Students Get a Room of Their Own

The University Federal Credit Union Student Learning Commons opened in the Perry-Castañeda Library to much fanfare in August, and already the room has become a regular comfort zone for library users.

The space, as imagined by the planners, architects and designers, is drawing in students in droves – so much so, in fact, that there is polite competition for particular spots emerging.

“I normally sit over by the windows,” says Geography Junior Matt Turner, pointing to a row of armchairs bathed in sunlight. “But I got to the library a little late, so I’m here instead today.”

Not that “here” is all that bad. The renovation of the room – its first since the building’s dedication in 1977 – has allowed for the replacement of unfriendly ’70s institutional furniture with plush leather chairs and soft, comfortable sofas. The cold fluorescent lights have given way to the softer light of suspended modern fixtures in playful shapes and contrasting sizes that washes over geometric patterns in the new flooring. High metal shelving disappeared to make room for low profile storage that effectively opens up the cavernous 11,000 square foot space. There’s even an area for those individuals or groups that need a bit of separation from the crowd in the form of asymmetrically-arranged study “pods” – mesh-enclosed areas with tables and chairs which are useful either for interaction or solitude.

“I used to study on the 3rd floor (of PCL),” says Turner, “but this is more accessible and not as cramped or confining. And I like the social atmosphere of the room.”
Welcome Back

Libraries staff spent the first days of the 2007 fall semester taking their act on the road, as it were, to host welcome tables at various locations around campus.

The sites – at which staff members answered myriad questions and provided directions – turned out to be an oasis on the dog days of late summer. The Libraries distributed almost 5,000 bottles of ice-cold water and an inestimable degree of assistance and reassurance to a student population experiencing the excitement and nerves of their first day at UT.
Libraries Incorporates New Integrated System

Recent visitors to the Libraries’ online catalog are finding it’s not their grandfather’s library catalog (or even their mother’s or father’s).

Following the installation of a new integrated library system over the summer, the public catalog now offers features similar to those found on such popular web sites as Amazon.com and Google.com.

The new system–Millennium–offers a number of useful new services for our users. A customizable account provides users a central mechanism for managing books checked-out in their name, the ability to save searches for use at a future time, an alert mechanism that sends email notices when the library receives new items relevant to their search, and an option to maintain a log of previously checked out items – creating a personal reading history. The Millennium system incorporates new technology, for example, that helps users locate electronic content licensed by the Libraries, as well as software that brings in expanded information such as tables of contents, dust jacket images, and reviews.

Behind the scenes, there are significant, if less visible, benefits for library operations. Because it is an integrated system, Millennium improves staff efficiencies by connecting information from various areas – acquisitions, serials, cataloging, circulation – with a central record. Eliminating redundancy in the creation of records allows library staff to work more quickly with fewer overall errors. In addition, moving to a web and Java-based library system allows the library to reduce its reliance on aging mainframe computer systems, and reduces the development and maintenance costs associated with maintaining those systems.

Robin Fradenburgh, Associate Director for Technical Services, notes that the University Libraries has a proven track record of incorporating technology into library operations. “Our first online catalog, developed in-house by library staff, represented a tremendous step forward in providing access to information about our collections,” says Fradenburgh. “The new integrated library system continues the commitment to leveraging technology for the benefit of our patrons.”

“As information resources grow both in quantity and nature, it is incumbent on the Libraries to maintain robust and sustainable tools for effectively locating and using those resources.”

New Library Benefits for Texas Exes

In August, members of the Texas Exes gained access to two valuable databases through a portal set up on the Texas Exes website (https://www.texasexes.org).

Access to the alumni versions of Academic Search® and Business Source® allows members of the Texas Exes to search and view full text articles from an array of journals and other publications for their personal use.

Academic Search Alumni Edition® provides full text for more than 2,300 publications as well as indexing and abstracting for more than 8,000 publications. The database offers information in nearly every area of study including biology, chemistry, engineering, physics, psychology, religion & theology, and more. Academic Search also includes valuable peer-reviewed full text journals, offering critical information from many sources.

