Library Profile: W.B. Roberts Library, Delta State University

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Library Profile — W.B. Roberts Library

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Delta State University

Every university has its own personal strengths that it feels set it apart from the rest of the academic pack. In Delta State’s case, it is a family atmosphere involving the faculty, staff, students, and local community that has been evident since the very beginning. James Broom, the first president of the institution, exemplified this attitude by writing personal letters to the parents of students. He would update them on their child’s academic accomplishments and express how much he enjoyed their personal contributions to the institution. This “personal touch” is what still draws an ever-growing number of students today to Cleveland, Mississippi.

Delta State University is one of the eight public institutions of higher learning in the state of Mississippi. It was founded in 1924 as Delta State Teachers College through the efforts of Senator W.B. Roberts and Senator Arthur Marshall. The college opened its doors in 1925, with a faculty of eleven and a student enrollment of 97.

The school saw steady growth in physical facilities, academic programs, and student population in its first few decades. In recognition of this expansion, the institution changed its name to Delta State College in 1955. Progress continued for all facets of the institution and in 1974 was renamed Delta State University. In just fifty years, Delta State had evolved from a fledgling college housed in three buildings to a comprehensive regional university. Today, the institution supports a population of over 4,000 students.

Delta State’s nickname for its athletic programs has undergone an interesting evolution as well. In the early years, teams were known as the Green Waves. After a few decades, this was changed to the Statesmen and Lady Statesmen, names that are still being used today. However, in the eighties, the student body decided to supplement and breathe new life into the school’s mascot by creating the Fighting Okra. As soon as the six foot tall vegetable sporting red boxing gloves and an attitude appeared, the rest, as they say, is history. The character has become wildly popular and adorns apparel and supplies of all shapes and sizes.

The Library

The first library on campus had a rather humble beginning; it was located in a single room in the original Administration Building and housed 1,008 volumes and 22 magazine subscriptions. In 1939, a new library building was erected and named after W.B. Roberts, a legislative leader who helped establish the college. As time passed, the need for a larger facility became more acute. A new W.B. Roberts Library was constructed in 1968, providing much needed space for a growing book collection. The building also provided a home for part of the Division of Education and Psychology. Finally, in 1999, W.B. Roberts Library underwent a $9 million renovation and expansion.

The current library is a showcase for the campus and has expanded to 91,000 square feet and has seating for 850 people. This added space has allowed the inclusion of an Instructional Resources Center, two open computer labs, and a bibliographic instruction classroom. In addition, users benefit from numerous privileges.

From the Reference Desk

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The Handbook of Advanced Electronic and Photonic Materials (2001, 0125137451, $3,500) is another significant science set published by Academic Press. Authoritative and highly technical, this 10-volume handbook contains 73 state of the art review chapters by more than 180 international experts that summarize advances made since 1970. Topic coverage includes semiconductors and semiconductor devices, High Tech Superconductors and organic conductors, ferroelectrics and dielectrics, conducting polymers, liquid crystals, display and laser materials as well as nonlinear optical materials, nanostructured materials, light emitting diodes and lithium batteries. This is science necessary for the 21st century and this reference provides a major resource for those working in the fields of electrical and electronics engineering, computational engineering, data storage and information technology, solid-state physics and other advanced technologies. University libraries and research and development centers are the primary market for this set.

The International Yearbook of Industrial Statistics last published in 1999 is out in a new edition (2001, 1840646195 $210). Compiled by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and published by Edward Elgar, this book provides a table after table of comparative international statistics on manufacturing and industrial performance. This information is of value to faculty and students as well as professional economists, policy makers, businessmen and planners. While there is some historical data back to the 1980s, the vast majority of information covers the middle to late 1990s. Suitable for any library needing this type of statistical data, but given the limited date coverage, it would be most useful for libraries owning previous editions.

A new edition that is not dependent on past volumes is the American Council on Education's American Universities and Colleges (2001, 3110169673, $249.50). Published by Walter de Gruyter and now in its 10th edition, this set keeps growing and improving. All of the information and features provided in past editions are here, however they have been updated, housed in two volumes and printed on better paper. Aside from the nuts and bolts on over 1900 US colleges and universities, sections on foreign students in the United States and on professional education remain highlights. American Universities and Colleges is one of the most comprehensive directories of higher education available.

American First Ladies: Their Lives and Legacy (2001, 0415930219, $125) published by Routledge is a second edition. Arranged chronologically, these comprehensive essays cover first ladies from Martha Washington to Laura Bush. Written by 29 scholars in a serious but reader friendly style, each essay notes biographical details as well as the roles these women played in politics, society and as first ladies. While varying in length according to individual activity and contribution, all of these essays provide useful information and taken together give the reader a sense of how the role of first lady has evolved over the years. Another quality feature is the bibliographical essay that ends each entry. In short, if your library needs a good reference book on the first ladies, this would be an obvious choice.

There are also second editions of two titles in ABC-CLIO's Contemporary World Issues series. Rainforests of the World by Kathryn Gay (2001, 0874367123, $45) and the Religious Right by Glenn Uatter and John W. Storey (2001, 1576072126, $45) are useful handbooks intended for general reader, high school students and first year undergraduates. With obvious environmental concern, Rainforests of the World provides background information on the destruction of the world's rainforests. Contents vary from essays on habitats, problems, controversies and solutions to a chronology, sketches of people and events, a directory of organizations, relevant data and documents, and lists of print and non-print resources. Following the same format, the Religious Right tracks the political and social impact of the religious right on America. The concentration is not on religious beliefs or doctrine. Selective rather than comprehensive, these handbooks offer useful facts in a handy and easy to use format. Both titles are worthy of consideration, if not for Reference, then for Circulation.

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
is especially significant since ILL has assumed an even more important role with the increasing emphasis on distance education. We have initiated several new services for the fall term that provide support for distance students and their unique curriculum needs.

The Horizon
As with many state institutions, Delta State is currently facing a shrinking budget because of difficult economic times. This has forced us in Library Services to closely evaluate the services we provide and those that we plan to offer in the future. Even though our materials budget is not at the level we wish it could be, there are some positive changes coming in the near future. In September, we are going to utilize Serials Solution’s reporting service. This will generate a single alphabetical list of our electronic full-text journal holdings that can be mounted on the Library Services Web Site. We are also in the process of acquiring a new library automation system that we plan to implement next summer. Both of these additions will allow us to provide our patrons with significantly improved access to our available resources. While there are always challenges that must be faced, with our beautiful new facility and a new automation system on the way, we realize that we are more fortunate than most. This infrastructure, maintained by a dedicated staff, will provide a powerful combination and exciting possibilities for W.B. Roberts Library and Delta State University.

Schappell Interview
DS: I did not know the answer to this question, so I went to the expert. Cindy Cunningham, Amazon.com’s US Catalog Librarian, told me, “The list price of a book is the manufacturer’s [publisher’s] intended price. We can discount or surcharge from that price depending upon the deals we may make with the publisher or distributor. (We would only surcharge for special order books with costly handling issues on our end.) So, the list price comes from the publisher, sometimes via the distributor, and is in our data before we do anything else to the price. It should be a universal value—that is, everyone in the book industry should have the same list price for a book, even if they don’t all charge the same in the end.)