University Library

University of Louisiana at Monroe

Annual Report, 2019-2020

Prepared by the Director of the Library, Megan Lowe

Library Annual Report, AY 2019-2020

Director's Narrative

Prior to the events of the spring 2020, the ULM Library's evolution into a technology-equipped, user-focused information commons and campus hub continued, also continuing its collaboration with the Office of Information Technology (OIT). The fall semester of 2019 went as normally as one might expect. However, the spring semester of 2020 brought the COVID-19 pandemic and eventually a closure of campus. During that time, the University Library endeavored to continue providing resources and services to its constituents, to the best of our abilities. The summer of 2020 saw the University Library reopen with the rest of campus and attempt to plan for what the fall semester of 2020 might look like. Through it all, the University Library remained and remains dedicated to supporting ULM's students and employees in learning, teaching, and research.

Fall 2019

In comparison to what would occur in Spring 2020, the Fall 2019 semester was pretty normal, even boring, relatively speaking. The Library continued its support of the faculty learning community on open educational resources (OER FLC). Through the efforts and support of the academic library consortium LOUIS, the Library was able to expand access and holdings on open and affordable education resources (AOER). The Reference Department offered its usual menu of open workshops on a variety of topics for both students and employees. Other services continued as normal, including Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and digitization/preservation of archival materials in Special Collections.

Updates to the furniture and environments for the first and second floor – namely for the Information Commons – continued into the fall. Announcements and photos were shared on the

Library's website and its social media. These ongoing improvements reflect the ongoing

collaboration between the Library and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) to create a

student-center, technology-equipped, socializing-friendly space.

The institutional repository (IR) continued to support the professional journals

Contemporary Southern Psychology (CSP) and the *Online Journal of Interprofessional Health*

Promotion (OJIHP). Heather Pilcher, the Coordinator of Special Collections and Archives, opted

to pursue using the IR for certain photograph collections in the fall and decided to begin with a

collection of aerial photographs of campus (https://repository.ulm.edu/aerial/ - see Appendix A

for a screencap of that collection). The IR was supposed to go fully live in Fall 2019, but the lack

of content beyond the journals delayed that decision.

The Library, with the assistance of OIT, once again supported the Louisiana Library

Association (LLA) and the Louisiana Chapter of the American College & Research Libraries

(ACRL-LA) to put on their virtual conference regarding academic librarianship in November

2019 (see Appendix B for a screencap of the announcement page). The University's Zoom

subscription was utilized to offer a completely virtual conference on academic librarianship

which was attended by participants from all over the country. The conference will not be held in

2020 owing to concerns about virtual conference burnout but will likely resume in 2021.

Given the success of the holiday-themed, social media-based games in the fall of 2018,

the same activities were again conducted in the fall of 2019. Candy-guessing games and the "Elf

on the Shelf" both made reappearances. Winners received Starbucks giftcards donated by

Library administration. These events were once again very successful and would have been

repeated in the spring (more on that in the appropriate section). The Library also once again

invited PAWS NELA to bring in therapy dogs for finals, offering several opportunities for the

campus community to interact with the dogs. This year, owing to the condensed schedule of

finals (which began following the Thanksgiving holiday), the therapy dogs were only available

for one week instead of two weeks.

Unfortunately, Chief Information Officer Tom Hoover left to take a position elsewhere at

the end of December 2019. It was not clear at the time of his leaving whether or not his position

would be filled or if the position would continue. Until a decision regarding the CIO position

was made, Director Lowe reported directly to Vice President of Information Services, Dr.

Michael Camille. Long-time Circulation Department employee Melinda Brown retired at the end

of 2019.

Spring 2020

Spring 2020 began normally. The Reference Department planned to hold its usual cadre

of open workshops and sent out the schedule at the beginning of the semester. Projects like the

OER FLC continued apace. The Records Management Committee met in January. The UL

System Conference was held at ULM in January, and the Director co-presented with a colleague

from ULL. Diana Greenlee of Poverty Point contacted the Library about a possible project for

the VR lab or the IR. A donor had approached Ms. Greenlee and was interested in sponsoring a

collection "rehabilitation" project. The donor and Ms. Greenlee were scheduled to visit the ULM

Library in March. This project was subsequently suspended for several reasons.

February saw interviews to replace Melinda Brown's position. Dr. James Boldin from the

Music Department contacted the Library about using the IR for preserving faculty and student

musical performances and recitals, and arrangements were subsequently made for Dr. Boldin and

his colleague Tracy Bedgood, adjunct professor of Music, to receive training to use the IR.

February also saw a request from Drs. Camille and Ruiz to determine if the Library could help

temporarily house personnel from Caldwell and Sugar Halls. These buildings were scheduled to

be taken offline for some needed renovations. The Director showed Drs. Camille and Ruiz

several spaces which could potentially house displaced personnel – mostly faculty study carrels.

The Director also showed the vice presidents several study rooms but emphasized their

popularity with students. In February, the nursing school underwent accreditation, and the

Director visited with accreditation representatives to answer questions about Library resources.

