Information Commons - icommons

– Nick Wharton

The Mortensen Library Reference Department and the Information Technology Services (ITS) User Branch are combining their service desks and redesigning the main floor computer space in the Mortensen Library. We are calling the merger the Information Commons or icommons. From a central desk, the Reference Librarians and ITS Technicians will work closely to utilize their respective expertise to best serve patrons with all questions, whether equipment or research related, directional or technical.

By the Fall of 2008, the icommons Service Desk will be centrally located behind the main staircase, behind the famous University model, next to the Reference Collection and just up the way from the Circulation Desk and the new Cyber Café. The main area of the User’s Branch will house the already installed Collaboration Pods (c-Pods) to the patron’s immediate right of the desk. Along the back wall, overlooking the Hog River, will be about 35 personal computer workstations with low partitions to promote collaborative learning and unobstructed sightlines. There will be 2 c-podlets, comprised of one large screen TV and two keyboards. The print stations and photocopiers will be centrally located near the icommons Desk which will be low and inviting to every type of question.

The User Branch public workstations will be designed with very little barriers between computers to allow light from the windows and clear vision to and from the commons desk. We have designed the icommons space to be more communal and more collaborative for our users. There will be space at each station to roll up a chair to allow work in collaboration with a colleague. We are hopeful that the new design will invite more exciting research and create a greater sense of community in the Library.

The icommons service staff will be ready to help with computing, print and electronic resources needs. There now will be one place to go in the library to receive technical assistance, assistance with programs and software, help with the use of databases, aid in locating books and journals and any other questions that may require an answer. This will be accomplished by offering a tiered and integrated service by a team of experts to our University Community. A University Librarian will be available most of the hours that the Mortensen Library is open. In addition, fully trained student assistants from both ITS and the Library will staff the desk all open library hours.

The ITS User Branch has expanded its footprint on all floors of the library building. ITS added a total eight PC’s throughout the library and plans to add or relocate workstations in strategic places on the main level. Two more c-pods will be installed this summer. Also, there is now a fleet of 22 laptops that can be charged out for use in the library from the Circulation Desk of the Mortensen Library on any given day with a valid University ID.

Our vision is that as you enjoy your cup of coffee from the Goodwin Café and check your email, you will engage our icommons area to help you surf, locate, utilize and learn about the diverse topics both online and in print at the Mortensen Library. The University Libraries and Information Technologies have a long history of offering services to University patrons and will continue to do so, together. We hope to increase our ability to support our patrons’ informational needs and increase patron satisfaction with the University Libraries and the User Branch. Please come and check out our new look and new name in the icommons early in the Fall Semester, 2008.
The 77th Annual Meeting of the Music Library Association was held February 18-24, 2008 in Newport, Rhode Island. The organization had been told in October that all remodeling would be completed by the time of the meeting, except for some of the guest rooms, but February came and the construction was nowhere near complete, so the approximately 500 attendees ended up spread out in three hotels. It was a conference that will be talked about for a long time due to the construction zone and the fierce winter storm that dumped snow on Newport. However, with all of this going on good things came from the conference.

As is customary at these conferences, there were a wide variety of sessions that covered everything from technology to reference services to cataloging and acquisitions. There was much talk and discussion about the movement at the Library of Congress to add form-genre headings (another form of subject access) to records and create authority records for these. Music headings are going to be a pilot project for this endeavor with the Bibliographic Control Committee being asked for input and assistance as they move forward. Also on the subject access front is a proposal to create a SACO (Subject Authority Cooperative Program) Music Funnel similar to the NACO (Name Authority Cooperative Program) Music Funnel. In addition there was much discussion of the new cataloging code, RDA (Resource Description and Access), which is scheduled at this time for publication and implementation sometime in 2009. Further information can be obtained at the Joint Steering Committee’s website at http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/jsc/rda.html. One last hot topic was the use of social networking sites and social tagging in our libraries.

The biggest musical thrill of this year’s MLA meeting for me was the combination of getting to hear legendary record producer and writer George Avakian offer his perspective on the Newport Jazz Festival at the opening day plenary session, and then listening to New York Times journalist Nate Chinen interview Newport Jazz Festival founder George Wein later that day. I was serving on a search committee for a new MLA Publicity and Outreach Officer at this meeting, which prevented me from attending all of the sessions that piqued my interest, but I was still able to hear many panelists who impressed me with what they are doing to better serve the public.

