

York College Library **Annual Report, 2006-2007**

Last year saw major changes for York College's Library: a transition in leadership, significant renovation to the entryway and public services areas, and unprecedented support from Student Government to purchase new books. Given the extent of administrative support, this heralds a new era in the Library's visibility and functionality on campus. Library faculty and staff have worked hard to accomplish these goals.

Staffing

After fifteen years of service, Professor Robert Machalow stepped down as Chief Librarian in January 2007. President Keizs appointed Kenneth Schlesinger, a Visiting Professor from LaGuardia Community College, as Acting Chief Librarian in February 2007. A new faculty member, Anamika Dasgupta, started at the same time as Evening-Weekend Reference Librarian. She is already serving as liaison to the Math and Computer Studies department, and has energized library faculty with her grasp of new technologies.

Daniel Cleary, who has a strong background in science and allied health, had his Substitute appointment extended another six months until February 2008. York administration requested that the Library submit PVNs for two proposed faculty lines: Cataloging Librarian and Science Librarian. The Library has not had a professional cataloger since 1986, and the Science Librarian will support the College's expansion of natural sciences and professional programs.

Physical Plant

Since the Library opened in the Academic Core building in 1986, no renovation work had been done to its existing space. Last year students complained that the Library was a drab and inhospitable space. Fortuitously, with \$200,000 in CUNY Compact funds, Phase I of a major renovation of the Library's entryway and public service areas was undertaken during Spring 2007. This involved new colorful carpeting; attractive, ergonomically correct chairs and lounge seating; 40 carrels with state-of-the-art computers; a new Reference Desk; and a remodeled Circulation counter. The Library has been transformed into a contemporary, user-friendly Information Commons, which should attract increased student visits.

Simultaneously, the Library charged a new Environment and Signage Committee to evaluate and make recommendations about cleanliness, efficient deployment of existing furniture resources, and a major overhaul in creating limited, but effective, signage. Correspondingly, we plan to educate students about treating the library space respectfully and promoting a positive work environment. Preventing cellphone use, as well as food and drink, continues to be an uphill battle. While Public Safety has had a limited presence, we need a stronger commitment in order to support the most successful library for our students.

Collection Development and Resources

York's Student Government Association earmarked \$200,000 of its funds for the purchase of new books by the Library. In many respects, the Library has not had a guaranteed source of collection development funds since the 1970s, and – in one notorious year – spent a grand total of \$12 on new books. As a consequence, the collections and student learning suffered. This almost became a retention issue – anecdotally, students reported leaving York frustrated, not being able to find the print resources to support their classwork.

We learned, the hard way, that it's fairly easy to spend \$200,000 on books. With titles averaging \$45 nowadays, this translated into about 2000 new books for the collection. While a substantial increase, clearly there must be ongoing maintenance of effort to assure that York maintains current and competitive research collections.

As Acting Chief Librarian, one of Professor Schlesinger's first initiatives was to organize a Subject Liaison program [<http://york.cuny.edu/library/about-the-library/subject-liaisons>], in which library faculty are assigned to individual academic departments based on their interests and subject expertise. Not only did this facilitate the selection process, but Academic Chairs are pleased having representation and accountability. Further, Collection Development Librarian Njoki Kinyatti drafted a revised Collection Development Policy [<http://york.cuny.edu/library/library-services/collection-development>], which serves both as guidance and a public relations tool.

Reference and Electronic Resources

Given the Library's mandate to support science and allied health professional programs, access to updated and comprehensive electronic resources is increasingly significant. Coordinator of Reference John Drobnicki assumed responsibility for electronic resources as well, and made considerable effort to confirm that all currently licensed resources are accessible on the library website. In addition, the Library licensed subscriptions to Cambridge Journals Online, Cochrane Library, Medline with Full Text, and Scopus. Further, we incorporated two CUNY-wide databases, Black Thought and Culture, as well as Women and Social Movements in the United States. With the assistance of CUNY's Office of Library Services, we added an EZproxy server to facilitate remote access to electronic resources, which Academic Computing also supported by adding VPN access.

Information Literacy

The Library has an active program to instill information navigation, evaluation and application skills in our students. Last year library faculty taught 91 information literacy sessions, reaching nearly 1000 York students. These classes, tailored specifically to the instructor's assignment, are equally applicable to general education and upper division courses. Headed by Scott Sheidlower, the program recently was restructured by limiting classes to one-hour sessions and attempting to involve all library faculty in a team-based operation. Part of our challenge involves publicizing this important service campus wide, while at the same time balancing library faculty's considerable time commitment in staffing two Reference Desks.

Information Literacy is beginning to play a major role in new programs and initiatives. Anamika Dasgupta was invited to participate as Information Literacy liaison to York's new Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Moreover, as part of integrating information literacy in the general education curriculum, an exciting CUE initiative has been proposed to address local history in the Jamaica community. Using York Library resources, as well as the Long Island Collection at nearby Queens Library, students will research local sites of historical significance and become walking tour guides.

Periodicals, Microforms, and Interlibrary Loan

Librarian Hope Young has been adept at managing an active unit providing access to journal and newspaper resources, while eliminating redundant print subscriptions now accessible in electronic format. Simultaneously, in support of York Master's program in Occupational Therapy, we made a financial investment to complete the backfiles of major industry journals to facilitate student research.

CLICS

CUNY libraries introduced an extremely popular intercampus book exchange program last fall. Essentially, CUNY students may now request any book from any campus, and have it delivered to their home campus in two days. York has benefited from this exchange due to its limited onsite collections. However – given the number of queries – this has proven labor-intensive to Circulation staff.

Website and Publications

York College launched a newly designed website and content management system, in which the Library was able to participate. As a result of hard work from the Web Committee and written submissions by library faculty, we launched a reconstituted site in April 2007, which contained new sections on Collection Development, Information Literacy, and Periodicals and Microforms. Patrons now can access increased current information about library services. One feature coming soon will be interactive forms for requesting new books, Information Literacy classes, and Interlibrary Loan.

The Library recently rolled out its first virtual reference program, an e-mail service to encourage campus research queries.

Faculty decided to migrate from its paper-based newsletter, INFO*, to a new online, interactive publication, PASSWORD. Nearly ten pages in length – and featuring guest contributors from the college community – it should be ready for distribution in mid-May.

Library Committee

This College Senate standing committee has been reinvigorated under the leadership of incoming Chair Linda Grasso. The Committee has designated major goals for the 2007-2008 academic year, and now includes representation from all of the College's academic departments.

Future Projects

Historically, York Library has suffered from under funding, neglect of its physical plant, and lack of strategic direction. Under new leadership, with the energetic contributions of library faculty and staff, we hope the Library will continue renovating its onsite facilities, supplementing print collections, find creative ways to augment budget for electronic resources, and promote Information Literacy in its active reference and instruction programs as central to the teaching and learning mission of York College.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Schlesinger
Acting Chief Librarian

May 2007