Business Source Alumni Edition® provides more than 1,350 full text business magazines and journals, of which more than 350 are peer-reviewed. This database includes publications in nearly every area of business including marketing, management, MIS, POM, accounting, finance, econometrics, economics and more. Business Source includes full text sources ranging from general periodicals to trade publications and top management journals. Additional full text sources include country economic reports, industry reports, market research reports, company profiles and more.

Vice Provost and Libraries Director Fred Heath views the effort as a benefit to both organizations. “This exciting partnership with the Texas Exes allows the University Libraries to continue to serve UT students, even after they leave the Forty Acres,” says Heath.

Exes members can also take advantage of an existing benefit by obtaining a courtesy borrower’s card from the Libraries, which provides them access to additional services when they visit the Libraries physical locations. Members of the University of Texas Alumni Association may annually present verification of membership and a photo ID at the Courtesy Borrower Desk in the Perry-Castañeda Library and receive a complimentary borrower card.
The best thing about planning is seeing the results. After countless hours spent analyzing the details of requirements, timelines, and resources, there’s little to match the feelings of excitement and satisfaction when concrete results first begin appearing.

Such was the response earlier this fall when library staff members searched Google Books and located a full-text version of Angel Floro Costa’s *Rasgos Biográficos del Doctor Juan Carlos Gómez*. After almost a year spent in meticulous discussions, negotiations, planning and implementation a book digitized from the University of Texas Libraries was available to the world through Google Book Search (http://books.google.com/books)!

In 2006, the University of Texas Libraries joined a select group of major libraries working with Google to make large portions of their collections available to Google Book Search. Given the tremendous holdings of the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, we chose to focus initially on the approximately one million books in that collection. Over the next few years, our librarians will work with Google staff to select and digitize at least one millions books, simultaneously increasing the visibility of the material world-wide and creating digital versions that will assist our long-term preservation goals.

Before the first truckload of books left the University this past July, however, our librarians spent a good deal of time working with Google staff members to plan the process. Jennifer Lee, Head of Preservation Services for the Libraries, serves as project manager for the Google Book project, and described the many factors considered in the planning process.

Books had to be selected and located, then labeled with bar codes to enable the necessary inventory control and compilation of information about the books. Procedures for pulling the books and preparing them for shipment had to be developed; and every step of the route from shelf to tractor-trailer had to be mapped and analyzed.
Janice Duff Recommends

New books stop near my work area on their way from catalog processing to the shelves. I have them in my sight across the room and often take a walk over to see what’s new. A couple of my recommendations here come from such perusing. I’ve learned to rely on our Interlibrary Service for those few books, cd’s, tapes, maps, anything published that’s not in the Libraries collections. I would be stupefied to find a request unfilled.

Life is Meals; a food lover’s book of days, James and Kay Salter
If you’re looking for a gift for the cook, or a good little read with your morning tea, you can’t do better than this collection of offerings from a couple’s lifetime of reading and cooking. A portrait of big eater Diamond Jim Brady, the development of the microwave, pitting an olive, a homily on gleaning – one for every day of the year, and each entry gives pleasure.

The Extra Mile, Pam Reed
Those who’d rather go for a run before breakfast, or who want to know why anyone would, can find some insight here. Pam Reed is an ultra-runner, one of those who run races of 100+ miles. After such a run, in the dessert, she will eat, sleep, wake up and – yes, you guessed it – go for a little run, a short one with a friend, maybe 4 or 5 miles. Whether you’re a marathoner or a couch potato, you will be amazed by this woman’s drive.