Some highlights include: the Texas Tech University project employing CONTENTdm and Flash Player to stream their entire sound recording collection via their OPAC; the Sound Directions: Digital Preservation and Access for Global Audio Heritage project Harvard is working on with Indiana University; the use of ShelfLister to generate real-time shelf lists at Southern Methodist University; and the incorporation of LibGuides into the music library’s website at my alma mater, DePauw University.

There is a session titled “Hot Topics in Music Librarianship” every year, and this year’s topics included Grove Music Online’s new web design (which was roundly panned), whether or not music librarians should continue maintaining web meta lists for music and musicology, the use of Netflix by some academic libraries to deliver video materials to patrons, discussion about OCLC’s Collection Assessment Tool, redesigning audiovisual carrels and workstations in libraries, scanning of scores and storage in digital repositories, budgeting for approval plans, and whether or not to continue buying compact discs in this era of streaming audio databases (a majority of institutions are still buying CDs).◆
Ever have the urge to read the dictionary? Ever think that it would be an exercisable exciting event? Ever think the exchange of excellent readers would cause you to take an excursion to fulfill your evocation? Want to make an example of yourself and join this exclusive club Exercise your right to be heard!

During 2008, the Town of West Hartford, CT will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Noah Webster, author of the *American Dictionary of the English Language*, who was born in West Hartford, on October 16, 1758.

To mark the 250th anniversary of Webster’s birth, the President’s College and Noah Webster House have issued a challenge to other institutions — schools, corporations, retail businesses, civic organizations, places of worship — to each adopt one of the letters of the alphabet and stage a public reading between April and October. The plan is to complete the reading on October 16th, when the letters X, Y and Z will be read. The only requirement is that all the headwords get read. Sponsoring organizations may add their own embellishments to their programs.

For more information please contact: Christopher I. Dobbs, Executive Director, Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society, 860.521.5362 or fax 860.521.4036. ◆

**New ABC Flower Cards honor Noah Webster’s 250th Anniversary**

A new selection of note cards has been designed by Barbara Dessureau, Library Technologies, to honor the 250th Anniversary of the birth of Noah Webster. The flower images have been scanned from the University Libraries Rare Book Collection, *The Ladies’ Flower-Garden of Ornamental Annuals* by Mrs. Jane Webb Loudon, dated 1840, and the flower definitions are taken from Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*, dated 1828.

The cards are printed on green sage flecked paper, measure 4.25” x 5.5” with eight per package in a clear case at $7.50. You can also order the entire alphabet of 26 cards for $20.

To see the entire line of letters and flowers, visit the Libraries Gift Shop at http://library.hartford.edu/aboutus/images/products.pdf. Or order from the ABC Flower Form at http://library.hartford.edu/aboutus/abcform.asp. ◆

**cPods are Famous**

Cheryl LaGuardia, Research Librarian, Harvard University, ran into Nick Wharton at the ACRL New England Conference and picked up our cPODS for the LJ Blog.

April 22, 2008

So I went to the ACRL New England Annual Conference last Friday, and it was excellent, as usual (more about this in future posts). I ran into many friends, including Nick Wharton, a former colleague now at the University of Hartford, who told me about the cPod stations they recently installed at his library. cPod stands for “collaboration pod,” and they’re pretty nifty: 42 inch monitors with three keyboards and three mice so students can work together collaboratively, easily and comfortably.

Given that collaborative learning is so popular among many library users now, this seems like a neat and natural way to let it happen.

Kudos!

More as it happens,

Cheryl

Posted by Cheryl LaGuardia on April 22, 2008 | Comments (0)
Student Awards

Every April, the Mortensen Library Board of Visitors recognizes six outstanding student employees from the University Libraries. This spring’s winners represent the Allen and Mortensen Libraries. They received their awards and gift certificates from the University Bookstore at the April 16th meeting of the Board.

Richard Bertino, an audio engineering major, works at the Mortensen Library as a shelve. Rich is responsible for various aspects of stacks maintenance including shelving and shelf reading. Rich also assists patrons, while working in the stacks, needing help finding books or journals. He has been indispensable in helping with shifting projects, and discarding outdated material. Rich is currently a junior and is a valuable member of our student staff.

Brooke Duffy, a photography major, works at the Mortensen Library in Circulation. Her main responsibilities include checking in and out materials to library patrons. Library patrons gravitate to the Circulation desk because it is right as they walk in the library; Brooke must always be ready to assist any patron that approaches the Circulation desk, and she does this with a friendly and courteous manner. Brooke is always willing to help library staff and patrons in anyway that she can. She is currently a junior and “a perfect TEN” in our book.

