Librarians are ready and eager to answer students’ questions, and we know that students have plenty. We also know that most students have cell phones with texting capabilities. So, last fall, we conducted an experiment: what if students could text reference questions to librarians—would they do so? The answer, we discovered, is a resounding “Yes”!

During New Student Orientation, we launched the “Text a Librarian” service for students, faculty, and staff. More than 370 students sent us text messages on the first day; we’ve received a steady flow of questions since. The questions have been wide-ranging—Where can I find this call number? What are the library’s hours? Which databases cover my topic? How do I make an appointment with a librarian? How do I cite this source using APA style? We’ve even been asked what’s on the menu at Vail Commons. And yes, we responded to that question, and to every other question, all in 160 characters or less per message.

Text a Librarian complements our other services and provides students with another way of getting the information they need, when they need it and where they need it. We’re delighted by the way students are using it, and we’re looking forward to expanding the service in the spring.

Donor List Will Appear in the Summer Newsletter

We have decided to get in sync with other offices on campus and report our donor information at the end of the fiscal year (June 30). Therefore, the 2010 summer edition of Columns will acknowledge gifts received from January 2009 through June of 2010. We sincerely appreciate the generosity of our donors and will continue to thank them through our newsletter; we’ll just do that on a slightly different timeframe.
Library of Congress (LC) Classification is Reality

Starting on July 1, 2009, all new books processed in the library began receiving Library of Congress (LC) call numbers. The first book to receive such a call number at Davidson was authored by our own Professor of History John Wertheimer, titled *Law and Society in the South: A History of North Carolina Court Cases* (University Press of Kentucky, 2009). The majority of the new materials being added to the LC collection, in excess of 1,500 volumes, have been purchased in a "shelf-ready" condition directly from the book vendor. The resulting new internal workflow has been as efficient as predicted, saving considerable time and effort.

The library staff has put the time saved in processing to good use, planning for the retrospective conversion of the existing collection to LC. Pilot projects involving the reclassification of the library’s folio collection and items that were checked out throughout the fall semester have been a success, with more than 1,600 items being reclassed from Dewey to LC. Reclassification of items in the music library will commence in the spring semester, and the lessons learned in these endeavors will be applied as we work to complete a plan for the overall reclassification of the entire collection.

The Old and the New

It’s common to say that libraries are in a time of transition. The amount, kinds and formats of information are greater than at any previous time, but much important information is still delivered in traditional formats, too. Library users are eager for the new but aren’t ready to give up the old. What’s a library to do?

The Davidson College Libraries have taken a number of reasonable steps to build bridges between the old and the new:

- It’s clear that journals printed on paper are declining, in favor of electronic journals. When we’re confident of archival preservation of this material, we make the move to electronic-only. We are charter members of Portico, the collective permanent archive that provides back-up access to journals if electronic access is ever withdrawn.

- We have e-books in several formats, but we still buy printed books, too.

- We have a new emphasis on our special-collections materials, increasing faculty awareness so these treasures get used in classes.

- We are digitizing archival materials to make them more accessible to scholars and students at Davidson and around the world.

Library users are also changing. They are more diverse in their learning styles, and they bring technology with them. We’ve seen a real increase in students bringing their own laptops to the library, and we think the addition of power poles around the building is contributing to that. We’ve put more tables on the main floor, and we see students collaborating there frequently. But we haven’t abandoned our individual quiet learners! We’ve increased the number of assigned carrels and made more seating available in the super-silent lower level, where even passersby with squeaky shoes get the evil eye.

The current economy makes it especially difficult to try to be all things to all people, though. As inflation has risen but budgets haven’t, we’ve had to make some difficult choices. We have stopped buying journals in multiple formats. While we do order print formats of books we have as e-books, we encourage people to consider these requests carefully, as every purchase of duplicate content means less purchasing power for unique content.

Through all of these changes and decisions, we never lose sight of our goal to contribute to the teaching and learning of Davidson faculty and students by providing research materials.

Through all of these developments and make wise choices in the days ahead.
Did you receive the e-mail holiday greeting from the library in December? If not, join in the fun and send us your e-mail address. You can also help us cut down fewer trees and spend less money on postage! If you'd like to receive electronic rather than paper correspondence from us, please send your e-mail address to lismith@davidson.edu.

