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Library Profile — Western Kentucky University Libraries

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The University:

Situated on a hill above the nearby Barren River in Bowling Green, **Western Kentucky University's (WKU)** population is known as the "Hilltoppers." Although providing a small campus environment, WKU has aspirations of national recognition as an excellent comprehensive public university. Eighty-three percent of the 15,000 students enrolled are Kentucky natives, and many become first-generation college graduates. Founded in 1906 by an act of the Kentucky General Assembly, WKU, like many schools of that era, began as a normal school. By the 1930s, the Western Kentucky State Teachers College had absorbed several local educational entities and achieved university status in 1966. "Western," as it is called by the local residents, offers four-year degree programs in 88 academic majors, 18 associate degrees, master's level degrees in 45 areas, and 3 shared doctorates with the **University of Louisville** and the **University of Kentucky**. The university also has extended campuses in nearby Glasgow and Owensboro. In 1986, WKU created a community college as one of its five undergraduate colleges within the university. Now as part of the new **Kentucky Commonwealth Virtual University (KCVU)**, Western will significantly increase its outreach and distance learning opportunities.

The Library

Western Kentucky University Libraries (WKU Libraries) offers services through its main complex Helm-Cravens Library, the Educational Resources Center, The Kentucky Library and Museum in the Kentucky Building, and extended campus sites. Built in 1930 as a physical education building, the Helm Library was renovated and reopened in 1965 as the campus library. It is on the *National Register of Historic Places*. In 1971 the Cravens Graduate Center and Library stacks tower was constructed and connected to Helm on two levels by enclosed walkways. The library collection includes about 500,000 books, 100,000 volumes of periodicals, 1.2 million microforms, a government depository library (since 1934) with 250,000 federal, state and local documents, a law library serving the Warren County legal community and WKU, and 4,500 current serial subscriptions. Patrons access the collection via **TOPCAT** with terminals located near the main entrance Circulation Desk and on each floor of Cra-

vans and Helm with networked access throughout campus in all academic buildings and residence halls. Electronic resources are readily accessible through our Web site: <http://www.wku.edu/library>. The Helm building also houses the Student Technology Center, operated by Academic Computing and Research Services, with over 100 computers for students to access email, do word processing, and surf the Internet for research papers.

The Dean of Libraries reports to the Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs. The library follows a faculty model with three departments: Library Public Services—subject liaisons, reference, circulation, interlibrary loan, extended campus, Web and virtual library services, government/law, and collection development; Library Special Collections—Kentucky Library and Museum, University Archives, Manuscripts and Folklife Archives; and Library Automation and Technical Services (DLATS)—acquisitions, cataloging, and serials. WKU Libraries has 28 full-time faculty, including department heads, and 3 part-time faculty. In addition 30 full-time and 20-25 part-time staff work throughout the system, for a total of about 100 library personnel.

Acquisitions

The acquisitions functions within **WKU Libraries** fall into two areas: monographic and serials. The Acquisitions Unit is responsible for pre-order searching via **OCLC**, ordering, receiving, claiming, and paying for all library materials except for serials. Western has a professional librarian, the Acquisitions Coordinator, who manages the unit. The coordinator works closely with the Collection Development Coordinator and with the various library liaisons who submit requests from the departments and their own selections. The Acquisitions Coordinator maintains and reports encumbrances and fund balances for collection development monitoring. The four paraprofessionals in Acquisitions have a combined average experience of 15 years and perform tasks related to the various components of the acquisition process. After pre-order searching, records are exported from **OCLC** to **TOPCAT**. The majority of orders are placed online with **Blackwell's** and the **Eastern Book Company**. We hope that **Ingram**, our third major supplier, will eventually provide "point-and-click" ordering from its database. Acquisitions also supports

the ordering and processing of children's and young adult materials for the Educational Resources Center which serves Western's College of Education and the local school districts. Some of the most interesting materials ordered are various historical materials purchased for the Kentucky Library and Museum. This archive and museum complex in the Kentucky Building serves scholarly and regional research in topics as varied as folk music, genealogy, local history and even the Shaker utopian movement of the 19th century. In conjunction with Kentucky Museum purchases, we have participated in online auctions on sites like **E-Bay** in order to find specific historical materials. One future goal is a renewed commitment to cross-training as we migrate from **NOTIS** to **Endeavor Voyager** system this fall.

Serials Acquisitions

The Serials Unit also has a coordinator and four paraprofessionals with a combined average work experience of 17 years, and 2 student assistants to handle 4,500 subscriptions. The centralized functions include ordering, paying, cataloging, processing, checking-in, binding, replacements, and routing serials (newspapers, journals, periodicals, microforms, electronic products), monographic series, and titles from standing order plans and memberships. We currently use **NOTIS** for check-in and payments on the order/pay/receipt records, but will prepare for predictive check-in and other changes implicit in the migration to **Voyager**. The Serials Unit processes standing orders after approval by the **Serials Review Committee** or the **Electronic Resources Committee**. Library liaisons (subject liaisons) can submit requests for one-time purchases directly to the coordinator.

Initiatives and Trends

Within DLATS, current monographic acquisitions trends center around the implementation of online ordering for the majority of materials ordered for the library. As we bring up the **Endeavor Voyager** system, we will streamline acquisitions ordering, especially for out-of-print and gift processing. We also hope to use a University purchase card for special and online purchases. For serials, one goal is to implement electronic data interchange for major vendor invoices and to survive predictive check-in and everything else

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everyone; it keeps companies of all sizes focused on the needs of their customers.

