



# Access

## News from the *University Libraries*

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### LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE AT NOTRE DAME

Editor's note: This special issue of *Access* summarizes the findings and recommendations of a committee of the University Libraries. The College Library/Undergraduate Services Committee was commissioned in 1979 to study the needs of the undergraduates for books, library services and library instruction. This is their report.

Carrying out one of the major goals established for the University Libraries for 1979-80, the Director appointed library faculty, library staff, teaching faculty and student representatives to the College Library/Undergraduate Services Committee in October 1979. The Committee was charged with identifying the library collection and service needs of undergraduates at Notre Dame, evaluating the adequacy of the College Library in meeting these needs and making recommendations on the organization of the general collections in Memorial Library and library service and instructional programs.

The Committee reviewed the history of library services and collection organization at Notre Dame, and investigated the experiences and current planning in other university libraries. In addition, contacts, both formal and informal, with students, teaching faculty, library faculty and staff, and academic administrators produced a great deal of valuable information on the key issues.

The Committee's research and discussions fostered the articulation of goals which would focus the Libraries' efforts

in meeting undergraduate collection and service needs. These goals are:

1. The Library collections must be organized in a rational and clear way so that patrons can successfully locate the materials they seek with minimum inconvenience.
2. The Library must increase its awareness and understanding of academic programs, teaching methods and course requirements in order to develop collections that supply the resources needed for academic study.
3. The Library must seek to determine the existing and potential collection needs and expectations of students, so that resources which are needed for the completion of class assignments and which provide opportunities for enrichment and discovery can be provided.
4. Library competence is a valuable component of a college education, and the Library must provide instructional programs and services which will maximize library literacy and effective independent use of the library and its collections.

These objectives determined the problem

areas to be addressed by the Committee and the data to be gathered.

A summary of the final report of the Committee which was completed in June is provided below.

### Student and Faculty Surveys

In conjunction with its study, the Committee was asked to conduct a survey of undergraduate student use and attitudes toward the Libraries. In April, a sixty-two item questionnaire was distributed to all 6,800 undergraduate students. Completed answer sheets were returned by 1,000 students, or 14.7 percent of those surveyed. The results demonstrate that the students responding represent an excellent cross-section of the undergraduate student body at Notre Dame in terms of year of study and college.

The results support the following conclusions relevant to the Committee's work:

1. Approximately 50 percent of the undergraduates make heavy (daily or several times a week) use of Memorial Library, but infrequent use is made of other campus libraries.
2. The most frequent student use of Memorial Library is to read notes or personal copies of books and magazines.
3. The majority of students generally find that their courses do not require them to make at least weekly use of the library.
4. Most students favor shelving current issues and bound volumes of periodicals together.
5. The majority of students have difficulty locating sufficient material on topics of current interest in the library.
6. Approximately one-third of the students have participated in library orientations or instructional programs, while 40 percent feel they need more instruction in the use of the library.
7. The majority of undergraduates favor a unified book collection in Memorial Library.

The Committee sought to secure a faculty perspective on the questions under study, and a more detailed understanding of how the library can best support teaching activities at Notre Dame. In April, a ten-item questionnaire was distributed to the instructors of 90 courses, 13.8 percent of the 654 courses being taught. It surveyed the resource, research and library instructional needs of students in undergraduate courses as perceived by the course instructors. Completed questionnaires were returned for 74 courses, or 82.2 percent of those surveyed. The results demonstrate that the courses covered in the responses represent an excellent cross-section of undergraduate courses at Notre Dame in terms of college and level of study.

The results support the following conclusions relevant to the Committee's work:

1. In approximately 80 percent of the courses, the expectation is that students will obtain the majority of required readings by purchasing or borrowing personal copies, and the majority of supplemental or recommended readings through library collections and services.
2. For satisfactory course performance, nearly 75 percent of the instructors indicate that students would find it necessary or helpful to utilize library resources.
3. A term paper or project resulting from research is required in 42 percent of the courses.
4. The development of bibliographic skills in a subject area is required in 16 percent of the courses.
5. Nearly 60 percent of the faculty indicated that they assume students already possess the library/research skills required by their courses, and that they would not need instructional services offered by the library staff in the teaching of their courses.
6. The majority of respondents feel that the College Library or any separate undergraduate collection is unnecessary or detrimental.