By March it became clear that the CIO position was being discontinued, and the Library

would report directly to the Vice President of Information Services until July 1, when the Library

would revert back to Academic Affairs, to which it reported prior to the creation of the CIO

position. The Director was made budgetary authority for the Library, much as the Dean of the

Library was prior to the creation of the CIO position (which incorporated the Dean of the Library

position and many of its responsibilities). The Coordinator of Technical Services, Charles

Hughes, submitted the final report of the collection inventory that he had begun the previous

year, in the wake of the completed deselection project.

March also saw the earliest indicators that COVID-19 had begun affecting the state and

would likely affect the campus. Starting March 19, 2020, classes were held exclusively online.

Select buildings on campus remained open, including the Library, but by March 27, the decision

was made to close the Library. Access to a computer lab and printers was provided through the

Student Success Center during limited hours throughout the week until late summer. Once the

Library closed for good, most Library employees worked from home (WFH). A select few

worked in the building, but those individuals had no contact with one another. All departments

and services were effectively closed and suspended. All circulation services and physical/print

materials Interlibrary Loan (ILL) requests were suspended, though electronic resources could be

borrowed and lent. Reference services transitioned to virtual, with the reference librarians offering assistance through email, phone, and eventually via Zoom. The intended social media-based events were suspended. The Director and her administrative assistant would occasionally come into the office to deal with requisitions, requests, and other issues, but largely this work was conducted from home through scanning and email whenever possible. The Director's main office number was listed as the contact number on all COVID-19 related notices. This number was forwarded to her personal mobile so that in addition to the Reference number, anyone contacting the Library for information would make contact with an actual person to ensure that any Library-related questions would be addressed in a timely fashion.

Summer 2020

WFH and complete campus closure persisted until June 2020, when campus administration initiated a staggered return to campus. Library personnel was part of this staggered return to campus. Unfortunately, an employee tested positive for COVID-19, and all Library personnel were sent back home to WFH for 14 days, in an abundance of caution. When campus reopened to the public on July 1, so did the Library. Reference services remained virtual, and access to Special Collections was by appointment only. The study rooms were taken out of circulation in line with guidelines developed by LOUIS and endorsed by the Board of Regents. Small electronics (e.g., webcams, headphones) were also taken out of circulation over concerns about the staff's ability to keep them sufficiently disinfected for use and uncertainty regarding the virus's endurance on such surfaces. Other services resumed as normal, with social distancing and mask mandates in place. Certain personnel continued to WFH even after campus reopened owing to self-disclosed medical conditions or other concerns which were honored by campus administration.

Statistical Highlights

The Library's hours of operations during a normal semester week remained the same for the Fall 2019 semester and the first part of the Spring 2020 semester. However, once Governor J.B. Edwards issued the stay-at-home order, the Library's hours shifted until the Library closed entirely on Friday, March 27, 2020. Prior to closure, the Library maintained intercession-like hours, closing at 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and at 4:30 p.m. on Friday. The Library remained closed to users until July 1, 2020, when it reopened using the intercession hours until the Fall 2020 semester began.

Needless to say, the Library's statistics are a far cry from last year. Given the inability of the campus community to access the physical building and physical collections – as well as study rooms and reserve materials – Circulation statistics are definitely down from last year. Given the Library's closure from late March to July, the gate counts are also obviously down. Concerns about lending and borrowing physical materials during pandemic meant that most Interlibrary Loan activity was limited to electronic resources, meaning those statistics are down as well. This same applies to Reference statistics, both inquiries and instruction-related. Owing to the efforts of LOUIS, the Library was able to acquire several e-resources (namely e-books and open source resources) and develop the collection. It is worth noting that there may be some fluctuations in the collection numbers owing to the aforementioned Technical Services inventory of the Library's collections.

CIRCULATION	
Total Checkouts	**12,053**
Circulation	1,070
Reserves (including study rooms, headphones, webcams, and phone chargers)	10,983
Interlibrary Loan	**835**
Borrowed	602
Loaned	233
Gate Counts	**238,411**

REFERENCE	
Reference Inquiries Total	358
Bibliographic Instruction: Groups	6
Bibliography Instruction: Students	85

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS - PHYSICAL	
Print Volumes	142,188
Print Serial Subscriptions	4
Microformats	578,640
Print Federal Documents	106,834
Print State Documents	6,078
Audio-visual Units	166
Multicultural & Literacy Lab Collection	3,840

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS - DIGITAL	
E-Books, Unique Titles	464,756
E-Serials, Unique Titles	81,513
Electronic Serial Subscriptions	1,201
Electronic Federal Documents	107,523
Electronic State Documents	203
Databases	116

Closing Comments

If 2019-2020 has taught us anything, it's that things can change quickly and catastrophically. While 2019 was relatively normal and 2020 started similarly, spring 2020 very quickly set the stage for an unprecedented experience for not just the Library or the University but the world as well. However, the Library continued to support students and faculty to the best of its ability and has learned some valuable lessons which will hopefully help us improve our services moving forward. It also offered us time to reflect on work and our work processes. Fall 2020 will be unlike any fall semester the University has seen thus far, but the spring and summer provided time to consider variables and practices and to establish guidelines which are meant to protect the campus community. The Library modified its practices; we will likely hear complaints about the lack of study rooms, but the safety and health of the ULM campus community is one of the Library's new priorities.

Appendices

Appendix A: Screencap of Aerial Photo Collection in the IR

Appendix B: Screencap of the Virtual Academic Conference Website