# **Looking Back and Moving Forward**

# **An Evaluation of Library Services at UMW**

# **November 2021**

“If the college did *not* have a library, faculty and students might worry. But since the library is always there, it is easily ignored.”

 Earnest L. Boyer, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*

In 2011, as part of our preparation for the upcoming SACS COC Reaffirmation Process, we published a report that used the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Standards for Academic Libraries to evaluate the services and resources of the UMW Libraries. Ten years later, we are again approaching a SACS review, and it seems appropriate to revisit and update that evaluation. Much has changed in the last ten years. The University has a new President, and we have experienced several changes in academic leadership. Enrollment has shifted downward, and other budget challenges have reduced funding for library staff, resources, and services. At the same time, the availability of library resources in electronic format has increased. Libraries have embraced new opportunities for promoting open scholarly communication and open education resources. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to reshape higher education and academic library services. This report examines the library’s accomplishments and challenges of the last ten years.

# **Peer and Aspirant Comparisons**

As with the 2011 report, we compared the University of Mary Washington against the COPLAC member institutions and against the university’s list of aspirant institutions. COPLAC institutions from outside the United States and provisional members were not included. Kentucky State University, Northern Vermont University Johnson, Mansfield University, and the University of South Carolina Aiken joined COPLAC since 2011.

**Table 1: Peer and Aspirant Institutions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **COPLAC**  | **Aspirant Institutions** |
| Eastern Connecticut State University, CT | Brandeis University, MA |
| Evergreen State College, WA | Loyola University, MD |
| Fort Lewis College, CO | Colgate University, NY |
| Georgia College  | College of Charleston, SC |
| Henderson State University, AR | College of William and Mary, VA |
| Keene State College, NH | Davidson College, NC |
| Kentucky State University, KY | Bucknell University |
| Mansfield University, PA | Dickinson College, PA |
| Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, MA | Elon University, NC |
| Midwestern State University, TX | Ithaca College, NY |
| New College of Florida, FL | James Madison University, VA |
| Northern Vermont University Johnson, VT  | Ramapo College of New Jersey, NJ |
| Ramapo College of New Jersey, NJ | St. Mary’s College of Maryland, MD |
| Shepherd University, WV | SUNY at Geneseo, NY |
| Sonoma State University, CA | Truman State University, MO |
| St. Mary’s College of Maryland, MD | University of Richmond, VA |
| SUNY at Geneseo, NY | Wake Forest University, NC |
| University of Virginia’s College at Wise, VA | Washington and Lee University, VA |
| Truman State University, MO |  |
| University of Illinois at Springfield, IL |  |
| University of South Carolina Aiken, SC  |  |
| University of Maine at Farmington, ME |  |
| University of Minnesota-Morris, MN |  |
| University of Montevallo, AL |  |
| University of North Carolina at Asheville, NC |  |
| University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, OK |  |
| University of Wisconsin-Superior, WI |  |

*Institutions highlighted in yellow did not submit data to ACRL in 2021.*

ACRL collects data each year from participating libraries, and these data are available through the ACRL portal. The ACRL survey includes the data collected by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), and the tool allows for easy comparison with other institutions. Our points of comparison for this evaluation were:

* FTE Students per FTE Staff
* Total Materials & Services Expenditures per FTE Student
* Total Expenditures per FTE Student
* Total Physical Collection
* Total Digital Collection
* Reference Transactions
* Research Consultations
* Presentations to Classes
* Hours of Operation
* Annual Gate Count

Institutions that did not submit data to ACRL in 2021 are highlighted in yellow in the table above.

Table 2 shows the results of these comparisons. Only those institutions that submitted data for each criterion are included in the count.

**Table 2: Peer and Aspirant Comparisons**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **UMW** | **COPLAC Mean** | **UMW Rank** | **Count** | **Aspirant Mean** | **UMW Rank** | **Count** |
| Total Staff FTE | 32.5 | 25.71 | 4 | 17 | 58.67 | 9 | 15 |
| Students/FTE Staff | 126.46 | 134.06 | 6 | 16 | 115.08 | 6 | 14 |
| Expenditures/Student | $594.26 | $637  | 7 | 16 | $1,289.79  | 13 | 14 |
| Physical Collection | 323,961 | 235,999.56 | 6 | 17 | 684,814 | 13 | 15 |
| Digital Collection | 592,691 | 713,322.47 | 7 | 17 | 1,221,011 | 12 | 15 |
| Reference Transactions | 1,737 | 2031 | 8 | 16 | 4,457 | 8 | 13 |
| Research Consultations | 541 | 312 | 3 | 13 | 1,561 | 7 | 14 |
| Presentations to Groups | 171 | 107 | 4 | 16 | 341 | 11 | 15 |
| Hours of Operation | 90 | 89.84 | 11 | 17 | 115 | 15 | 15 |
| Annual Gate Count | 108,022 | 133,680 | 5 | 13 | 365,798 | 12 | 14 |

