

**Texas A&M University: Building the Library Experience of the Future**

Engineering Village: Thanks to all of you at the Texas A&M Library for joining us and giving some insight into the successes that your library has had over the past couple of years, and what you're looking to do for the library of the future.

Before we get started into some of the details, I would ask that each of you introduce yourselves and tell us a little bit about what you do.

Steve Smith: I'm Steve Smith. I'm the Associate Dean for Collections and Services. I'm over most of the day-to-day operations, both technical and public services, and I work with a lot of great people.

Susie Goodwin: I'm Susie Goodwin, Head of Learning and Outreach and Humanities, Social Sciences, and part of my job is to coordinate all of the instruction activities across the libraries and then also work with the Subject Librarians in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Sandy Tucker: I'm Sandy Tucker. I am Head of Science and Engineering Services and Head of Liaison Services. I coordinate the Liaison Services across the Libraries and then I coordinate the work of the Science and Engineering Librarians and serve as their Work Administrator.

Dennis Clark: And I'm Dennis Clark. I'm Head of Public and Research Services, and I oversee Main Library, Circulation, Reference, Media, and Reserves.

Engineering Village: And so what types of trainings do you offer your students within the library?

Susie Goodwin: We have a pretty strong instruction program here, and it's organized in two ways. One is the liaison model where our Subject Librarians go out and work with the departments to help the students in their course work.

And then we also have a general instruction program where we work closely with the Writing Programs Office out of the English Department and see

almost all of the students that are taking basic composition classes for their degree work.

We also go to all the orientations on campus and have a lot of online tutorials that we direct our students to as well.

Engineering Village: And what types of interaction do you have with your faculty? I mean I know sometimes they don't use the library as much as students. So how do you keep up with them and keep them happy with the materials that you've purchased?

Sandy Tucker: I think what we know that the way to keep them happy is to have more and more content delivered to their desktops.

They have high expectations for that. They don't generally come to the building, so we interact with them by e-mail some. Also, we all send messages to our departments by e-mail.

And then several of the liaisons also now have office hours in the departments that they serve, and they meet with faculty and graduate students in spaces in their own – on their own stomping grounds.

And then I would say a number of our liaisons also attend regular seminars in their departments, so they get to know the research interests of the faculty. And then we also, as Susie said, work with faculty in developing courses.

I know when I'm doing a class for a faculty member, I always ask for a copy of the syllabus and for copies of assignments so that I get familiar with what they're doing that way.

Some of the liaisons also go over to the departments and just go door to door and drop off cards and shake hands and greet people.

We also make a point of getting to know the new faculty members as they come on campus. We will contact them individually and offer them tours of the library and help them get set up and get familiar with our various resources.

Let's see, one other thing we have is the subject guides on our Web site that list the basic and some of the advanced resources for each department and we do advertise those things through our various e-mail messages as well.

Engineering Village: And I know that you know the university library is kind of changing as you know students become more comfortable with the Internet and Google. What are the biggest challenges at TAMU that you're having with the library of the future?

Steve Smith: Well I think, of course, some of the challenges we know very well. It's a struggle to keep up with costs of materials and materials inflation.

I think the ways in which students are learning, the activities that they engage in are changing and have changed tremendously in the past two decades.

So it's important for us to understand the kinds of learning activities that they're involved in. They're much more likely to be, for example, doing original research these days. Obviously, they use technology much more intensely than certainly years ago when I was an undergraduate. I think also they're engaged in more collaborative learning.

They are more likely to be doing a presentation, something different from the standard, old-fashioned term paper.

So I think not only providing access to content in a world of constrained resources, but also giving them understanding of those needs, not only for access, but how to gather, manipulate and turn that information into content that they can use for their own benefit.

I think space is another challenge. The days when we could address space by making additions to central campus library facilities are long gone. The cost of central campus real estate is simply too high and there are too many other demands on the space.

And, the print collections haven't stopped growing. So that's another challenge. I think another challenge is you know the rising expectations,

faculty and students, we give them more. It makes them happy. They want more.

