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Back Talk-When Your New Best Friend is a Rattlesnake

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I t looks like we’re the dog who caught the car. When that happens it makes you wonder if you have dental insurance.

What’s happened is that we’ve been given the provisional go-ahead to do a major renovation of our signature 1966 Hayden Library tower at ASU over the next two years. There’s still process to go through to make sure all the dollars are in place, but the preparations have been ramping up, at first gradually, and now dramatically.

The stages are all predictable enough: vision/strategy, meetings with senior leaders, preliminary approval to hire architects, then hire architects, do the work to prepare to work with them, work with them in endless iterations, and get — about now, after almost two years work — to where serious drawings are being prepared for actual construction. Meanwhile, start planning swing space, logistics, and any associated small construction projects.

And then there comes the day when things start moving. In our case, the first move was the overall admin suite, now downsized and housed quite comfortably three blocks away. (This means I go back and forth on hot days through our life science buildings — to get a quick air conditioning bath — between the two and always stop to see Hector, the five-foot long albino diamondback rattlesnake, his daughter Lucy, and their fellow reptiles in ASU’s famous hall of snakes.) Then moving the books: at first a dribble, and then suddenly there were moving trucks pulling up to the loading dock and book carts rolling, rolling, rolling, like the wagons in the theme song of Rawhide. (A small lesson we learned from that move: if ever a domestic move made you furious at the quality of the movers and the work they did, it’s interesting to see what happens when the big moving company sends a team to work for its largest customer. It turns out they really do employ an A team of movers who are very smart, very careful, and very hard working. These folks have been just a pleasure to watch. Why, they were as careful with my books as I would be.)

When architects are in the vicinity, it’s easy to get caught up in the pleasures of design and to lose track of what’s most important. There’s an old joke that the sign a major corporation is and get — about now, after almost two years work — to where serious drawings are being prepared for actual construction. Meanwhile, start planning swing space, logistics, and any associated small construction projects.

And then there comes the day when things start moving. In our case, the first move was the overall admin suite, now downsized and housed quite comfortably three blocks away in our large science library. (This means I go back and forth on hot days through our life science buildings — to get a quick air conditioning bath — between the two and always stop to see Hector, the five-foot long albino diamondback rattlesnake, his daughter Lucy, and their fellow reptiles in ASU’s famous hall of snakes.) Then moving the books: at first a dribble, and then suddenly there were moving trucks pulling up to the loading dock and book carts rolling, rolling, rolling, like the wagons in the theme song of Rawhide. (A small lesson we learned from that move: if ever a domestic move made you furious at the quality of the movers and the work they did, it’s interesting to see what happens when the big moving company sends a team to work for its largest customer. It turns out they really do employ an A team of movers who are very smart, very careful, and very hard working. These folks have been just a pleasure to watch. Why, they were as careful with my books as I would be.)

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The discipline we will purchase material in tangible format, most notably allows for both greater access and assessment. However, depending on make every attempt to acquire content in digital format. In most cases this mobile, tablet, or otherwise.


does your library have an ils or are you Part of a col-


does your library have a collection development or similar department? Our library system has four primary units with individual foci of General Education, Labor History, Law, and Health Sciences; each unit has a dedicated collection development librarian.

IF SO, WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET AND WHAT TYPES OF MATERIALS ARE YOU PURCHASING? Print or electronic or both? Our overall annual acquisitions budget is ~$10 million. Although we aim to purchase in electronic format whenever possible, we purchase print when print is deemed appropriate but we focus our purchasing on electronic format.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR LIBRARY WILL BE LIKE IN FIVE YEARS? I’m imagining that – right now – the Wayne State University Library System is five years into our transformation. Our Library is a model for a 21st Century Library and leads library education. Our Library has a distinguished track record of achievements in student success and retention, digital publishing, community engagement, and – most important – is powered by a commitment to organizational development. Our library is an exciting, fun place to work and the exceptional work of our people attracts worldwide attention and recognition.

WHAT EXCITES OR FRIGHTENS YOU ABOUT THE NEXT FIVE YEARS? I’m excited about the unlimited potential of research libraries working together. I’m frightened by what will come if research libraries continue working in silos. Higher education is at a strategic inflection point; it is essential that library leaders become more creative, entrepreneurial, and strategic. Over the next five years, leaders of the best research libraries will step forward and work together to boldly lead our respective institutions, higher education, and the evolving information industry.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU THINK OUR READERS SHOULD KNOW? If you’re looking for a great place to work – and thrive – within our industry, please consider the Wayne State University Library System! I’d love to begin a dialog with Against The Grain readers about everything we’re doing here in Detroit!

Wayne State University Library System (WSULS)

Detroit, MI 48202

Information and Reference Desks:
David Adamiy Library Undergraduate Library (313) 577-8852
Purdy/Kresge Library (313) 577-6423

Vera P. Shiffman Medical Library (313) 577-1094
Arthur Neef Law Library (313) 577-6180

All Libraries Text Message Number (313) 228-3978

library.wayne.edu

BACKGROUND/HISTORY: The WSULS includes the David Adamiy Library Undergraduate Library, the Purdy/Kresge Library, the Vera P. Shiffman Medical Library, the Arthur Neef Law Library, and the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs.

NUMBER OF STAFF AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Total Library Staff FTEs 219; Professional Staff 73; Support Staff 68; Student Assistants 78.

OVERALL LIBRARY BUDGET: Total Library Expenditures $19.6 million; Total Library Materials $10.0 million; Total Salaries and Wages $7.9 million; Other Operating Expenditures $1.7 million.

TYPES OF MATERIALS YOU BUY: We acquire in various formats but make every attempt to acquire content in digital format. In most cases this allows for both greater access and assessment. However, depending on the discipline we will purchase material in tangible format, most notably print books for our Course Reserves service.

WHAT TECHNOLOGIES DOES YOUR LIBRARY USE TO SERVE MOBILE USERS? Our websites and discovery layers utilize responsive design, meaning our website shrinks or expands to adapt to any screen size; mobile, tablet, or otherwise.

DOES YOUR LIBRARY HAVE AN ILS OR ARE YOU PART OF A COLLABORATIVE ILS? As of December 12th, we will be using III’s Sierra ILS and we host this as an individual library system.

DO YOU HAVE A DISCOVERY SYSTEM? We have developed a system we call QuickSearch, a tool that organizes search results into easily navigable categories so users can easily find what they need. QuickSearch combines the search power of Summon, the library catalog, research guides, DigitalCommons@WayneState, digital collections and the Wayne State University website into a single search interface.

DOES YOUR LIBRARY HAVE A COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT OR SIMILAR DEPARTMENT? Our library system has four primary units with individual foci of General Education, Labor History, Law, and Health Sciences; each unit has a dedicated collection development librarian.

OKAY, THAT’S ALL WE HAVE ROOM FOR THIS TIME, WATCH FOR MORE NEXT TIME. Yr. Ed.