Overall, the UMW library compares well to our COPLAC peers in most areas. We rank highest in Research Consultations and Presentations to Groups, and lowest in hours of operation. The data reported in the ACRL survey’s last administration do not include adjustment to hours because of the COVID pandemic, and gate counts do not account for the lengthy library closings that the pandemic caused.

Changes in the comparison groups and in the ways data are collected make it difficult to compare 2021 rankings to those of 2011. We took the institutions that reported expenditure per FTE student in both 2011 and 2021 and compared both the COPLAC and Aspirant groups. The data show no change in our rank with either group. Among COPLAC institutions, we remained seventh out of fourteen. Among the Aspirant institutions, we remained next to last, or twelfth out of thirteen.

The Aspirant group includes several institutions with much higher enrollment and institutions that offer more extensive graduate programs, including doctorates. Given this wide disparity in size and mission, it is not surprising that UMW ranks toward the bottom in most areas. The institution should consider revising its aspirant institutions to include those more similar in size and mission to UMW.

# **The ACRL Standards**

The ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education consist of nine Principles:

* **Institutional Effectiveness:** Libraries define, develop, and measure outcomes that contribute to institutional effectiveness and apply findings for purposes of continuous improvement.
* **Professional Values:** Libraries advance professional values of intellectual freedom, intellectual property rights and values, user privacy and confidentiality, collaboration, and user-centered service.
* **Educational Role:** Libraries partner in the educational mission of the institution to develop and support information-literate learners who can discover, access, and use information effectively for academic success, research, and lifelong learning.
* **Discovery:** Libraries enable users to discover information in all formats through effective use of technology and organization of knowledge.
* **Collections:** Libraries provide access to collections sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, format, and currency to support the research and teaching missions of the institution.
* **Space:** Libraries are the intellectual commons where users interact with ideas in both physical and virtual environments to expand learning and facilitate the creation of new knowledge.
* **Management/Administration/Leadership:** Library leaders engage in internal and campus decision-making to inform resource allocation to meet the library’s mission effectively and efficiently.
* **Personnel:** Libraries provide sufficient number and quality of personnel to ensure excellence and to function successfully in an environment of continuous change.
* **External Relations:** Libraries engage the campus and broader community through multiple strategies in order to advocate, educate, and promote their value.

## Institutional Effectiveness

In 2015, we combined our assessment and data collection efforts under the Data Collection and Analysis Team (DCAT). DCAT collects use data for resources and services, and they conduct surveys of faculty and students on a regular basis. DCAT also collects the data reported to NCES and ACRL, and we share these data with University Relations as needed for the US News and World Report College Rankings and other reports.

The 2019 Faculty Survey showed a high level of satisfaction with the library’s resources and services. Sixty-four percent of the respondents said that they were extremely satisfied with the library, and 63 percent felt that the library had improved their student’s research skills considerably. We asked respondents to tell us in two or three sentences about a time when the library had a positive impact on their work. Many faculty spoke about the efficiency and efficacy of our interlibrary loan services in support of their research and teaching, and about the support they and their students receive through our research and instruction program. In their responses to other open-ended questions on the survey, faculty expressed concerns about weaknesses in the library collections, the library’s limited budget, and the state of the physical building.

DCAT surveyed students in 2020. Forty-nine percent of the students who responded said they were extremely satisfied with the library overall. Most of the students indicated that they visit the library once a week or more, and they also said they use the library online with similar frequency. Seventy-seven percent of the students indicated that they use the library as a space for individual study. In their comments about the library’s physical space, students expressed concern about the library’s worn appearance, its cleanliness, and the lack of adequate lighting in many areas.

We use the results of our assessment efforts to guide our decision making about changes to our spaces and services. Comments about library spaces in previous student surveys inspired us to create the “sun rooms” on the third floor to take advantage of the good natural light in those areas. We used funds donated to the library’s Foundation account to purchase bright, comfortable furniture for these areas. We also upgraded the furniture and lighting in the smaller group study rooms on the second and third floors.