So that's another challenge, keeping up with those expectations especially in a world where you know they can go to Google and do Internet searches so easily and find information that way.

It's a challenge to sort of show them what the library has, orient them to – make them simply aware of the abundance of licensed content, and as well as open access content that we're growing here. So there are lots of different challenges out there, and those are just a few of them.

Engineering Village: What types of changes are you making to your library to help keep up with these challenges?

Dennis Clark: We're in the middle of a several phase renovation program to about 50,000 square feet of our space. The last time this space was changed was about 10 years ago, and changes in the way the students do their work, and students, and the way that faculty ask for students to do their work have certainly changed over that 10 years or so.

We're doing some renovations to our main library that focus more on group study and collaboration, student level collaboration with their peers, focusing more on interactive areas in the library where students can casually and then in kind of in semi-formal ways get together to do their work.

We're putting more computers, obviously, in spaces. This is certainly nothing new. But one of the things that we're doing here is we're creating something more like a student workstation. Not just a computer lab with rows and rows of computers, but areas where students can come and they can partner with other students.

And they can spread out their materials and they can basically squat for a long time while they are working through projects. We're changing the kind of furniture that we have from more traditional library you know carrels to more like sofas and couches.

And we're expanding the role of our coffee shop in the library because of the idea of the casual environment within the library is something that we know that our students do want a lot of.

Engineering Village: And you also have some very innovative employee training and education programs. What type of things do you do to help the librarians you know stay up to date and help keep them learning as well on the job?

Steve Smith: Well, one of the things that we've done that's probably fairly innovative is we're a service entity that happens to be a major research library. And we try to think of ourselves that way, and really instill a service ethic in everybody who works here.

About a year ago, the Dean of the Library, based on some plannings and some other activities that goes back two or three years, took the top management team in the library for leadership training in the Disney Service Institute.

And so seven or eight of us had about a week to spend in Disney World in Orlando, Florida, learning how they instill a service culture and a service ethic in their employees. And then we came back and brought the Disney trainers to campus. They've been back two or three times, and we've done versions of that training for everyone in the library.

So I think that's one of the most innovative things that we've done that's a little bit different than just concentrating on technical skills.

But trying to build that service ethic, I think the two most important things any librarian can have are a service ethic and technical proficiency or expertise in the area of his or her assignment. And if I have to choose, I'm going to choose the service ethic because if you want to learn, if you want to serve, you can learn to do anything.

So that's a big emphasis in the past two or three years, and I think it's really had a great impact on how we do our work and how we think of ourselves and our relationship to the library users.

Engineering Village: So now that you have the training and the materials, how do you market the library services to the campus to remain relevant and make sure that people are able to find you when they need something?

Susie Goodwin: We market the library every way and any way we can, actually. And I think the biggest thing is partly tied to the way our culture's changing here from a bibliographer model where we concentrated on building our collections up over the last, I don't know, 50 years or so and even longer than that.

But in the last 10 years with the physical spaces changing, I think our model for outreach and liaison development has grown as well.

Even though we're attracting students into the library, we're taking our message outside the library, both virtually through things like social networking, using Facebook and Twitter, revamping our Web site to make it easier to use and to showcase some of the great resources we have.

But also getting the librarians out into the departments and on campus like, Sandy mentioned, in terms of office hours outside the library as well as a lot of our librarians are teaching credit courses now. So we're able to pull our collections into the classroom and directly work with the students.

Another new thing we're looking at is that on campus there's a lot of learning communities that have developed, so we've been reaching out to those groups too, and promoting the library that way.

Another great thing that happens when we started looking at our space too was tying all of our print resources that market the library together so that we have a much more cohesive brand and list of things that the librarians can take out to promote the library and our services.

And they all say the same thing, they all look the same, and I think that's helping to get our message out. And people are noticing the library more because of that.

Engineering Village: That's great. Well thank you everyone. This was a great discussion. And I'm sure that our readers and customers will be really interested, and

hopefully, adopt some of the customer service ethic that you all have had into their own libraries.

So thanks again, and have a great day.

Dennis Clark: Thank you.

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