ATG: *Okay, then, have you seen a growth in your business because of the mergers?*

BS: Most definitely. Everetts is a growing company with a great reputation. As I said, my official title is Manager of North American Sales. As the name indicates, my primary responsibilities are representing Everetts to current and prospective library customers in the US and Canada, as well as advising the company on how best to serve the long-term interest of this market. I think that I took this job at a good time. Librarians are anxious these days to understand their vendor options in this very changing marketplace.

ATG: *Is Everett's primarily for academic library customers or does it have a broader customer base?*

BS: In the US particularly, the focus is on academic libraries large enough to need books and journals from the UK and other parts of Europe. Unlike Academic Book Center, Everetts provides both books and journals to libraries. Part of the attraction for me was the chance to learn more about the journals side of the business. Until I joined the company, I was unaware how significant Everetts' service is to law libraries and even bookstores. In some cases, we also serve medical and public libraries. Both the service and customer bases are quite diverse.

ATG: *How many book vendors can we have in the marketplace to keep the activity economically viable?*

BS: I guess I'd be inclined to turn the question around and ask how few options are librarians willing to live with? From my vantage point, the market needs enough players to meet the diverse range of library needs,

and to maintain enough competitive tension to keep everyone working at high levels of proficiency. Personally, I'd hate to see much more erosion, though I suspect there may be more. And, for obvious reasons, I hope libraries continue to embrace the legitimate role that smaller, specialist companies play in the service arena.

ATG: *Can Everett's really make a go of it in the U.S. market? What's different about them that would make them a good vendor for a U.S. library to use?*

BS: Let's not forget that Everetts is over two hundred years old and already making quite a go of it in North America. That's a lot longer than anyone else in this business has had to develop contacts and expertise in the supply of books and journals from the UK. Everetts is a highly respected company with a significant customer base. Those things are only earned through hard work and excellent service. Compared to less experienced, or less flexible companies, I think Everetts is in an ideal position to serve the North American market.

ATG: *What sort of global customer base is Everett's working with? Do you personally have a role in that?*

BS: Everetts customer base is international: Asia, the Middle East, and Australia/New Zealand are just as significant to the company as the US and Canadian markets. While I have contacts in Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong, my role, at this point, is to expand our base in North America. There's plenty of opportunity here on which I can focus my attention.

ATG: *What's coming next to booksellers? What's in the future?*

BS: What I suspect and what I know are two different things. What I know is that business/technology/service environments change so rapidly that any guesses about the future are just that: guesses. What I suspect is that library supply will continue to be a tough business, made no less so by publishers continuing to squeeze our margins as a way to maximize their own profits. Someday, hopefully not too late, they'll wake up to the fact that we provide them as great a service as we do our library customers, saving publishers millions of dollars in distribution costs.

It would not surprise me to see more consolidation in bookselling as weaker companies suffer the effects of eroding margins, impossible price competition, and the demands of keeping up with technology. I'm especially worried by price competition in the

market now. As we've already discussed, the American companies have traditionally participated in this more than the Europeans. The current trend of buying market share at any cost is a death wish just waiting to happen. While there may be some short-term gains for a few lucky libraries, capturing unprofitable business destabilizes the entire industry. If we don't watch it, the victors in the market will have nothing to show for their triumphs. Ultimately, libraries will be the big losers, because there will be few if any companies left to provide them with services they need.

ATG: *Are you thinking of partnering with any online booksellers?*

BS: I assume you mean companies like Amazon. No doors have been closed to this, but what would it accomplish? Online booksellers do a great job of selling an individual item needed in a hurry, but they do so at great ex-

pense to the library. To meet larger library needs, companies like Everetts are ideally suited to assist right now: comprehensive coverage of a wide range of publishers and their publications, backed-up by effective Web-based technologies. This includes value added services like slip and approval plans and standing order services. What we bring to the transaction will never be available from places like Amazon.com, and that's a willingness to individualize the service to meet specific library needs.

ATG: *At this past Charleston Conference, there was a lot of discussion of eBooks. What is the role of the traditional bookseller with the e-monograph or book?*

BS: I guess the role might be something similar to what subscription vendors currently provide with regard to obtaining e-journals for their customers. If e-publishers will provide a reward structure for our helping them sign up libraries for their services, there may be an opportunity to work together. If not, and libraries want us to play some kind of intermediary role, then we'll have to figure out how to charge for the service. Licensing will, of course, play a complicating role in establishing any working arrangement with e-Book publishers.

ATG: *I am sure that you are aware of the NetLibrary initiative. What do you think of it? Is there room for any partnering with traditional booksellers in this model?*

BS: Again, I really don't know. A lot depends on whether booksellers are invited into the process and rewarded for their efforts.

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that occurs with a new system. The transition and challenge for everyone in all three departments will be the successful migration to Voyager as part of the **Kentucky Commonwealth Virtual Library (KCVL)** and figuring out consortia purchase of major electronic products for all of the libraries participating in the KCVU. Another library initiative is a grant from **BellSouth** which allows WKU librarians to offer community Internet workshops on popular topics like travel, China on the Web, Shakers, birding, mysteries, business, and much more. Twice a year, the library publishes *Collections and Connections*, an award-winning newsletter highlighting the achievements, awards and significant gifts to the library and museum.