



Saint Mary's
University

PATRICK POWER LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT

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Introduction

The growth of the "virtual library" has not spelled an end to the role of librarians within the information infrastructure of the university. It is increasingly obvious that critical thinking skills and a solid understanding of the organization of information is fundamental to the successful use of virtual research tools. Our services to the university community include a foundation of information literacy combined with instruction in the new technologies.

The underpinning of our successful response to increased demand for instruction in the use of research resources lies in staff training. The Library's emphasis in 1996/97 was on increasing education and instruction for library staff. Upgrades to hardware and software necessitated employee re-orientation to applications software such as Microsoft Office. In addition, the Library introduced several electronic services, most of which are full-text databases through which users across campus can locate and download articles, financial reports, directory listings, and other material supporting research from the undergraduate to the faculty level. Before any of these services were introduced to the University community, there was a period of intensive staff training to inform front-line personnel about the potential and operation of each database. Staff were then confident in meeting the demands of faculty, university staff, and our traditional audience - students.

Service to Our Users

The change to the way information is disseminated has had an impact on the activity at the **Reference Desk**. Students are learning library skills through our workbook programme for which the participation rate doubled in 1996/97. Classroom teaching sessions have also increased. About 40% of the student population was engaged through our **User Education** instructional activity, which may account for greater self-sufficiency in the Library and for diminished need to ask for assistance. Staff spent more time instructing and dealing with search puzzles than in responding to more mundane questions. As well, **Reference by Appointment**, one-to-one service, met its target clientele of thesis and

essay writers who require in-depth guidance. While over 6500 CD-ROM sessions were recorded in the Library alone, an equal number of sessions originated through offices, computer labs, and dial-ins to networked CD-ROM and other resources. Full-text databases became available campus-wide for the first time, enabling our users to retrieve information without actually coming into the library building. The combined effect of more self-sufficient users and greater remote access to research materials produced fewer questions at the Reference Desk.

Access Services exhibited growth in circulation, visits to the library and volume of photocopying this year. Improved Novanet reports and services contributed to the department's success in these areas.

The Ferguson Library for Print Handicapped Students handled 477 requests for materials, up from 465 last year. Eighty-one individuals used the service, an increase from last year's 74. Better interlibrary loan access and greater use of e-text have reduced the demand for audio materials, but volunteer recorded material continues to play a vital part of the Ferguson programme. The Ferguson Library's agreement to assist Saint Francis Xavier University in producing special needs materials for its students was very successful. Use of special materials at StFX increased by 225% and they added 12 new items to the Ferguson tape collection.

The further use of automation in **Interlibrary Lending** this year has enabled a reduction of processing time. This year, for the first time, we offered our users the opportunity to request loans by e-mail and 16% of our total requests came via this route. The Library continues to be a net lender of material, lending 518 more items than we borrowed. Within Nova Scotia 5.2 items were lent for every one borrowed.

The **Archives** policy document, outlining collection and retention policies was accepted by the University Senate in September. Archival donations increased substantially this year as the University community became aware of the policy, however the University needs a total records

management program to ensure that valuable material is not discarded. Archives staff have developed a web site and databases relating to faculty and their publications. Active use of the materials continues.

Without the timely ordering and receipt of materials by the staff in **Acquisition Services** and the prompt and accurate cataloguing of these materials by the staff in **Cataloguing Systems** and **Database Management** staff in our public service areas would not be able to deliver their usual excellent service to our users. These departments make an essential contribution to the accomplishment of the Library's goals.

Media Services continues to focus on providing state-of-the-art service to the campus. The television distribution system is now available in 38 classrooms. Use of the new computer producing high quality full colour graphics for faculty, staff and students is increasing, both on site and through the campus network. Planning for teaching and learning media for the new Sobey Building is underway.

The Collection

Major full text serials databases became available this year, for use in the library and across the campus. Canadian Business and Current Affairs Fulltext, the ABI/Inform Global business database, Academic One Thousand and the ever-changing Lexis-Nexis are enhancing the profile of our collection. Increasingly we are purchasing access to these on-line sources in cooperation with other universities in Atlantic Canada. In addition, specialized data sources such as CANSIM (Statistics Canada timeseries), Canadian Tax Partner, TSE Stock Information and the range of information available through our subscription to the Statistics Canada Data Liberation Initiative are all changing the way our users locate and retrieve information.

Because of the extensive cuts to our serial collection we were able to increase modestly the number of monographs purchased this year. Improved reports from Novanet enabled

library liaisons to keep the academic departments aware of the spending activity on their behalf in a timely fashion.

With financial cuts to all libraries no one institution can provide even all the core materials required by its users. Novanet launched a pilot automated rapid document delivery project to meet some of the demands. However, just-in-time delivery of information does carry a price tag which is increasingly passed along to the users.

The More Things Change...

All libraries evolve in response to new developments over the years, but in the past four or five years the Patrick Power Library has had to respond rapidly to changing forces. We are caught in the scholarly communication crisis, with a proliferation of published material, a plethora of new information technologies, and an increasing inability to afford the status quo. We have instituted major organizational changes to meet the demands of teaching, collections development, information technology, and improved automated acquisition and cataloguing of material. Saint Mary's has become a leader in our field in staff training and development, as well as in the delivery of relevant services to our community.

David Garvin defines a learning organization as one "skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights."¹ As an academic library, we are a learning organization which has focused on re-education and continuous learning throughout 1996/97. To achieve this result, we have relied on a motivated and focused staff, who are the cornerstone of our success. Their dedication to the Library, its initiatives and its goal of friendly, conscientious service have facilitated the implementation of rapid change while ensuring the Library's popularity and respect within the University and the region.

1. David A. Garvin, "Building a Learning Organization", Harvard Business Review 71 (July-Aug. 1993): 80.

	1986/87 (10 years)	1991/90 (5 years)	1995/96 (1 year)	1996/97	% Change 1986/87 to 1996/97	% Change 1995/96 to 1996/97
Questions at the Reference Desk	18,441	27,220	27,205	26,181	+ 42.0	- 3.8
Total Circulation	192,435	218,508	233,249	235,235	+ 22.2	+0.8
Students taught in Library Instruction Sessions	1,499	1,647	2,454	2,811	+ 87.5	+14.5
Visits to the Library	535,936	562,679	515,187	551,785	+ 3.0	+ 7.1
Monographs purchased	4,000	5,458	3,069	3,316	- 17.0	+ 8.0
Volumes purchased per student	.83	.51	.44	.45	- 45.8	+ 2.3
Average cost of a journal subscription	\$137.94	\$187.07	\$290.77	\$280.27	+103.2	- 3.6
Journals as a percentage of total acquisitions budget	55	51	58	51	+ 7.3	-12.1
Total titles added to Novanet, including retrospective cataloguing	11,227	12,540	6,601	5,985	- 46.7	- 9.3