STREAMLINING ACQUISITIONS

In 2008, we contracted with library workflow-analysis company R2 Consultants to help us work more efficiently. R2 Consultants has made three recommendations. First, they suggest that we go to shelf-ready processing for books that we order, meaning that the books arrive with barcodes and spine labels already in place. When a book arrives, all we have to do is enter it into our system and it is ready to go on the shelf. This has streamlined book processing and requires less staff time ordering and receiving items.

Second, they recommended that we contract with a single vendor for ordering books and shelf-ready processing. After a rigorous comparison of four vendors, we selected Yankee Book Peddlers (YBP), a division of Baker and Taylor. They allow us to submit orders for items not yet published, and notify us when the items become available, saving us from tracking these individually. We can order any items that can be located by YBP or Baker and Taylor, including items published in the United Kingdom or pre-published titles. Most items ordered with YBP come in ready for us to check in and then go straight to the shelves. A welcome part of this process is that short on-order title records are sent to us the morning after ordering for downloading into our system, so on-order items now display in our public online catalog. We are currently ordering approximately 75 percent of our new titles through YBP. The remaining 25 percent are foreign, out of print, or media items.

Finally, R2 recommended that we notify faculty of titles received. At the beginning of every quarter, we now send lists to each department head of all titles received for their department, and faculty members also receive a list of titles received that they ordered. This has been a very popular change. You might be interested to know that faculty members prioritize their orders so that we spend college resources wisely. Among other things, they indicate whether items are needed for the current semester, whether use of an item will be high, and whether we could get an item through inter-library loan instead of purchasing it.

JOIN OUR E-MAIL DISTRIBUTION LIST

The E.H. Little Library’s Smith Rare Book Room served as the spooky setting for last October’s “Ghosts in the Library,” an event hosted by Archives and Special Collections. Candlelit and complete with jack o’lantern, skeleton, and tombstones, the room was filled with 42 students and staff who turned out to hear favorite ghost stories presented by Davidson students Sarah Adams ’10 (philosophy, Fayetteville, N.C.) and Aimee Nieuwenhuizen ’10 (Spanish, Evergreen, Colo.), as well as Emeritus Professor of English Gill Holland and local storyteller extraordinaire Sauni Wood.

There were no tricks—just treats—from the stories themselves to the “goodies” handed out at the door. Everyone left sneaking glances over their shoulders to be sure no ghosts followed them home!

• Sauni Wood entertains with a ghostly tale.
That sentence probably grabbed your attention, didn’t it? We used it to entice students to complete a carrel-usage survey this fall. “If you fill out our survey, we’ll enter you into a drawing to win.” Well, our motivator worked. We had a 76 percent response rate from students with carrel assignments, providing us with valuable information as we continue to “repurpose” and create useful study space for students.

Active use of carrels
- 81% were actively using their carrels this past fall.
- 19% were not actively using their carrels this past fall.
- 86% believed they would need a carrel in the spring.
- 14% believed they would not need a carrel in the spring.

This information allowed us to place students on a waiting list into carrels, as well as to find spots for students returning from studying abroad in the spring.

Hours per week usage
- 65% use their carrel between zero and 10 hours per week.
- 28% use their carrel between 10 and 20 hours. (The projection for spring jumps to 42%, probably due to senior-project work.)
- 5% use their carrel between 20 and 30 hours.
- 2% use their carrel more than 30 hours per week.

Number of times carrel-mates needed to use carrel at same time
- 79% Never
- 10% Several times per month
- 8% Some other frequency
- 3% Several times per week
- .01% Daily

Reason for using carrels
- 76% I need a quiet place to study.
- 10% I need a place to store my books and personal items.
- 10% I am working on a research project.
- 4% Other.
- 0% I am collaborating with my carrel-mate on a project.

The number of times carrel-mates needed to use the carrel at the same time, as well as the reasons students use carrels, suggest that we have enough carrels and that we should continue to offer them. For the 10 percent needing a place to store books and personal items, we can do a better job of educating them about some lockers that are available in the library.