## Collection Organization

Throughout the 1960's and early 1970's, university libraries across the country organized special collections and separate library facilities for undergraduate students. They were designed to centralize and simplify library services for a growing undergraduate population; provide instruction in the use of the library; act as a productive link between the novice student and the larger, complex library system; and relieve increasing demands being placed upon research collections and facilities.

From 1963 to 1972, the first two floors of Memorial Library were designated the College Library where materials needed to support both undergraduate and graduate course work were housed apart from the Tower research collections to which undergraduates had limited access. The College Library was further divided into various subject units, each encompassing a collection of books, periodicals and reference tools, and a staff to provide patron assistance. In 1972, these separate subject collections were eliminated, unified reference and current periodical collections and service points were organized, and a College Library was formed that would "support the teaching function of the university" and serve as "a strong and vital undergraduate collection."

Successful undergraduate libraries have been built upon well-defined, duplicate collections, with planned and sustained growth and weeding of materials. The College Library collection at Notre Dame has never been adequately defined, nor has it systematically duplicated the research collections. The growth rate has been sporadic and no provision has ever been made for the routine withdrawal of obsolete titles. In addition, its development has been plagued by a serious lack of fiscal and staffing support. The result is a hodge-podge of books without rational explanation for their location.

There has been a growing disenchantment with the undergraduate library concept throughout the 1970's, and a large number of these separate collections have been disbanded at other university libraries. The notions that undergraduate students have distinctively different abilities, needs and preferences in areas of library use and represent a basically homogeneous group have been broadly discounted. Some have argued

that changes in undergraduate curriculums and teaching methods make selection of a small and useful undergraduate collection impossible. Others have pointed out the instructional advantages of encouraging all students to work with the total research library system. Perhaps the key factor, however, has been the increasing inability to support financially the extensive duplication of materials and services.

Recent evaluations of the collections at Notre Dame have demonstrated that the College Library fails to meet even the basic criteria of a "core" or "course-support" collection, and documented serious gaps in the provision of recommended titles for academic libraries in the total library system.

The surveys of faculty and student use and attitudes toward the library clearly show that both groups favor the shelving of books in Memorial Library together without a separate undergraduate collection. Those students and faculty members that indicated more frequent use of Memorial Library and greater difficulty in locating library materials tended to favor more strongly a unified book collection.

Perhaps no group has experienced more difficulty and frustration working with the present collection organization than the library staff itself. Extensive interviews with both public and technical services staff have revealed increasing problems in helping patrons locate materials in Memorial Library and in substantial remedial processing. The existence of a separate College Library collection without clear and identifiable parameters is most often cited as the factor exacerbating these difficulties.

Even if a convincing argument could be developed for upgrading the College Library facility at Notre Dame, the required fiscal and staffing support would only come at the expense of other pressing library collection and service needs. We feel it will be far more profitable to organize the library collections in a rational and clear way so that patrons can successfully locate the materials they need with minimum inconvenience, to implement more creative and effective uses of the second floor of Memorial Library, and to attend to undergraduate library requirements in the total collection development and

and service programs of the University Libraries.

The Committee makes the following recommendations on collection organization:

1. The general collections in Memorial Library, that is the College Library and the Tower book collections, should be re-organized into a single, unified collection. Planning for the relocation of the College Library should begin as soon as possible, with a target date of August 1981 established for the completion of all necessary shifts of library materials.

2. The feasibility of organizing a small duplicate collection of "core" books that are in high demand should be investigated. These books could be treated as a non-circulating or "open-reserve" collection, possibly integrated with the present reserve system. This would facilitate successful access to classic, documentary and supplementary course materials, by guaranteeing that one copy of such would always be available for consultation in the library.

#### Collection Development

In view of its history and status, to call the present College Library an undergraduate collection is a misnomer, and to examine its effectiveness is pointless. It is better to ask whether there is such an ideal entity as an "undergraduate collection," and whether Notre Dame students could be effectively served by such a unit. Our experience indicates that the resource needs of undergraduates are not clearly distinguishable from the overall collection requirements of the larger body of Notre Dame users, and that to define a set of collection goals exclusively in terms of undergraduates would be misleading.

This is not to suggest that undergraduates can be ignored in developing the collections. They may be more dependent on the library for materials than a faculty member with a large personal library. A persistent complaint in the student survey was that the library collection does not include enough recently published works or materials on topics of current interest. The heavy use of ephemeral materials and the leisure reading collection by undergraduates is indicative of significant interest and value.

