

A CORN Chronicle

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Love of Learning:
The building of JUL Central





Paul M. Gherman
University Librarian

About the cover:
Are they praying or courting?
A Vanderbilt co-ed holds hands
with two male students in the
library reserve reading room in
the vintage photograph on the
front cover. The photograph was
probably taken in the 1940s,
shortly after the library was built.
(The photo is courtesy of Vander-
bilt University Special Collections
and University Archives.)

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Many of us remember the days when doing research meant a trip to the library during those times when it was open and facing the challenge of finding a parking space to boot. Well, those days are gone.

Our students have long demanded that the Library remain open longer hours, especially at night, when they can focus on their studies. Two years ago, we opened the Science and Engineering Library, 24/7, from Sunday noon until Friday at 10 p.m. We still have our normal Saturday hours, too. Usage has steadily increased over time, and one can always find a few individuals studying no matter what time of night.

At exam times the Peabody Library adopts similar hours to offer additional study space. One will find our libraries at capacity many hours of the day during finals, with students finishing papers to meet deadlines and then studying for exams.

But in many other ways, the Library is now always open as we add more and more digital information that is available via the Internet to student dorm rooms, faculty offices, homes, and even to our students studying abroad. Day or night, every hour of the day, the Library connects our students and faculty to quality

information that we purchase for their exclusive use. This is not information available to anyone searching Google, but scholarly resources from major publishers around the world.

Our goal is to place the Library in the path of our users no matter where they begin their search for information. We realize that many of our students begin their search with Google or other Internet search engines. We want to be the end point of their search no matter where they begin. We are investigating new and more powerful software that draws together a wide variety of information from many sources, and presents it to our users in a meaningful fashion. Our goal is to continue to meet our users' needs as their information-seeking behavior evolves.

I would like to call your attention to Professor Paul Conkin's interesting article about the history of the General Library Building in this issue. Professor Conkin is one of our most frequent users, and his research into our building's history is both informative and enlightening, particularly in relation to the technological changes that are occurring in the library. I think you will enjoy what he discovered.

—PAUL M. GHERMAN

Acorn Chronicle Wins CASE Award

The *Acorn Chronicle* magazine, published by the Jean and Alexander Heard Library, received a CASE III Special Merit Award from the judges. The publication won in a category where it competed against research, special audience or special purpose magazines. CASE is the acronym for the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, an international association of college and university professionals who manage advancement initiatives at educational institutions.

Librarian Writes Article About Fonda, Vets

Librarian and former Marine Peter Brush wrote an article about actress Jane Fonda and Vietnam veterans that appeared in the April issue of *Vietnam* magazine. Brush says that although many veterans continue to despise Fonda for her anti-war efforts, including traveling to Hanoi at the height of the war in support of the Communists, many of the defamatory stories about her actions in Vietnam are inaccurate. To access the article online, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/as8oy>. Brush's review of a book about the 1954 battle of Dien Bien Phu—*The Last Valley: The Battle That Doomed the French Empire and Led America Into Vietnam*—was published in the December issue of *Vietnam* magazine. To access the article online, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/8sxt6>.

Primich Is New Director of the Stevenson Science and Engineering Library

Tracy Primich is the new director of the Sarah Shannon Stevenson Science and Engineering Library. She began her new job April 17. Primich earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Bucknell University and master's degrees in history and library science from Indiana University. Prior to coming to Vanderbilt, she served as the supervisor of the research library for Ford Motor Co. in Dearborn, Mich.



Tracy Primich

Divinity Library to Renovate, Expand

The Divinity Library obtained approval to move forward with plans for renovation. The renovation involves the acquisition of the entire second floor space in the General Library Building. Currently, Divinity's space is restricted to the north side of the first and second floors. With the additional space, the library will have more room for its collections as well as expanded study areas and seminar rooms. Bill Hook, director of the Divinity Library, consulted with architects throughout the fall about renovation plans.

A Special Book Finds Its Way "Home"

BY CELIA WALKER
Director of Communications and Development

A history book purchased for the princely sum of a quarter at a used book sale is the latest treasure acquired by the Jean and Alexander Heard Library.

