is becoming increasingly difficult. Even though technological developments are introducing new material formats, a report issued by OCLC in March 2003 (http://www.oclc.org/info/trends) predicts that print will not be replaced by electronic formats. Instead, current formats will exist alongside emerging and new formats. Inflationary price increases for journals present another challenge. For 2003-04 the upper end of the range of inflation rates for journals is predicted to be almost 12% ("Periodical Price Survey 2003," Library Journal, April 15, 2003, pp. 51-56). Increasing costs for journals erode dollars available for other materials. Replacing print journals with electronic versions provides 24-hour access that can benefit both on-campus and off-campus students, but does not significantly reduce costs. The Libraries must secure annual increases to base funding for learning materials that at least match the inflation costs for journals. A flat budget is, in reality, a cut. With funding increases, the Libraries could pursue new opportunities to address the needs of graduate students and faculty. Additionally, planning for library support should be incorporated into the approval process for new undergraduate and graduate programs. Regular and systematic evaluation and assessment of the collections will continue, in order to ensure that the materials, whether physical or virtual, support the curricular and research needs of the University’s academic programs.

A collection of library resources is greatly enhanced when users can quickly find the particular resources they need. Libraries’ personnel continually work to develop the online catalog, which allows users to efficiently find books, journal articles, and other resources. The challenge of maintaining and enhancing the online catalog, which even now does not completely reflect all of the Libraries’ holdings, increases with the multitude of formats. As the Teaching Library acquires more resources in electronic formats, additional staff time will be required to meet the unique demands of the online environment. For example, electronic content requires the negotiation of contracts for its ownership, in order to ensure that the content of back issues of journals remains available to library users. For the same reason, staff must also provide for archiving of non-current electronic materials. These are just a few examples of the new, but essential, responsibilities that cannot be adequately handled with current levels of staffing.

In this complex electronic environment, the need for information literacy skills is even greater. Many students are introduced to these skills by interacting with reference librarians in the Libraries. Librarians help students learn how to find information in all formats, wherever it exists. By using the online catalog to find a book, creating a bibliography of journal articles on a specific topic, or finding reliable information on the Internet, students become more information
Literacy. As students’ needs change, so must our reference services. Some possibilities for change include:

- finding new ways to meet the needs of distance-education and off-campus students
- meeting library users in dorms, academic departments, and faculty offices to provide reference services in alternate settings
- offering enhanced services, like AskColorado, through our web site
- streamlining the delivery of service within Michener Library
- expanding Music Library reference service
- responding to student needs for technical assistance, both for distance education students, as well as on-site in the Michener reference/information commons area

For several years, the Libraries has offered a formal classroom information literacy program. To fully implement the Teaching Library model, the Libraries recommends adoption of information literacy as a core General Education learning outcome. The Libraries could further the mission of the University by creating a program to teach information literacy competencies in incremental steps. This might be achieved using multiple instructional strategies both within and outside the Libraries: technology-based learning modules used in core courses in each program or major, service learning opportunities in the Libraries, and online and face-to-face LIB credit instruction. Library faculty could develop measurable outcomes to assess the programs. Together, faculty from the Libraries and other colleges could address the information literacy needs of each discipline and incorporate information literacy in core classes.

One result of information literacy instruction is that students demand access to information resources, sometimes obscure, that are located around the globe. The Libraries will implement technologies that improve the speed and efficiency of materials delivery through online access and resource sharing programs such as Interlibrary Loan and Prospector. Our dream is to provide instantaneous access to materials for users in their offices, homes, and dorm rooms.

Digitization projects will provide access to materials that had previously been restricted to on-site use only. More and more archival materials, including the James A. Michener Special Collection, are being digitized for Internet access. Digitization of photographs, videos, and manuscripts will preserve the originals while allowing high-volume use of facsimiles. In the future, library archivists will be more engaged in oral history projects, which create primary source material for future generations. These too will be digitized and available over the Internet. Other candidates for digitization include videos that support the distance education curricula and musical recordings that have been placed on library reserve for class assignments.

The Electronic Reserve system is a new technology in the Libraries that individual faculty are already using in a limited way to provide access to course materials. In the future, it could function as part of a larger service to streamline the University’s delivery and management of all electronic course materials, including the management of copyright issues.