“The Saga of Billy the Kid, Walter Burns
Billy the Kid is the subject of many books and movies. Bob Dylan, called by one of our English faculty “the American Homer,” wrote the music for one of movies. Michael Ondaatje, author of The English Patient, wrote a book of poems and vignettes in Billy’s stead. I doubt our interest in Billy would have thrived so if not for Burns’ book, published in 1926 and based on accounts of people living then who had known Billy. Burns creates such a sympathetic character and tells the story so well, not wanting to go to sleep with Billy’s end on my mind, I had to stop reading just before the death scene.

The Courting of Marcus Dupree, Willie Morris
One of many fine books by this quasi-native son, The Courting of Marcus Dupree chronicles the feverish college recruitment of a promising high school football player in the early ’80s. Willie Morris, an editor of the Daily Texan in the 50’s, after a stint in The Big Apple returned home to Mississippi and found this story there. It’s more than the story of high school football star and his family working their way through the tangle of possibilities and promises offered in the recruitment process. It’s a look into the soul of this town where twenty years before three young civil rights workers had been murdered.

In North Toward Home Willie reminisces about his years in Texas. Somewhere in his work, maybe not here, he writes of returning to campus long after he’d left and searching out Clark Field, UT’s former baseball field. Near the Fine Arts Building he found just a remnant, the outfield’s rocky ledge where only the trained Longhorns dared climb for fly balls. Let me know if you run across that passage. I’d like to read it again.

A Beautiful Blue Death, Charles Finch
Set in London in 1865, it’s true to the language and milieu (as far as I can tell) and has an amalgam of elements of the classic British detective story and 19th century novel: an aristocratic amateur detective and his valet, gentlemen’s clubs, old boys, country houses and town houses, balls and bridge and afternoon tea. The London winter is palpable and the understated romance between sleuth and lady sweet.
TDL Receives IMLS Grant

The Texas Digital Library, a collaborative project managed by The University of Texas, Texas A&M University, The University of Houston, and Texas Tech University, has been awarded a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for $824,686.

The grant will help fund the development and implementation of the Texas ETD Repository, a statewide system for managing the entire life cycle of electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) from initial submission to final publication.

By enhancing existing technologies and developing new technologies to fill unmet needs, the Texas ETD Repository will address all aspects of ETD management, including submission and workflow processes, digital rights management, discoverability, and long-term preservation.

Staff Highlighter: Robin Dougherty

Position: Middle Eastern Studies Librarian, chief cook & bottle washer.

Age: Proudly 46.

Hometown: Hard to say, since I’ve lived a lot of places! I feel completely at home in Washington, DC.; Philadelphia, PA; Cairo, Egypt; and Oxford, England.

Years of service: 1 year and 7 months.

Job description: I oversee all aspects of acquisitions, cataloging, and reference for all formats of materials related to Middle Eastern studies that are held by the UT Libraries. The languages I principally work with are Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, but I also acquire or recommend relevant materials in Western languages. I work closely with UT faculty and students, my colleagues here in PCL, and vendors.

Something you never expected: To be living in central Texas, to have eaten as many tacos as I have since coming here, and to play in a band, which I’ve been doing for about a year. And when I got here, I found that everyone in the library knew me as the person who brought seven cats with her from Egypt.

Favorite book: The two trilogies by Olivia Manning, The Balkan Trilogy (consisting of The Great Fortune, The Spoilt City, and Friends and Heroes) and The Levant Trilogy (consisting of The Danger Tree, The Battle Lost and Won, and The Sum of Things). I usually bring these along with me whenever I have to take a very long trip; they are a rewarding read every time. The story line resonates with my own experiences in expat academia in Egypt and England. Manning’s description of the British army fighting the Germans in the Egyptian desert is supposed to be among the best examples of war writing in all of modern English literature, but the reason I keep coming back to these books is for her hilarious and well-observed descriptions of the oddball characters who pitch up in marginal academic positions in various out-of-the-way corners of the world, and the shenanigans they get up to in order to entertain themselves and one-up each other. I’ve met people like them!