The book, *An Advanced History of Great Britain from the Earliest Times to 1918* by T.F. Tout, was owned and used by famed Vanderbilt alumnus Robert Penn Warren while he was a Vanderbilt student. A three-time Pulitzer Prize recipient, Warren is the only writer to win the prize in poetry as well as in fiction. In 1986, three years before his death, he was named the nation's first poet laureate.

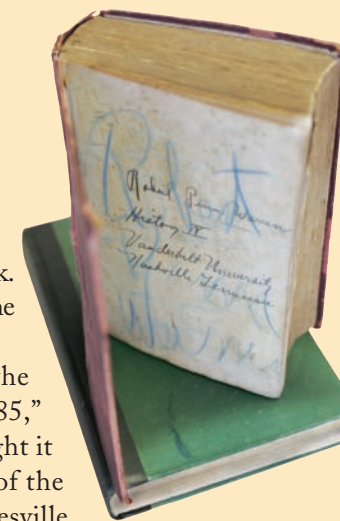


The book, now housed in the Vanderbilt Library's Special Collections area, contains Warren's signature, comments, and musings.

The way the book made its way to the Vanderbilt Library is a fascinating story in itself. A 10-page spread on Warren in the fall 2005 issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine* reminded alumnus Alan Pierce, BS'77, that he owned an old book that had belonged to Warren. Pierce e-mailed the editor of *Vanderbilt Magazine* to ask if anyone at the university might be

interested in having the book. "We'd love to have it!" was the Library's quick response.

"My mother gave me the book for Christmas in 1985," Pierce says. "She had bought it for 25 cents at a Friends of the Library book sale in Gainesville, Fla. It was in a pile of history books she was rummaging through. She loved history books, and every Christmas she always gave each of us at least one second hand book. Her point is that a book is never second hand if given to a new reader. As children, we were not amused, but anyway, she gave me, a 1977 Vanderbilt graduate, the book for old times' sake."



Photo, bottom of page 2: Robert Penn Warren as a senior at Vanderbilt in 1925.
Photo, page 3: The book Warren used as a Vanderbilt undergraduate. Recently given to the Library by alumnus Alan Pierce, the book rests on a volume Warren used to teach Vanderbilt freshmen in 1931-32. It was bequeathed to the Library's Special Collections by the late Robert A. McGraw, a longtime senior administrator at Vanderbilt.

Mrs. Pierce happened to be quite familiar with Warren and the famed Fugitives literary group that he joined after arriving at Vanderbilt at age 16. The Fugitives were a group of writers who influenced the beginning of the Southern Literary Renaissance. Ironically, one of the Pierces' neighbors for about eight years in Gainesville was Andrew Lytle, another well-known writer who had also been a member of the Fugitives.

"The Lytles had at least one daughter the age of one of my older sisters, and our families were social at the time," Pierce said. "It is possible Lytle had the book with him in Gainesville, and left it when the family moved. It is even possible that I might have been in the same room with the book when we were visiting the Lytles. Now, mind you, they moved away around 1964, so I am really speculating, but it is amusing to think that I might have crossed paths with this same book 20 years before I owned it."

continued on back cover

JUL Central: A Perfect Library

BY PAUL K. CONKIN,
Distinguished Professor of History, Emeritus

*(Editor's note: For more than four decades, Paul K. Conkin has been a historian, teacher, and mentor. A Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus and former chair of the history department at Vanderbilt, Conkin first came to the University more than 50 years ago as a student in history, earning his master's degree and then his doctorate. He is the author or co-author of more than 20 books, including *Gone With The Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University, the last and most comprehensive history of the University*. He won five major Vanderbilt teaching and research awards and was president of the Southern Historical Association in 1996-97.)*



Augustus F. Kuhlman
Primary designer of JUL Central

I want to tell a story about the building in which I am writing this essay. Not about the long effort to gain a separate library building at Vanderbilt, or about the process that led to the founding of the Joint University Libraries (JUL) system in 1936. The first director of JUL, Augustus Frederick Kuhlman, has told this story in full detail.

