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Off-campus Library Services to Graduate Students

Marianne D. Hageman

College of St. Thomas

There are three cardboard boxes in the office of the College of St. Thomas's reference/extension librarian, one for each off-campus library collection. Two books and some photocopied articles are on the desk, pending notification of the requestors and distribution to the appropriate box. Last night's requests and pending reference questions are at the top of the IMPORTANT folder, and there are notes to go over for Tuesday's bibliographic instruction class. Time to go; where are the car keys?

St. Thomas's extension library program is a collage of services and systems coordinated by a part-time extension librarian. While faculty, students, staff and some small businesses are customers, graduate students are the greatest in number. Highly motivated, these users have needs for specialized materials and information and are persistent enough to hunt for them. Their classes are some distance from the college's O'Shaughnessy Library; and while some have access to company or large public libraries, many find the convenience and skilled assistance found in the off-campus library a great help. There are scheduled hours at two sites and telephone access for all three.

The College of St. Thomas is the largest independent college in Minnesota. It is a private, coeducational, Catholic, liberal arts college with its main campus located in St. Paul. The college's expansion into extension campuses began with a donation of property. In 1981 the Gainey Foundation gave the college the home of the late Daniel C. Gainey (president of Jostens, Inc.) near Owatonna, seventy miles from the college. With the help of additional financial grants, the college converted the property into a conference center, which opened in 1982 (Connors, 1986; Carrigan, 1986).

In 1983 the Peavey Company donated its technical center in Chaska, Minnesota (Connors, 1986). In fall 1984 the college began offering undergraduate and graduate courses there as well as workshops (Henry, 1987). The administrators of the MBA program and the library staff saw the need to provide library services to faculty and students at the Peavey Center and to develop a collection onsite (K. Ozolins, personal communication, May 9, 1988). Temporarily, two rooms held a library/resource center to

support these programs, materials then consisting primarily of duplicate copies or older editions of reference materials and magazines. At first, a liaison librarian was appointed (T. Plomondon, personal communication, November 29, 1984), then a part-time extension librarian was hired in December 1984 (K. Ozolins, personal communication, December 20, 1984).

In early 1985 a library and study room were developed, materials and periodicals were purchased, and faculty and students were informed of the library's service. During the spring semester, classes at the Gainey Conference Center requested library service; with faculty support, a site was selected and a small collection was developed (College of St. Thomas, 1985).

That summer the college began leasing the fourth floor of the Hazeltine Gates building in Chaska for the St. Thomas Enterprise Center, which serves as an incubator for small businesses (Staff, 1986). A small collection of books and periodicals for browsing was acquired for this program. In January 1986 the college purchased the building, and in 1987 the educational programs, including the library (which absorbed the Enterprise Center collection), were moved to this location; it was formally renamed the Chaska Education Center.

In 1986 the college planned a third extension, to downtown Minneapolis. A feasibility study had shown strong interest in having the college offer courses downtown, particularly undergraduate business and computer science and graduate MBA programs (Pregont, 1986). The current space, in a remodeled former department store, is leased until August 1990. While the nearby Minneapolis Public Library offered introductory orientations and the use privileges available to all downtowners (J. Kimbrough, personal communication, October 29, 1986), it was made clear that this would be no substitute for St. Thomas's own library services (E.B. Fugazzi, personal communication, December 22, 1986). A combination library/study room was designed, not far from most classrooms.

Instead of expanding the responsibilities of the extension librarian, a committee of main campus librarians (two of whom had previously held the extension position) recommended periodicals and general reference books for Minneapolis under the established budget. One of these librarians acted as library liaison (but not visiting the campus) during the first year. Materials were delivered by a daily courier, and onsite staff handled routine maintenance and recommended additional purchases. For the 1988 spring semester, the extension librarian position was increased to coordinate library services at Minneapolis as well as Chaska and

Owatonna.

Both Chaska and Owatonna have evolved into campuses for graduate study. St. Thomas's Graduate Programs in Management have been active since 1974; in addition to the MBA and its several concentrations, there are programs for software design and development, manufacturing systems engineering, and business communication. A majority of Minneapolis classes are also in management, although there are several "New College" classes for undergraduates, also largely business-related. Thus the three campuses' collections center around business, with individual specialties.

Many graduate students are employed by smaller companies. While employees at large corporations such as 3M or Honeywell may have experience with corporate libraries, those from smaller companies have no such resource. Their undergraduate library experience, if any, is behind them, and they have been dependent on colleagues or possibly public libraries for information. For their professions and for classwork, they need many kinds of business information; for example, statistics, demographics, market share, competitor information, advertising rates, how to start and operate a small business. While their needs may be complex, they are often unfamiliar with what is available.

The information needs of St. Thomas's extension students, faculty, and staff include materials and information delivered in a timely manner. This is accomplished by separate library collections and particularly by the extension librarian. She is the intermediary between extension users and the information resources accessible through the college's library; she can be consulted by those planning and participating in the extension program. An extension librarian is an effective, visible sign of the college's commitment to off-campus users (Rearden & Lasky, 1980; Mount & Turple, 1980).