Based on the information gathered by the Committee and the observations of its members, the recommendations in the area of collection development are:

1. Library liaison/selectors should be given the responsibility of insuring that we are collecting basic monographs, a selection of representative journals and the key reference tools in the subject areas which are being taught in the Colleges.

2. Responsibility should be assigned for the maintenance and development of pamphlet and other ephemeral collections which are up-to-date and directed to patron need.

3. Efforts should be broadened to discover specific titles wanted by undergraduates and to acquire them if they fit the library's collecting parameters. The soliciting of course reading lists and syllabi and prompt action on book recommendations from users are two ways of achieving this.

4. The Assistant Director for Collection Development, in consultation with the present staff of the College Library, should explore ways of supplying the demand for popular reading materials.

5. The purchase of duplicate copies, particularly of missing titles and titles recalled from circulation, should receive serious consideration.

6. The Assistant Director for Collection Development should coordinate the scope, direction and timing of the weeding of materials of marginal value from the collection.

7. The task of learning more about teaching methods and student use of the collections should be part of the charge to the Collection Analysis Project Study Team which will begin its work in the Fall of 1980.

The development of collections in support of undergraduates in the Colleges of Science and Engineering was given special attention by the Committee. The branch library system at Notre Dame was designed to bring the resources and services required for research in the sciences and engineering closer to graduate student and faculty users. This emphasis on advanced research, in combination with limited budgets and space, has resulted in an obvious but understandable neglect of the resource and service needs of under-

graduate students. Up to 1972, provision was made for undergraduates through the maintenance of a general science division within the College Library, but since that date the development of science collections in Memorial Library has been haphazard and ineffective.

Undergraduate students in science and engineering, though relying heavily on textbooks for their coursework, do require access to library materials for research, supplementary readings and general interest. The Committee therefore recommends that:

1. The University Science and Engineering Librarians should be charged with the development of a "study level" collection in the sciences and assuring the coverage of such books on the approval plan.

2. In addition to the resources required for research and coursework in the science disciplines, the library should strive to acquire general science materials (history and biography of science, science and society, interdisciplinary studies, etc.) that could also be used in the non-science departments.

#### Library Instruction

The Committee also investigated the library instructional needs of undergraduates and the changes required for the implementation of a viable program of instructional services. Research demonstrated that faculty, students, and librarians have different understandings of the library skills of Notre Dame students and the ways in which these skills are acquired. The Committee recommends increased emphasis on library instructional programs at various stages in the student's undergraduate career. These issues and recommendations will be detailed in a future issue of Access.

#### A Proposal for the Re-Organization of the Collections

The recommendation to disband the College Library collection and to organize a single unified general collection in Memorial Library has prompted the development of several re-organization proposals. The one that has secured the support of the Library Administrative Committee calls for the integration of the books currently designated College Library on the second floor into the materials shelved in the tower, and the shelving of all materials in the Library of Congress

classifications H-HJ (business and economics), M (music), and N (art) on the second floor. These materials receive relatively heavy use, much of it by undergraduates, since three of the four programs immediately supported are not offered at the doctoral level.

This plan presents a number of distinct advantages over the current placement of materials in Memorial Library. (1) The single sequence of materials will make the collections generally easier to use for both students and faculty. (2) The plan will locate on the second floor, where abundant seating is available, several portions of the collection that are used heavily by undergraduates. (3) The plan will locate the subject collections in business and economics in close proximity to the Microtext area which contains considerable material supporting coursework in these areas. (4) The music collection will be located in close proximity to two other library units supporting music study, the Audio-Learning Center and Music Seminar. (5) The art collection will be located where there is adequate table space available for the effective use of over-size materials. (6) The plan will provide to those users who browse the shelves a more accurate representation of the Libraries' holdings in a given area, and increase the likelihood of individuals finding material which is needed or helpful. (7) The plan should not significantly increase undergraduate traffic to the Tower since most use of study facilities is basically unrelated to the location of materials, particularly on the undergraduate level. (8) The plan will be less costly to maintain, since an effective college library collection would require additional funding for the extensive duplication of materials, and additional efforts for selection, weeding and processing.

All concerned in the Libraries are convinced that these proposed changes will permit better service to all categories of users and help resolve certain space problems in the tower, while maintaining current traffic and study patterns in the tower.

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