The first, intimidating goal for JUL was a new central library building, a library essential for strong graduate programs at three institutions. It would provide a new home for

the main academic library at Vanderbilt (heretofore located in crowded quarters in Old Main), and for the Library of the School of Religion (a library also critical to the mission of nearby Scarritt College). It would also supplement rather than absorb the other decentralized libraries, including a large educational library at Peabody, the only library in Nashville that met national criteria for graduate work. Despite the Great Depression, a fund drive to gain \$2 million for such an effort succeeded by 1938, with \$600,000 raised locally. Vanderbilt contributed a needed site that was as close as possible to each of the three campuses. Detailed planning for the new building began in 1938. Construction started in 1939. The Depression, which so imperiled fundraising, proved a great blessing in the construction phase, with



costs that now seem unbelievably low. The contract for the construction of the building, less plumbing, heating and air conditioning, was for \$475,000. The new library, which almost everyone soon referred to (inaccurately) as JUL, opened for student use on September 24, 1941. The formal and elaborate dedication ceremonies occurred on December 5-6, but with final construction details not completed until at least a month later during the opening weeks of American participation in World War II.

Kuhlman was the primary designer of JUL Central, although a building planning committee worked with him until completion. No building was ever more carefully planned.

Kuhlman visited more than 20 university libraries. He was conversant with every new development in library science. He wanted nothing less than a perfect building, a model for other joint library systems.

My task in this essay is to clarify the design elements that fulfilled Kuhlman's utopian dreams and that led to a very special library. JUL Central, by the original conception, was to be a graduate level library, serving the needs of the already large graduate enrollment at Peabody and a relatively new, growing Ph.D. program at Vanderbilt. At the same time, it was to serve the undergraduate needs of the three campuses, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. Van-

JUL Central (circa 1941) as it neared completion. Note the Model A Ford in the foreground. Augustus Frederick Kuhlman, the first director of the JUL, and Henry Hibbs, the head architect, chose an architectural style they both called collegiate gothic. The new building was one of only a very few facilities in Nashville that featured air conditioning.

derbilt science majors continued to use the libraries developed in biology, geology, chemistry, and physics, which later merged into the present Science and Engineering Library. Peabody undergraduates in educational fields had their own library on the Peabody campus. Law and medical students had their own libraries. The School of Religion Library, although housed in JUL Central, remained a separate entity, with its own director, staff, policies, and stack space.

The library was not intended as an architectural gem. Money did not allow this. But from the beginning, Kuhlman and the head architect, Henry Hibbs of Nashville, wanted an attractive building that would please the local donors. The main building, as originally planned, comprised a central tower (approximately 91 feet by 116 feet) of 14 stack floors with eight-foot ceilings. Only eight of these were completed in the first phase. This expansibility all but required a flat roof, of asphalt and pebbles, with copper flashing and down spouts. In what became very confusing later with open stacks, each of the public areas in this central part, which were numbered as floors one to three, matched up with two separately numbered stack floors. Long wings, three stories high, flanked the tower to the north and south. They were not symmetrical because of a slightly narrowed 15-foot extension to the east of both wings. The wings were 144 feet long, and up to 30 feet wide.

Kuhlman and Hibbs chose an architectural style that they both called collegiate gothic. It closely matched the nearby Vanderbilt Medical School and Hospital. Hibbs fought to get as many outside gothic facades as money allowed. This is still evident in the arched windows in the front and back of the center section, in the rather elaborate entrance facades on both the east and west, in the bay windows on floors two and three of the wings, and the heavy brass doors to the outside. Beautifully cut limestone formed the first floor, and a somewhat varied red and brown brick the higher floors. The steps were of granite. The completed building, supported by a framework of structural steel and concrete, was one of the most pleasing in the architectural medley that made up the Vanderbilt campus, which lacked the architectural har-

mony of either Scarritt or Peabody. But the glory of the building was not outside but in the public areas within, where Kuhlman would accept no compromises on the quality or material or what was most conducive to a perfect learning environment.

One central assumption of Kuhlman and his committee was that modern universities were moving beyond textbook courses. Able professors would increasingly assign multiple readings from several books or journals, which for the most part would be available only for reading within the library. It would thus be the responsibility of libraries to provide large reference and reserve reading rooms to accommodate undergraduates. As planned, the library would have closed stacks, not open to undergraduates, but all other areas, save the acquisitions and cataloguing departments, would be open to students and the public. This allowed the placement of outside doors in such a way as to control traffic flow and allow easy student access to all reading rooms, the pride of the library.