## Professional Values

Each September, the library collaborates with the Department of English and Linguistics and the Writing Center to hold a series of events marking Banned Books Week. The highpoint of each week is a campus read-aloud, where faculty, students, and administrators read from selected works that have been banned or challenged over the years. This event allows us to demonstrate our commitment to intellectual freedom and the right to read in a meaningful way.

Events in the last several years have led us to focus as well on our diversity and inclusion efforts. We used a library intern to audit the juvenile collection to determine the level of diversity in representations and in authors and to identify and remove older materials with problematic representations. We also continue to include discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion in our regular staff meetings, recognizing that most of the work that needs to be done on this issue begins with ourselves.

## Educational Role

The research and instruction program is one of the strengths of the UMW library. The QEP that resulted from our 2013 SACSCOC reaffirmation focused on building research, speaking, and writing skills among first year students. The library developed four research-related modules for FSEM faculty to assign to students enrolled in First-Year Seminars (FSEM), and librarians met with FSEM classes to introduce them to library resources and services. These instruction sessions focused on the information literacy skills of finding research resources, evaluating those resources, and identifying scholarly resources.

Building on the foundation laid with our instruction in the FSEMs, subject librarians also meet with upper level classes as students begin to learn about the research methods of their disciplines. Students are encouraged to meet with their subject librarians for research consultations that focus on their individual projects. In addition, the librarians maintain research guides for each discipline to help students find resources.

## Discovery

After using the VTLS integrated library system for over thirty years, the library migrated to the Ex Libris Alma library management system with the Primo discovery service in 2016. Alma is a more robust platform for library services, and it was built to manage the wide array of library resources available today. With Alma, we can manage the licensing of our electronic resources along with the acquisition and circulation of print materials. Primo searches across most of the library’s print and electronic resources, making it easier for library users to explore our resources.

Some of the digital collections included in Special Collections and University Archives were created and initially housed on the Internet Archive. Eagle Explorer, a search interface developed in house, proved to be unsustainable after the staff member who created it left the library. We have moved these materials into Preservica, our digital access and preservation system, and we are in the process of integrating Preservica collections into Primo to enhance discovery.

## Collections

Ten years ago, most of the library’s collection was in print and housed either in Simpson Library or the Stafford campus library. Over the last decade, the collection of digital resources has grown to the point that these now outnumber the physical items. Faculty recommend new materials for addition to our holdings, and the subject librarians also select new materials, based on their work with their departments.

Collection evaluation is an on-going process. We undertook a thorough evaluation of the print monographs in 2011, through which we identified dated and duplicate materials that were removed from the collection. Budget constraints have resulted in the cancellation of many of our print journals, most of which have moved online. We sought faculty input during both processes.

## Space

The physical state of Simpson Library continues to be one of our chief areas of concern. The building opened in 1989, and much of the furniture is original to the building. Recurring issues with the HVAC system’s drainage have resulted in leaks that bring water into the building. The most serious of these was in 2018, when water came into the archives shelving area. Quick work on the part of the library staff prevented major damage to the collection, but a small number of items had to be sent to a conservator for stabilization.

Space to house our Special Collections and University Archives is extremely limited. Our collection of rare books is small, and we only add to this collection when items are donated. The University Archives, however, continue to grow, and we do not have space to house the materials we already have. The Special Collections reading room is attractive, but it does not provide an adequate space for staff to work.

The opening of the Hurley Convergence Center in 2014 relieved some of the pressure on the library as the only space on campus available for studying in the evening, but it also highlighted the overall shabbiness of the library’s appearance. Where the HCC has comfortable, bright furniture that can be easily rearranged, Simpson’s furniture is heavy, and the upholstery is worn.

The University included a library renovation in its capital request to the Commonwealth, but we do not know when that project will be funded.

## Management/Administration/Leadership

Internally, the library operates well, with regular staff meetings to discuss ongoing projects and to address areas of concern. The library uses Slack for quick communication among staff members, and documents are shared through various Office 365 applications. Staff in each library unit also meet regularly. The library has four teams that include staff from multiple units:

* Data Collection and Assessment Team (DCAT)
* Marketing and Outreach
* Scholarly Communications
* Web Site Development

Library staff are encouraged to volunteer for campus-wide committees, and we have had several staff elected to the University Staff Council over the years. The University Librarian attends most meetings of the University Faculty Council and is a member of the President’s Leadership Council.