Obviously, extension library services would be impossible without the support of the main campus library. All materials are available to off-campus users: circulating materials can be acquired through the librarian or in person; reference materials can be used onsite, consulted by the librarian for specific requests, or copied within reason. Articles can be copied from the library's periodicals. Since the extension librarian is a member of the reference department and works on main campus several hours a week, she keeps current with the main library's activities as well as working with off-campus collections.

To obtain materials from other collections, the extension

librarian has several alternatives. The main St. Thomas and extension collections are one option. Secondly, the St. Thomas library belongs to a consortium of private college/research libraries known as CLIC (Cooperating Libraries in Consortium). CLIC members routinely share library materials. Other options include Minitex, the regional ILL exchange, and OCLC, for materials not otherwise available and for verification. Each off-campus location stocks its own color-coded request forms (gold for Chaska, pink for Minneapolis, and purple for Owatonna), so requests are readily distinguished.

The CLIC catalog is available at each campus. It had been issued in microfiche as recently as 1985; it is now available on-line as CLICnet. Graduate students, often familiar with computers and terminals from work, respond well to an automated catalog. CLICnet is available through dial-access at Chaska, Minneapolis, and Owatonna as well as from home or office via one's personal computer and modem. CLICnet has been a boon in enabling students to see what is available, at least locally, and it makes them aware of various interlibrary loan possibilities while providing a symbolic supplement of the extension libraries' collections.

Chaska was the first of St. Thomas's extension libraries. It is also the largest, with approximately 250 books, 60 periodical titles, noncurrent copies of indexes such as the *Business Periodicals Index*, and over 1000 business annual reports. Chaska had about 200 students in the spring 1988 semester, taking eleven courses. The librarian is there two evenings a week, the nights classes are held.

Most Chaska reference titles are older books from the main library: for business, titles, the year-old volume is sent to Chaska when the main campus receives the latest edition; the next year that volume is returned to the main library's reference auxiliary and is replaced by a "new" year-old volume. Current periodicals are kept as space permits; old issues are usually discarded or sent to fill in gaps at the main library. The business annual reports are also year-old editions from the main library; when superseded, these are sent to Owatonna.

The distance of the Chaska campus from the main campus, and its distance from libraries with collections to support student needs, were decisive factors in the development of this extension library. The St. Thomas campus is thirty miles away, and nearby public libraries serve their own clientele. Thus the Chaska library was designed to be relatively large and, to an extent, to function on its own. It operates as a one-person library, with

the librarian handling everything from providing reference service to shelving, initiating interlibrary loan requests to filling out book orders. The main library's technical services department orders and processes all extension materials, but the extension librarian requests new items, delivers them, and examines them as they are added to the collection. Periodicals in particular must be checked for missing issues; suppliers have difficulty understanding these are not just "multiple copies."

In 1987 Chaska Campus moved to its present location, and the library gained new users: the tenants of the college's small business incubator. Their use is sporadic, and the library's hours are established for the convenience of evening student/faculty users, but several requests have been handled successfully.

The Owatonna facility is the smallest: 150 books, 20 subscriptions; its campus has the smallest enrollment, just over 100 students in spring 1988, taking ten classes. While at Chaska and Minneapolis classes are offered Monday through Thursday evenings, Owatonna has classes on Saturdays. Because of its distance from the St. Thomas campus, the librarian seldom gets there, although she oversees the program at a distance. It is the MBA coordinator who is responsible for the library onsite and aids students searching for information. Requests for materials and complicated reference questions are referred to the extension librarian via phone or the weekly courier. Owatonna's subscriptions, new books, and loaned materials also travel by courier to the campus. "Third-generation" business annual reports are sent there, and a few reference books are purchased.

The Minneapolis campus has a collection slightly larger (170 books, 30 subscriptions) but the largest student body of the three: in forty classes, there were 600 students in spring 1988, the great majority graduate students. Several factors affect the size of the Minneapolis library: the proximity of the main campus (seven miles away); the main Minneapolis Public Library (one block away, it has a large business collection); the large financial commitment to the Chaska library.

At first, library services were limited to onsite materials and written requests. However, for the spring 1988 semester the extension librarian was given additional hours to cover the Minneapolis campus. After an interesting start (no desk, no telephone, little visibility) the librarian established a presence; there have been several class presentations, on-line catalog demonstrations, and a developing user base. As in Chaska, the librarian was onsite two evenings per week. By the end of

May, it was decided that the extension position would keep the additional hours for the immediate future.

Each location has its own books and periodicals budget, with amounts depending on the state and future development of each. The FY 1988 budget for extension library materials was \$14,500. The funds come out of the overall library budget, but they are clearly earmarked. Also, use statistics are kept for each location. From the beginning, they have formed part of the extension libraries section of the O'Shaughnessy Library's annual report; currently, monthly reports are prepared to document continued use and the demand for library services to the administration.