The other assumption involved graduate students, who would need carrels or segregated reading rooms to facilitate their research projects. More than half the 42 faculty research studies, and all 90 graduate carrels (for Ph.D. candidates), were located within the stacks, along with several closed typing carrels. This meant that faculty and many graduate students had access to the stack floors. Notably, the stacks were plain and functional, with concrete floors, steel shelving (1,217 shelves in the original plan), and plain steel carrels. The stack elevator, beside the stack stairs, served all eight floors. It was small and unadorned. Each stack level had a tiny toilet that was not much larger than a broom closet, with an outside wash basin needed for hand washing by the student workers who either gathered or reshelved books on each floor.

Expected use patterns dictated the location of all the public areas. Because of the central stack floors, the front entrance was a bit of a problem. This was where everyone but Vanderbilt students would likely enter the library, and this included all the citizens of Nashville who had a stake in the project because of their contributions. The solution was an imposing front façade and doors, leading into a low hallway (really a tunnel) between a divided stack level on two. It was well lighted and adorned with display cases as one moved to the main central hallways. To the right and left were well-designed and comfortable lavatories, and in the



The original main entrance to the library still remains, overshadowed and partially hidden by a large addition to the front of the building. The main entrance was used by Peabody and Scarritt students, and citizens of Nashville; Vanderbilt students entered from the opposite side of the building.

“One central assumption...was that modern universities were moving beyond textbook courses.”

center two sets of stairs up to the main lobby on the second floor (today the fourth floor). The hallway to the right led Peabody and Scarritt students to the long reserve reading room in the north wing. To the left in the south wing was a small religious reading room (60 seats), appropriately close to the School of Religion and Scarritt. At the east end of this wing was a bibliographical lab, with appropriate reference works, intended primarily for the use of the Peabody Library School. This lab helped justify another outside door on the ground level at the extreme east end of the south wing. It led to a stairway and a small elevator (comparable to the one in the stacks) that extended all the way up to the third (or today sixth) floor. It is now used primarily by Library staff, but the planning committee believed it would offer convenient access for Peabody Library School students who would take many of their courses in the bibliographical lab, one story above this Peabody-oriented entrance.

The reserve reading room was one of the most carefully planned and idealistic features of the new library. The 165 oak chairs, like those in all reading rooms, were specially designed to foster good posture (most of these are still in use). Books on reserve were available from the shelves along the walls. Students could check them out, for a set period of time, at a central desk. The expectation was that most would not circulate out of the reading room. Clocks and hourly buzzers informed students of the elapsed time. Two conference rooms adjoined the large reading room. One was for students in a given course to discuss their reading. Another was for faculty members to meet with students to explain or discuss assigned readings. From my personal experience, I believe that few faculty members took advantage of this opportunity. Also available, but in the south wing of floor one, were three carefully planned and equipped audio-visual rooms, where students could listen to records or view films or slides.

The main entrance to the library from the west led up short stairs to the second floor lobby, which was the functional core of the library. Here was the main circulation desk and, in beautiful cabinets, the card catalogues (JUL Central, a Union catalogue of all Nashville area libraries including other branches of JUL, and, for reference purposes, recent acquisition cards for the Library of Congress). Foundation grants over several years had enabled the completion of all these cards before the library opened. Facing the main lobby, to the north, was a lovely browsing library. To the south was the main JUL office and secretarial suite—the domain of Kuhlman. To assist student work-

ers in procuring requested books, the library installed a state-of-the-art book conveyor, with carriers at eight-foot intervals on a revolving chain that moved at six feet a second.



Three Vanderbilt students seek help from a librarian in the reference room of the library in this vintage photo.

This conveyor took books to any stack floor designated by a push button and automatically discharged them into recovery boxes. Beside the conveyor were vacuum tubes that delivered book requests to any designated stack floor except five (why five was missing remains a mystery). At the time, all this seemed a perfect arrangement for a closed stack library.

The south wing of the second floor was a working area for staff. Access for books and supplies was at the west end of this wing, with a door and stairs leading to the termination of a road that came in from Garland Avenue. It had a turning space for trucks, in what amounted to a very small

and soon inadequate shipping and receiving area. Since these staff offices were closed to the public, they had plain concrete ceilings and no expensive paneling, but the library staff did have a lounge with a small kitchen on the third floor, next to a large women's rest room. The placement of toilets revealed one working assumption—all professors would be male, almost all the library staff female.