Karina Maestre is a senior majoring in Music Theatre, and she works in the Mortensen Reference Department. Karina is attentive and patient with patrons, making sure each patron knows how to proceed to find what they need. When she discovers a problem, she will not only bring it to the attention of the reference staff, she will also offer possible solutions. Karina’s concern for patrons and calm commitment to resolving problems truly saved the day during a recent medical emergency; she quickly explained the problem to the staff, and had Public Safety contacted, while many others simply watched or debated how to help the injured person.

Amanda McLeman is a sophomore, and majors in Architecture; she works in the Technical Services Department. Many of the projects she works on are large-scale, and therefore, cannot be completed in one day. Amanda sets personal goals each day that she works, ensuring that she and her co-workers see tangible results each day. Amanda is also flexible with her schedule. She always offers to rearrange it, studies permitting, so that the library’s needs are met. Her willingness to do this, during a time when many students are not able to work due to exams, is truly admired and appreciated.

James Shepherd, a music theory major, works at the Allen Library as a shelve. Although his main responsibilities are shelving, he helps with other tasks as necessary like mending and shelf-reading. His attention to detail is wonderful as he makes sure items are shelved correctly and that damaged items get mended. He is also very dedicated to the library and very willing to do whatever is necessary to do his part to help the library run smoothly. James is currently a freshman and we look forward to him taking on new responsibilities in the future.

Nick Statzer is a senior majoring in Instrumental Performance (Saxophone)/Acoustics and Music; he works at the Allen Library. Nick is persistent in seeing issues through to completion; he often emails, calls, or personally visits the library to follow up on notes he leaves for staff during his Sunday shift. Nick is always quick to assist patrons, and often comes to the aid of his co-workers when they need substitutes. A great example of this recently occurred when he volunteered to work the rest of a co-worker’s shift. This spontaneous and selfless gesture meant a lot to his co-worker, and further demonstrated Nick’s dedication to service, to all of his co-workers.
President’s College - Upcoming Programs - Fall 2008

The President’s College, the outreach arm of the University Libraries, offers short non-credit courses and other programs for members of the larger community. The program, under the directorship of Humphrey Tonkin, chair of the Mortensen Library Board, is also open to current and retired faculty and staff of the University. While anyone can participate in the courses, one can also become a Fellow of the President’s College. The $100 annual fee provides parking privileges, library borrowing privileges, discounts on events on campus, and also a substantial discount for President’s College courses. To sign up, or to be added to the President’s College mailing list contact Judy Kacmarcik (kacmarcik@hartford.edu; 860-768-4269).

The program for the fall will include the following offerings. Precise dates will be announced in the President’s College monthly newsletter.

**How To Write America: The Achievement of Noah Webster**
Five sessions. Christopher Dobbs, Michael Day, Robert Forbes, Laurence Davis, John Morse. Four visiting speakers offer an assessment of Noah Webster, under the guidance of Chris Dobbs, Executive Director of West Hartford’s Noah Webster House, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the birth of one of Connecticut’s greatest sons.

**Beethoven’s Symphonies: An Introduction**
Four sessions. Michael Lankester offers an introduction to Beethoven’s symphonies in preparation for the HSO’s performance of all of the symphonies of Beethoven during the coming season.

**Hamlet Up Close**
Five sessions. It’s a play we all know - but how well do we know it? Humphrey Tonkin takes a close look at some of the best-known episodes in this challenging and often enigmatic play - and invites his listeners to help him puzzle them out.

**Fridays at the Mortensen**
A series of lectures and events held after hours in the Mortensen Library on Friday evenings. The evenings begin with a light dinner. Among programs scheduled for the fall: William Hosley on local history, Willie Anthony Waters on Connecticut Opera’s upcoming production of Mozart’s* Don Giovanni.*

**Opera Panorama**
Three sessions. Chris Devlin introduces us to the variety and musicality of Italian, French and American opera - illustrated with live performances by members of the Connecticut Opera.

**Gothick Novels**
Five sessions. Kathleen McGrory. Where did the overwrought imagination of Catherine Morland in Jane Austen’s Northanger Abbey come from? Where did she get her sensational ideas? From the novelist Ann Radcliffe, of course - perhaps with a little Monk Lewis thrown in. A look at the remarkable and melodramatic world of Mrs. Radcliffe and her late eighteenth-century contemporaries.

**Bible and Archeology**
Three sessions. Richard Freund brings his formidable scholarship to bear on three of the great enigmas of the Bible and what archeology has to tell us about them: the Exodus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Tomb of Jesus. ♦
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So What is “Open Source”?  

What does open source mean to the University Libraries?  