Over the years, the library’s ability to contribute to academic decision making has diminished. The University Librarian no longer meets with the Provost, Deans, and others in academic leadership position. The result is that decisions are made that impact the library without the library having had the opportunity to contribute. Our hope is that this situation will be resolved moving forward.

## Personnel

In 2011, the library had a total of 25 people on staff, including 4 people working in the Stafford Library. Today, we have 20 full-time staff positions. Given that the Stafford Library has now closed, the number of staff does not seem to have changed dramatically. The numbers, however, do not tell the full story.

As positions have become vacant, we have adjusted staff responsibilities and re-defined some positions to adjust to the library’s changing services and needs. Unfortunately, budget cuts have resulted in some open positions being frozen, and the responsibilities that went with those positions have been reassigned to others. While most staff are willing to take on additional work to help during a short-term situation, we have not been able to reduce their workloads to make room for additional responsibilities for the long-term. Important long-term projects get put on hold while staff scramble to meet the most immediate needs. This is not sustainable over the long term.

In 2020, three of our longest serving staff retired: our Reference and Humanities Librarian, our Interlibrary Loan Supervisor, and our Acquisitions Assistant. We were able to fill the reference position, but the other two were frozen. We were able to make an internal hire to fill the ILL slot, but that, in turn, lead to a vacancy in Access Services. The Evening Circulation Supervisor position is now frozen instead of the ILL position.   The freezing of this position limits the hours in which the library can be open each week.  Students have indicated their unhappiness with the library’s limited hours in a variety of ways, including in an article published in the *Blue & Gray Press* on November 11, 2021.

The Acquisitions Assistant position is also frozen.  This position is necessary for processing new additions to the library’s collection.  The freezing of this position limits our ability to acquire and provide up-to-date resources to library users.

## External Relations

Over the years, we have built a strong relationship with the Central Rappahannock Regional Library, and we have collaborated with them on several successful programs. In 2017, we sponsored the public library’s Big Read program, and helped to bring Margot Lee Shetterly, author of *Hidden Figures*, to campus for a standing-room-only event. CRRL has had to suspend a number of its programs through the COVID pandemic, but we hope to continue this partnership in the future.

The library has participated in UMW Giving Day every year. The Marketing Team works with our student assistants to make videos that highlight the library’s resources and services. We reach out to alumni and other library supporters, and we have consistently met our Giving Day goals.

Special Collections and University Archives has connected with cultural heritage and historical organizations in the community. We have worked closely with the National Parks Service and the Washington Heritage Museums on digitization projects. The Head of Special Collections and University Archives and the Digital Resources Librarian meet regularly with alumni, and they present workshops during Alumni Weekend celebrations.

# **Significant Accomplishments**

Over the past ten years, we have continued to grow and to improve our services to faculty and students. Many of these changes have already been mentioned, but the areas listed below involved considerable effort on the part of the library staff, and they deserve to be singled out for recognition.

## Open and Affordable Education Resources

Library staff, particularly the Head of Reference and Scholarly Communication and the University Librarian, have led the campus efforts to promote the use of open and affordable educational resources. We provide regular workshops to help faculty identify and adopt open textbooks, and we proactively search for open alternatives to textbooks adopted for classes. We participate actively in VIVA’s open education efforts, including the Open Education Network. We promote the OER grants offered by VIVA, and we are pleased that many of the faculty have been successful with their applications. According to the staff at VIVA, our use of the Faculty Textbook portal has resulted in an estimated student cost avoidance is $193,979.25. History, education, and anthropology are the disciplines with the highest number of adoptions

## Institutional Repository

The creation of an institutional repository for faculty and student scholarship was identified as a goal in the 2015 University Strategic Plan called for the creation of a digital repository to include archival collections, significant student scholarship, openly accessible versions of faculty scholarship, and the digital scholarship of students and faculty.” In 2017, we launched Eagle Scholar (<https://scholar.umw.edu/>), built on the Digital Commons platform from bepress. The Scholarly Communications Team works with faculty and students to collect materials to be added to the repository, including student contributions to the annual Research and Creativity Day Symposia. To date, we have added over 5000 items to the repository, and papers in Eagle Scholar have been downloaded by users around the world.

We should note that the library has received no additional funding to support the institutional repository. We cut other areas of the library’s budget to pay for the repository because we felt it was a necessary resource, and we did not see that it would ever be funded otherwise.