All reading rooms received special attention. They, along with air conditioning, were the glory of JUL.

The whole north wing of this second floor contained the reference reading room. This, along with the reserve room beneath it, was expected to have the heaviest undergraduate use. Students entering from the east could access it through the main lobby, or by a stairway in the northwest tower. This stairwell led up from the first floor all the way to one of four towers (a structural precursor for the planned future expansion), and to two faculty studies on this fifth story (today the ninth floor).

A comparable stairway and tower to the south had less use, but led down to the religion library and on to the basement, and up to the lobby or staff area and floors four and five. This southwest tower had only one faculty study (where I am writing this essay) because of the space devoted to the small but ornate passenger elevator, the only one of three elevators open for public use. The two towers on the east did not include main stairwells, but as originally planned each would have had two rather spacious faculty studies accessed by a single stairway from the eighth stack floor. These were completed as planned for the southeast tower, but because the air conditioning architect commandeered the northeast tower for the original cooling system, it is now only an empty shell—one of the anomalies of the present building.

The third floor of the library (and upper floor for most of each wing) was primarily reserved for graduate students, although about two thirds of the south wing contained a science and technology reading room (today the periodical reading room). This reading room was expected to appeal largely to engineering students. The whole north wing was reserved for graduate students. It was their special reading room and a matter of great pride for the designers of JUL

Central. It had 150 assigned desks. Like all the tables in all three north wing rooms, these had sloping table tops, for easier reading, and inlaid masonite over most of the surface to cut down on any glare and to help hold books and papers in place. Uniquely, the graduate reading room had a row of shelves at the top center of the tables. Each graduate student had an assigned shelf, with its own number, and

could check out books to the shelf until the end of the academic year (if someone else requested the book, the library staff would simply procure it from the shelf and leave a notice for the graduate student). The shelves around this reading room contained bound copies of most scholarly journals. Four of a total of five research seminar rooms were on this floor, the first such on either campus. One was along the hallway just outside the graduate reading room, and three more on the west end of the south wing. These had blackboards and large, long tables that seated up to 18 students. In the next several years, almost all Vanderbilt graduate seminars took place in these library rooms. Thus, the third floor was a social space visited regularly by almost all Vanderbilt graduate students.

All reading rooms received special attention. They, along with the air conditioning, were the glory of JUL. First of all, they were beautiful. Slightly curved, plastered beams made for an arched top. Between the beams was a soundproof acoustic ceiling, and suspended from it banks of fluorescent lights. Surrounding each of the reading rooms were banks of shelves or cabinets, with special paneling elsewhere on the walls. Large windows (20 percent of the wall space) provided good natural lighting. All paneling, shelves, cabinets, internal doors, and window and door frames in all public areas throughout the whole library were fashioned either from quarter sawed sweet gum or, where appropriate, sweet gum veneer. I doubt that any building in the South contained as much prime sweet gum (liquidambar styracielua), an infrequently used wood that is remarkable for its light brown to slightly reddish color and its satiny luster. This light colored wood, which required no finish except wax, was perfect for the reading rooms. Almost all the original wood work is still

in place. To cut down on noise, both the reserve and reference reading rooms had special and expensive rubber tile, with asphalt tile in all other public areas.

Unlike the first three floors, the fourth floor lacked the high, 16-foot ceilings. It was only the first of a planned seven stack floors that would eventually tower above the wings. A series of eight faculty research studies (the most coveted because of the windows that opened onto the lawn to the west) lined the hallway that connected the two west stairways and towers. As one would expect, it included only a male restroom. Since it was difficult to find space for all the functions expected of a central library, the planners toward the end of the process decided to add two penthouses at the center of each wing. The one to the south became the beautiful Treasure Room, with even more luxurious cabinets and shelves than the reading rooms. It would house rare books, documents, and artifacts, and be open to the public only on special occasions. To the north was the microphotography lab. This required the most recent technology, in the form of microfilm cameras, readers, and one printer, plus an expensive dark room with drying closets, processing tanks, and enlarging tables, with elaborate plumbing (all still in place). At the time, it was as up to date as possible in a rapidly evolving aspect of library work, and allowed the library to begin microfilming such bulky items as newspaper files.