While statistics have not been kept consistently and are only a small sample, some observations can be made. The number of users more than doubled in spring 1987 when the Chaska library was near the classrooms; conversely it was cut in half when the library moved again. Use has remained constant since then. Photocopy requests have increased, particularly since the librarian has learned the interests of various users and watches for relevant articles. Gainey campus requests have doubled since the new MBA coordinator has promoted service. While it is too soon to judge the Minneapolis campus, photocopy requests this semester were twice those of Chaska's, and many class presentations were done.

Library services are promoted in various ways. The physical presence of the librarian, both in Chaska and now in Minneapolis, as well as the collections themselves are important, but not enough. The librarian publishes a monthly newsletter/acquisitions list/calendar, "The Library Link," highlighting new items while listing the librarian's schedule and phone numbers. At the beginning of each semester, memos are provided for faculty and students giving a brief outline of available services and listings of campus periodicals. A new publication serves as an SDI listing for users. The librarian scans incoming periodicals for articles and topics of interest, printing and distributing this list a few times each semester.

While the graduate business administrators greatly support the library, faculty and staff use, and their informing students of the values of library services, are equally important. Making faculty contact is crucial; many faculty members, once off-campus, expect little support and appreciate library access. Other faculty are already aware of the library: St. Thomas undergraduate classes often have a library component, and this is being developed for graduate programs. Doing class presentations

tailored to the needs of a particular class also promotes service: speaking to a class can alert potential users to library services.

The challenges of the position are many. First, it is a part-time position; this means that, even more so than for a full-time librarian, there is never enough time to do it all. Projects still pending after several months are a policy statement for Minneapolis and an extension procedures manual. A significant backlog has developed this year with the addition of Minneapolis and the rearranging of hours at various locations. Automation of extension library functions has been limited by insufficient time and infrequent access to a personal computer.

Scheduling is a challenge each month, with two onsite locations to include, being part of the reference desk rotation (including some weekends), as well as additional items such as class presentations and tours. The work is scheduled mostly afternoons and evenings, to coincide with peak use at the off-campus sites while allowing some time each day to work at the main campus.

Spending time traveling makes one more difficult to reach and takes up time (45 minutes to drive to Chaska, more during rush hour.) And extension faculty and students move between campuses; until the position included Minneapolis coverage, it was frustrating to see favorite users move out of one's scope. Now it's often a matter of keeping track of who's where, this semester.

People are not the only "portable" components of the off-campus program. The Chaska library itself has moved, several times. It began in the Peavey Center, first in two temporary rooms, then in rather spacious accommodations on the third floor (which was a problem, since the classrooms were on the second floor.) Later, the center rented our the former study room to a business tenant and the library/study space was confined to one room. In early 1987, the library was moved to the main floor so that the entire third floor could be rented. That summer, the entire campus moved to another building, and the library was relocated again.

Unfortunately, each library move has meant a loss of floor space, shelf space, and study space. After two moves in six months, library shelf space was cut almost in half. The needs of the library have not been considered in any of these moves: in all but one location, the library has been situated one floor away from most or all of the classrooms. Use and reference questions increased dramatically during spring 1987, largely due to the

library's proximity to the classrooms. Several students had scarcely been aware of its existence. After the latest move away from the classrooms, use dropped significantly. Library visibility has been crippled by its location "off the beaten track."

Another issue of the extension libraries is one of access versus security. The Chaska library is usually locked when the librarian is not there; access by small businesses is hindered, but not impossible since they can ask permission to use it during the day. At Owatonna, the books are on locked shelves; the room is open but watched so possible theft is reduced. In Minneapolis, where the library is the study room, it is unlocked at all times. Materials checkout depends on the honor system: a recent inventory found several volumes missing. Library personnel are reluctant to acquire many expensive items while there is no safeguard against library theft.

The Minneapolis library is extremely small for its multiple uses. Students pack the room on class nights, and the needs for quiet study can hinder the conversation required for reference service. More than half the space is devoted to study tables and carrels, and there is minimal room for adding to the collection. Future Minneapolis campus plans should include increased space for both the library and an additional study room.

Several elements combine to make St. Thomas's extension library services effective. One of these is the extension librarian: having one person whose primary responsibility is off-campus library services means continuous, effective service (Johnson, 1984). Separate collections at each site provide ready reference and basic material; an automated catalog makes users aware of other resources. Interlibrary loan "supplements" the core collections. The support of faculty and administrators is crucial, both as an ongoing commitment and as a means to inform potential student users. Promoting library services off-campus is uniquely challenging, combining elements of special, one-person, and academic librarianship.

As users, graduate students are highly motivated but too often unaware of the information resources available. Faculty members, met with prompt service, can become regular customers. Sharing the travel, scheduling, and locational difficulties with faculty and students gives the extension librarian a spirit of camaraderie which, with prompt, personalized service, promotes good relationships with users at remote locations.

Recently, the college has issued statements on the future of

St. Thomas. Two thousand students are projected to be studying at campuses other than St. Paul, and the Minneapolis Campus will become "a center for adult education." Clearly, the college expects extension programs to expand. With persistent demands for service, and the support of graduate faculty and library staff, there will continue to be off-campus library services for St. Thomas's extension programs.

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