You might have heard that the University Libraries will be switching to an open source catalog in the next few years. But you might not know why we are doing it or what we are moving to. Or you might now even know what open source is.

Open source. This phrase gets used often lately, but what does it mean? What is open source? Is it free? And what kind of free is it? Is it like free ice cream, where you can just enjoy a treat, or more like free kittens — only “free” once and you end up paying for them ever thereafter? Who takes care of it? What about licensing? And who creates it? Is it written by hackers sitting in the dark of their moms’ basements?

“Open source” software is loosely defined as “any program whose source code is made available for use or modification as users or other developers see fit. [...] Open source software is usually developed as a public collaboration and made freely available.” In our case, the software we are moving to is called Koha, and it’s a suite of tools created to help manage library services and provide a public search tool for collections of materials. Koha was originally developed for the Horowhenua Library Trust of New Zealand (koha being a Maori word for a gift or donation). Rather than making Koha a traditional, proprietary software package available only by purchasing a license, the creators put it into the public domain. Actually, it is distributed under something called the “General Public License” (GPL) — it’s free to use, distribute or modify so long as all modification also enter the GPL.

So Koha is free in the sense that we do not have to pay anyone for the license to use it and we can change it any way we want so long as our changes are free for everyone else to download, use and modify.

Does this mean that we will have to learn how to code, install and maintain this for our libraries? Well, we could if we wanted to, but the cost in time and effort may well exceed what we are paying now for our Voyager system. Fortunately, there are companies that specialize in support, implementation, modification, and will even host this for us. It may seem counterintuitive to pay someone — in this case, a company called LibLime — for a free product, but when you consider that all of the money we pay for goes directly into services that we specify, the costs are very reasonable indeed. And since we are not paying for a software license (often one half or more of commercial vendors’ prices), we still make out on the deal.

But perhaps the best thing about Koha is the fact that it will be ours. Currently, with Voyager, we are at the mercy of the company that owns the rights to the software. And due to the recent spate of acquisitions in the commercial library system vendors, our system’s license has been bought out by a venture capitalist firm that also owns another, very large library software package. Due to this kind of instability and market narrowing, knowing that you own your own installation is a real comfort. We could even, should we so choose, replace LibLime with another service provider in the future. It’s ours; we can do what we want with it.

We are not in this venture alone. The University of Hartford has chosen to partner with a consortium — the Westchester Academic Library Directors Organization (WALDO). Together, we share costs and collaborate on specifications for our modifications. Partnering with the WALDO also expands the possibilities we have with this configuration of...
Koha. As all of the other WALDO libraries are also moving from Ex Libris Voyager installation, we can expect a synergy of ideas and questions that we might not have thought to ask.

Guiding us through all of this are the people at LibLime, the service provider who is not only helping us to set up Koha, but also to modify it to suit our needs. Currently, Jennifer Olsen and I are involved in the recommendation process for system specifications. Next, we will help test the newly coded enhancements. Jennifer is involved with the cataloging aspects of our Koha install, as the Allen Library has some very stringent needs when it comes to music cataloging and classification. I am working with the team designing the acquisitions module, but am also reviewing all other aspects of this project. Incidentally, one of the LibLime staff members assigned to the WALDO configuration is recently from Ex Libris, where he worked as a Voyager project manager and business analyst.

So what is open source and what does it mean to the University Libraries? It means that we get a custom fitted catalog and staff tool, without an obligation to a big corporate conglomerate or a price tag for propriety software, and with colleagues and dedicated professionals for support. And that means a lot!
On Dec. 21, 2007, the University of Hartford was accepted into the Library of Congress’ Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO). SACO allows for participating institutions to propose new subject headings to the Library of Congress for inclusion in their Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) catalog. It is also a way for participating libraries to make recommendations for existing subject heading modifications.

As part of graduate school requirements, students at the University of Hartford are required to submit theses or dissertations. The nature of these documents often entails new subject matter and it is often difficult to assign subjects for them if they do not currently exist in the Library of Congress Subject Headings catalog. Through the means of SACO, we are now able to propose new subject headings. This is a great way to showcase our students’ hard work as well as enhance the LCSH so other libraries around the world can use the headings as well. Some of the subject headings submitted by University of Hartford include: “lean manufacturing,” “intimate partner violence,” “hand-made habitats (ponds),” “laser drilling,” “arcades (gaming),” “radioembolization” and “Orion Crew Vehicle (spacecraft),” just to name a few.