With one all-important exception—air conditioning—these were the features that fulfilled Kuhlman's dream and made JUL Central a very special library. When the planning committee for JUL Central decided for air conditioning in 1939, only a few buildings in Nashville already had air conditioning, including one state office building, one bank and the Davidson County Court House. The Cain-Sloan department store installed air conditioning at the same time as JUL, and perhaps alone in Nashville offered as many engineering challenges as JUL. (A longer Web version of this

essay, which can be accessed at www.library.vanderbilt.edu/access/conkin.shtml, includes acknowledgments and a full account of the air conditioning.)

At the time of completion the library more than met space needs. In fact, the early stacks were only about half full. The planners expected the building to suffice for about 20 years, when the proposed six new stack floors could double its capacity to about one million books. The estimate proved accurate, leading not to the upward expansion (still contemplated as late as 1964), but to the aesthetically disastrous addition to the front. Yet, even in the mid-'60s,



These World War II soldiers are studying in the graduate reading room on the third floor of the library.

expandability was still important, with the new graduate wing constructed to be able to support the other six, long-deferred stack floors.

The library has worn extremely well, although many functions and needs have changed since 1941. It would be difficult to find many 67-year-old buildings that have remained so little changed over the years. But given the time, and the perceived needs, it is difficult to find any critical feature that anyone overlooked in those dark years that connected a terrible depression to the most horrible of all wars.

Revised Common Lectionary: A Vanderbilt Divinity Library Online Resource

BY BILL HOOK

Director, Divinity Library

Lectionary: A compilation of Scripture readings from the Old and New Testaments for each day of the year, for personal use or for church worship services. [Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms]

A lectionary, defined above, might best be described as a “professional tool” for clergy. The scripture readings provided on the Vanderbilt site are from the *Revised Common Lectionary*, selected by the Consultation on Common Text, in order to develop an ecumenically useful weekly lectionary guide.

The original concept for an online resource was developed in 1995 by Divinity Public Services Librarian, Anne Womack. It was the Divinity Library’s goal in those early days of the World Wide Web to try publishing something on the Web that was more than just a page with links to other pages. It was an experiment that has paid rich dividends. When the Divinity Library purchased its first Web server to host its own pages in 1997 and revised its Web pages, the lectionary pages were already generating more user responses than any other resource. January 2006 marked the 10th anniversary of the Lectionary Web site established by the Vanderbilt Divinity Library. (The lectionary can be accessed at <http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/lectionary>.)

From the beginning, the vision was for the lectionary readings to have links to images in order to stimulate reflection. It was learned early in the development of the project that it would be difficult to identify and mount images that could be made freely available without copyright issues. It is only now, 10 years later, that the weekly lectionary index provides links to visual images for specific scripture readings.

The original lectionary pages were a text-based table of readings. Dial-up access to the Internet was the dominant option at

that time and creating pages that were quick to load was an important consideration. This was a compromise from the original concept but was still quickly hailed by users as extremely valuable. After accumulating statistics and analyzing use patterns, it became clear that the Lectionary Web site was being accessed almost exclusively by off-campus users.

Typical of the praise received from users is that of Professor Marian Ronan: “I am a theologian on the faculty of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif. Four times a year for several years, I cross-referenced with the quarterly lectionary readings the articles to appear in the upcoming issue of *The Living Pulpit*, a preaching journal. It was a fairly tedious task. One thing that made it a lot easier is the online lectionary that Vanderbilt provides. It’s extremely easy to use. That you make available not only the references but also the readings themselves is especially wonderful.”

Two significant revisions of the Lectionary page layout have been conducted, as well as constant corrections and updates, with the dedicated attention from a series of talented graduate students and the ceaseless efforts of Anne Womack.

Ten years after its rudimentary start, the lectionary pages remain the Divinity Library’s most visited Web pages—having recently being relocated to the Heard Library Web server last summer. The lectionary pages for each of the four Sundays in Advent, for example, generated between 4,000 to 5,000 visitors each week.