## Digital Archiving Lab

The opening of the Digital Archiving Lab in the Hurley Convergence Center in 2014 expanded our efforts to build our digital collections. The lab is equipped with specialized equipment for digitizing books, manuscripts, photographs, and other archival materials. The Head of Special Collections and University Archives and the Digital Resources Librarian work with faculty and students on a variety of digital projects, and we provide instructional support for several classes. In addition, we have provided digitization services for the larger community as well. Significant projects have included working with faculty and students to digitize the university’s herbarium collection, digitizing the Stafford County high school yearbooks, and working with the Fredericksburg Masonic Lodge to digitize the Bible that George Washington used when he took his Masonic oath.

The original plan for the Convergence Center called for the creation of a new position for the library. Those funds were not forthcoming, and we created the Digital Resources Librarian position by eliminating the Catalog Librarian position when it became vacant.

## Records Management

When the university’s Director of Emergency Management and Security retired in 2018, responsibility for university records management transferred to the library. We have made considerable progress in getting our records management procedures into compliance with Commonwealth regulations and in educating the community about records management.

Records management is a complex process, and the transition from paper to electronic documents has added to the complexity. On many campuses, it is a full-time position. We added records responsibilities to those of the support staff member working in Special Collections and University Archives. The time she spends working on records management has significantly reduced the time she can spend processing archival collections and supporting the other work of her unit.

## COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic created a serious disruption in library services to our students and faculty. During the pandemic, we encouraged faculty and students to request that materials be scanned for them when they could not come to the library in person. We worked closely with faculty to get the materials they needed for their classes into Canvas where students could easily access them. Reference services continued by email, phone, and chat, and research consultations and library instruction moved online. Through the summer of 2020, we were one of only a few libraries that maintained interlibrary loan services for our patrons, and we implemented an aggressive program of scanning materials requested by faculty and students that continued through Spring 2021.

When the campus reopened in the fall of 2020, we closed off certain parts of the library where it would be challenging to follow cleaning and social distancing protocols. We also reduced hours to 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, and 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Sunday. Our attendance data showed that Saturday was the least used day of the week, and we decided to keep the library closed on Saturdays.

We are proud of the high level of service the library was able to maintain, thanks in large part to the hard work of the staff in Access Services and Reference. As much as possible, we continued services with minimal disruptions. Staff were in the building even at times when the building was closed to the public.

We hope to be able to extend our hours back closer to our pre-COVID levels, but the primary constraints are staffing and security. Without the Evening Circulation Supervisor position, we do not have the personnel to keep the building open until midnight. In addition, the University Police are not able to fund the two security staff who worked in the library because of their own budget challenges.

# **Conclusion**

In the past ten years, we have accomplished a great deal. We played a significant part in the success of the University’s Quality Enhancement Plan, and we have become an integral part of the First-Year Seminar. We have used what funds we have to update areas of the library to create a better place for students and staff to work. We have furthered the conversation on campus about the use of open and affordable educational resources. We have raised the visibility of the library on campus and in the community.

As I prepare to retire from University of Mary Washington at the end of this calendar year, I feel I am leaving the library in good shape to move forward, but I also recognize that both the library and the university face significant challenges. My hope is that, as the university’s budget and enrollment stabilize, that some of the funding cuts of recent years will be restored, and that the library staff can continue to build on the good work we have done together.

The epigraph for this report is a quote about how easily the library can be ignored. As Boyer says, we are always there. We will rise to whatever challenge is put before us, and we will always act in the best interests of our students and faculty. That commitment to service is one thing that makes it easy for people outside the library to think we’re doing okay. They don’t see the fracture lines that, like the large crack by Simpson Library’s rear entrance, hint at significant but unseen issues. My hope is that this document will highlight the hard work of the library staff while calling attention to those areas where we are feeling the strain of doing too much with too little. To that end, I make the following recommendations:

1. Restore the Evening Circulation Supervisor position so that the library can return to its pre-COVID hours.
2. Restore the Acquisitions Assistant position as soon as possible, so that the library can acquire and provide new materials to its users in a reasonable amount of time.
3. Continue efforts to fund a renovation of Simpson Library to address its many infrastructure issues and to update its appearance.
4. Strengthen the University Records Management program to ensure proper retention of university records.
5. Build on the success of the First-Year Seminar instruction to enhance library involvement with upper-division classes.
6. Return the University Librarian to the academic decision-making table.
7. Work with the University Faculty Council to create a University Library Advisory Committee.

Submitted, with gratitude for the last ten years, by Rosemary H. Arneson, University Librarian