The way the system works is once a heading is proposed and it is ruled out that there is not another compatible heading already in existence, staff at the Library of Congress will create a new Library of Congress classification number for the subject which ultimately decides where a book will sit on a shelf. By means of listservs, publication bulletins, and postings on the Library of Congress SACO web pages, participating libraries can check the status of their proposals. The whole process takes approximately six weeks from the time a subject is proposed to when it becomes an official subject heading.

Training for this program entailed taking a three-day class held at Rensselaer at Hartford taught by John N. Mitchell, SACO Coordinator at the Library of Congress. The purpose of the course was to teach catalogers how subject headings are constructed and coded to include subheadings, geographical locations and chronological subdivisions. The cost of membership is free as long as the University proposes 10-12 subject headings per year. This will be easy to accomplish given the amount of new engineering, architectural, and psychological materials submitted throughout the year.

The University of Hartford is also now looking into becoming a NACO-participating institution. NACO is the Name Authority Cooperative Program, similar to SACO, this would allow for catalogers to create and maintain authority records on individual authors.

We are always looking to enhance the LCSH catalog. Should you ever wonder why you can’t locate your favorite book character, computer software, or even information on a special bird in your library’s catalog, contact us - we can help! In six weeks you could find the information located on the verso of future books.

Staff Happenings

Barbara Dessureau, Web Applications Developer, has taken on the new role of grandmother to her son Sean’s daughter. Born November 26, 2007, Lady Olesia is showing off her smile and learning to roll over. Though the thought of being called “grandmother” bothered Barbara at first, she is enjoying every moment she visits. Lady also has a paternal great grandmother, a maternal great grandfather, grandfather Roger, aunt Kelly and two maternal grandparents in Georgia, Dick and Priscilla.

Charles Huang, an Allen Library employee for three and a half years will be leaving this summer. Charles started as a shelve, then worked at the desk for a year before he was hired as Cataloging Assistant. Charles will be taking time to finish his dissertation, and spend more time teaching oboe. He plans to complete his doctorate in oboe performance sometime in the next academic year. We wish him all the best.
Visit with Janice Radway

Janice Radway, 2008 Harry Jack Gray Distinguished Visiting Professor, University of Hartford, and Professor of Literature, Duke University explored how reading and writing practices are evolving in an age of rapidly changing communication technologies. At the April 23, 2008 event in Wilde Auditorium, Radway looked at the explosion of “zines” and other do-it-yourself publication trends, and how they related to the presumed decline in newspaper and book reading.

According to Wikipedia, a “zine” is most commonly a small circulation, non-commercial publication or original or appropriated texts and images. More broadly, the term encompasses any self-published work of minority interest. A popular definition includes that circulation must be 5,000 or less and the intent of the publication is not primarily to raise a profit. Zines are written in a variety of formats, form computer-printed text to comics to handwritten text.

Radway is chair of the literature program and the Frances Fox Professor of Literature at Duke University. The event was sponsored by the Office of the Harry Jack Gray Distinguished Teaching Humanist and the University Libraries.

Staff Happenings

On March 25th, Reference Librarian **George Lechner** was invited to speak at the South Windsor Public Library to commemorate the 97th anniversary of the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York. The disaster claimed the lives of 148 garment workers, mostly young immigrant women, and led to the implementation of modern industrial safety laws. Lechner conducted a discussion of Connecticut author Katherine Weber’s award-winning novel about the fire entitled “Triangle”. In his talk, Lechner related that his own boyhood interest in history was stimulated when the story of the fire was told to him by another novelist, his neighbor Edward Lewis Wallant.

**Brooke Lippy**, Assistant Head of Allen Library, attended the annual Music Library Association conference in Newport, RI (February 17-24). After the conference, she was appointed to the Subject Access Subcommittee of the Bibliographic Control Committee. In addition, she attended the New England Music Library Association meeting at Tufts University on March 17th where significant time was spent on strategic planning for the future of the chapter. The results of the recent elections were also revealed at the meeting. Brooke has been elected to a three year term as Secretary-Treasurer of the organization.

**Randi Ashton-Pritting** and Paula Cook, Manchester Community College, were the 2008 Connecticut Library Association co-chairs for the 117th annual conference, Innovation, Transformation & Beyond @ CLA. The conference offered interactive hands-on opportunities to experience Web 2.0 applications, best selling authors, exciting children's and young adult programs, and a renewed effort to offer academic librarians dynamic programs. During the program, Randi and Elizabeth Abbe, Senior Development Officer, University of Hartford presented a session *Working with your Board* (not the bored!).

Library Technologies student, **Christian Thompson**, a senior in the CETA Acoustics program, has secured a job as Professional I at AKRF in New York City. Chris will be doing noise control for new construction and renovations. Congratulations Chris!
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