Much that appeared on the World Wide Web 10 years ago was ephemeral. The hope was to create a resource that would be substantial, useful and enduring. Ten years later, Anne’s original vision has been brought to the Web.



This detail from the Word of God Window in Vanderbilt's Benton Chapel is similar to some of the images on the Divinity School's Lectionary Web site.

Library Orientation Helps AXLE Work

BY MELINDA F. BROWN

Instruction Coordinator, Central Library

Vanderbilt freshman Sarah Stevens hails from Westwood, N.J., a suburb of New York City. So she's seen all the enormous buildings, museums and libraries the Big Apple has to offer.

Even she, however, was a bit intimidated when she first encountered the Jean and Alexander Heard Library, with its nine separate libraries and more than three million volumes.

That's why she appreciated the library orientation session mandated for her First Year Writing Seminar course, Women Poets in America. The session was scheduled shortly before the students were to meet individually with Lecturer Beth Bachmann, who taught the poetry course, to talk about their plans for a major paper.

"I found the library session very informative," Stevens said. "I wasn't sure how it was going to go, but showing us specific databases that we could use for our own particular topics was great. It was very applicable."

"I didn't really know that there were specific databases for accessing the articles and books. It was definitely helpful to learn all the on-line resources and learn that there are librarians available to help you find sources for specific subjects."

The First Year Writing Seminar courses were initially introduced to students last fall as a major part of a new curriculum called AXLE (Achieving eXcellence in Liberal Education). All courses include a mandatory library orientation session. These courses are Vanderbilt's way of introducing A&S freshmen to college level research and writing.

Kate Daniels, associate dean of the College of Arts and Science, is responsible for administering the First Year Writing Seminar program. A poet and tenured English professor, Daniels sat in on the same orientation session that Stevens attended. Bachmann also was present for the session.

The writing seminars provide an opportunity for professors to introduce freshmen to topics in which they are very engaged or about which they feel strongly. "Professor Bachmann is a poet herself and really seems to be very passionate about writing poetry, reading it and discussing it with the class," Stevens said.

Participating faculty may choose a general orientation to library research for their class, a course-related library session, or a more customized assignment-based library session such as the one for Bachmann's poetry class. The library instruction is usually taught in the electronic classroom in the General Library Building.



Poetry Lecturer Beth Bachmann (left) and English Professor Kate Daniels, associate dean of the College of Arts and Science, sit in on a library orientation session.

Various librarians in the Central Library and in the Science and Engineering Library teach the sessions.

Before the First Year Writing Seminars, there was no required library training for A&S freshmen. This meant that when faculty requested a library session for an upper level course, neither faculty members nor librarians could make a presumption about the level of a student's library research skills. Library sessions for many upper level courses had to include an entry level research orientation, taking time away from teaching higher level research strategies.

Additionally, librarians continued to hear from faculty that too many of their students had become over-reliant on Google, were not using enough scholarly sources, and were not critically evaluating the sources they did manage to locate.

The First Year Writing Seminar library session provides an avenue to not only address those faculty concerns, but also to help level the "playing field" for student research skills. The initial feedback from faculty and students has been extremely positive.

A few days after the library instruction, Stevens said, "This (instruction session) will definitely help me because I've just figured out what my topic is going to be. We have to use at least two outside sources to support our argument, so now I know how I can go in and look up the individual poets, look up the poems, and the topic specifically."

A SPECIAL BOOK FINDS ITS WAY HOME

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The book donated by Alan Pierce will join a textbook that Robert Penn Warren used while teaching Vanderbilt freshmen during the 1931–32 school year. The late Robert A. McGaw, a longtime Vanderbilt senior administrator, donated *Expository Writing* by Mervin James Curl to Special Collections in 1994. McGaw had been in the freshman class taught by Warren and the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer later autographed the book for him.

“What I remember best about that course is his resting his feet on his desk while reading to us from a book that he obviously liked and considered to be a worthy model, Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*,” McGaw wrote in a letter to Marice Wolfe, the head of Special Collections, at the time he bequeathed the book.

The volume donated by Alan Pierce, like the one given by McGaw, will continue to find new readers and admirers now that it has been placed in Special Collections.

We think Mrs. Pierce would be pleased.

A photo of Robert Penn Warren in his later years

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