Hobbies: I play percussion with “Bereket,” the UT’s Middle Eastern music ensemble, sing in a small church choir, and have been taking lindy-hop and flamenco dancing lessons. On a lazy afternoon, I enjoy watching nice old movies while snuggling with my cats, or doing geeky things like finding new widgets for my MySpace page.

Your path leads where? Onwards and upwards, excelsior! For the next few years my feet are quite firmly planted here in Austin; but who knows what the future may bring?
Assistant Technology Service Expands
The University Libraries are proud to announce a new service in the Perry-Castañeda Library that makes our collection more accessible.

Users who need adaptive equipment will have another option in PCL. In addition to the assistive technology section in the PCL reference room, students, faculty and staff will be able to use our new Assistive Technology Suite in PCL 3.106.

This service is made possible with the donation of equipment and software by the Services for Students with Disabilities Office.

PCL 3.106 is easy to access from the PCL elevators and includes a CCTV for enlarging printed text and objects, a Windows computer equipped with Jaws screen reading software, Zoom Text for enlarging text, Duxbury for converting...

The Next Generation
The Ask a Librarian Internship program provides University of Texas School of Information graduate students with hands-on experience in several areas of academic librarianship.

Interns work collaboratively with mentoring library staff to assist users with research questions at the Information and Research Help Desk in the Perry-Castañeda Library. These students also staff the Libraries popular Ask a Librarian service, answering questions for students, faculty and staff through email and instant messaging.

The program has evolved to include a library instruction component granting interns the opportunity to teach library classes promoting information literacy skills.

Graduates of the internship program have gone on to appointments at academic, public and special libraries across the country.

“The Ask a Librarian Internship Program was an ideal complement to my coursework and really helped to round out my experience at UT.” (Miranda Murray, Brooklyn Public Library)
From the Vice Provost

At the University of Texas we like to say, with good reason, “what starts here changes the world.” From the earliest undergraduate experiences right through to post-doctoral research developments, the University is fundamentally involved in transforming lives for the benefit of society.

The University’s libraries play a central role in that mission. Indeed, we are as enmeshed in the ongoing process of transformation as any other part of modern society – perhaps more so than most. As we take stock of the many accomplishments of the past year, and look forward to our plans for this new academic year and beyond, we find our work guiding the transformation of the public university research library.

Two of the most important needs of the modern university research library are to have a talented and forward-thinking staff and to be inextricably aligned with the curricular needs of faculty and students. In a single step, we’ve recently been able to tackle both concerns. The establishment and appointment of a new Discovery librarian will coordinate efforts to revamp the library’s current technologies and methods of digital information handling, and develop new approaches to discovery that will make university researchers and students more successful in their efforts to quickly find the information they need—in the form that they need it.

Successfully transforming an institution also requires continuity of effort. To that end, the Libraries maintains constant motion forward in our partnership with Google. In conjunction with the digitization effort we’ve undertaken with Google Books, Georgia Harper – our resident adviser on scholarly communications – is overseeing a research project to ensure that our Latin American collections are given the same rigorous attention to copyright issues as are the extant English language volumes.

Transitioning and improving existing services helps to make sure that there is no noticeable interruption in familiar patron services. The implementation of the integrated library system this past semester provided for the enhancement of individual attention (user accounts, email notices) and system services (catalog enrichment) without upsetting those aspects with which Libraries users are comfortable.

On the horizon are projects that address other issues of concern. The construction of a new Library Storage Facility (LSF) at the Pickle campus will focus efforts to alleviate space and storage deficits. The new LSF also demonstrates how creative funding through institutional partnerships is a viable approach in an era of diminishing resources. A collaborative effort at resource pooling with Texas A&M University is making it possible for this project to become a reality.

Taking on the task of adapting a traditional institution to suit modern users requires that we address multiple issues concurrently. We are committed—through a sustained and aggressive effort—to ensuring that the University of Texas Libraries meet and exceed the requirements of transforming our institution to meet the changing needs of our users.

G. Markham