The Libraries’ future needs will require ongoing and even closer cooperation with the campus Information Technology department for the implementation, integration, and maintenance of technologies. However, the variety of unique services, resources, and user needs demands that
the Libraries maintains its own Information Technology department, staffed by personnel knowledgeable in specialized library services and operations. This is especially the case since the Libraries’ electronic information resources (e.g., online catalog, databases, full-text journals) provide content; these resources require customized support not available for generic hardware and software packages. Funding is needed for technology life-cycle replacements, technologically-enhanced classrooms within the Libraries, state-of-the-art equipment, and the infrastructure to support its use.

Partnerships with other institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations will provide a greater number of helpful resources for library users. The cost of server space, training, facilities, and publicity, not to mention the cost of the resources themselves, is often shared among participating institutions for collaborative projects. Grant funding is also available, specifically to encourage collaborations. Some of the initiatives that could be pursued include journal article delivery through Prospector, shared maintenance of journal subscriptions, consortial purchase of information resources that support faculty and student research, development of a shared repository of digital dissertations and theses, and shared collection storage facilities. The need for archiving public domain materials such as government publications offers opportunities for cooperation at the state, regional, and national level.

Other potential collaborative initiatives focus on cultivating information literacy beyond the University walls, some of which could take the form of credit-generating classes within the Libraries’ rubric. The Libraries might design and deliver a regular information literacy curriculum for K-12 educators and certified Library Media Specialists, as well as professional development certification programs in information literacy for Colorado community colleges, businesses, and professional organizations. Furthermore, by actively partnering with school districts across Colorado, the Libraries could help prepare high school students for the demands of college-level research.

The Libraries will seek internal collaborations in order to provide new programs and services to enhance the University experience. As an example, University Archives could partner with graduate students from the History department and the College of Education to jointly develop K-12 teaching modules to provide local school students with primary source historical documents over the Internet. As another example, collaboration between faculty in the Libraries and other colleges could provide campus-wide professional development opportunities in the areas of copyright, intellectual property, plagiarism, and resource-based education.

The Libraries’ personnel require a high level of continuing education to maintain expertise in an environment where they are constantly restructuring their roles. Libraries are often the first to adopt and apply technology, so the work of both library faculty and classified staff will undergo rapid changes as new technologies evolve. The application of technology is not always equivalent to the automation of jobs; rather, the more important outcome is to benefit end users by providing faster access to more resources in a complex information environment. The Libraries will need both new and reassigned library faculty and staff in order to fulfill our dreams of providing the best possible services and resources for library users.
University Libraries Charting the Future Report

To support the Libraries, the University could consider innovative funding methods. The University of Iowa Libraries, for example, receives funding from the Athletics Department in recognition of the value of library services to student athletes. Brandeis University, as another example, takes advantage of a national women’s network to provide a continual source of funds to its libraries.

Although the University Archives is managed by the Libraries, and situated in the Michener building, it serves the entire University as the repository for historically significant records of UNC. While Libraries’ endowment funds will provide Archives with much-needed space on the lower level, those funds are not sufficient to cover environmental controls, archival-safe fire suppression systems, special lighting and security necessary to prevent the deterioration and loss of irreplaceable manuscripts and other materials. The James A. Michener Special Collection attracts researchers and visitors from around the world. Michener’s endowment supports an archivist and provides resources to process the collection. Our dream is to move the collection from its cramped quarters into a space to display museum-quality exhibits as well as provide a reading room appropriate to such a prestigious repository.

With a significant shift of resources, Archives could expand its current mission to include the coordination of a university-wide records management program for those records that must, by Colorado law, be retained. Generally, these records are not historically significant and, therefore, not maintained by Archives. Currently, each unit on campus must develop its own retention schedules, provide space for storage, and create ways to access the records. Centralizing this effort could realize great efficiencies.

The need for well-designed library buildings will not diminish even as libraries acquire more electronic information resources and digitize materials. Michener Library was designed to accommodate growth in library services; however, other University departments have occupied lower-level space that was intended for library use. The James A. Michener Library Program Plan, presented in July 1999, identified the critical need to reallocate the remaining space on the lower level. Further, a study of Michener collections undertaken in 2002 showed that shelving for collections will reach capacity by 2004. Selective use of compact shelving would ease some space problems, but not provide for collection growth or address the need for space that supports new technologies and service strategies. The floor plan must allow patrons to clearly understand where to go to efficiently use services and materials.

In the spirit of the mission expressed in the 1890 School catalog, the University Libraries endeavors to be a source of delight as well as education. As the founders recognized, a library is indispensable to our institution. Our Teaching Library will fill the continuing need for public places that allow people to mingle and share ideas face to face. As proposed here, the Teaching Library builds on existing strengths in the Libraries and the academic departments to develop new programs and services that support student success.