A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As President Tom Ross said in his March 9 letter to alumni, parents, and friends of the college, Davidson, like everyone else, has been affected by the economic downturn, but the college remains strong. Although the library’s budget, like all others, was cut 2.5 percent in 2008–09 and 3 percent for 2009–10, I can report that we are in much, much better shape than many of our peers.

President Ross asked that we not cut budgets and services that directly affect the student experience, so the library budget managers have worked hard to take our share from nice-but-not-necessary expenditures. That is why, for example, you received an electronic holiday greeting (if we have your e-mail address) instead of a calendar card. It’s why we have made cutting the materials budget our absolute last resort.

The support of our loyal friends is especially important in these difficult times. Without your help, our situation would be far worse. Rest assured that we will continue to provide top-notch library service to Davidson students and faculty, and thank you, again, for all you do for the library and the college.

Jill Gremmels
The Leland M. Park Director of the Davidson College Library
Call numbers on books will soon begin with letters instead of numbers as the library switches from the Dewey Decimal System to Library of Congress (LC) classification.

The move promotes efficiency. The Library of Congress will be creating the call numbers, freeing Davidson’s own cataloger, Kim Sanderson, to concentrate on more important tasks. Beginning July 1, books will have arrived “shelf-ready” from the vendor, fully cataloged with spine labels already affixed, ready to be checked in and made available to users. In addition, LC is the classification scheme most faculty are familiar with, as well as the one most students will use when they go on to graduate school.

Although many libraries converted back in the 1960s and 1970s, some major university libraries are making the change now, including Duke and Purdue.

The LC-cataloged books will be housed on the south end of the main floor. To help facilitate use of the collection, we will post a guide to the LC classification system on the library Web site, along with a link to a Dewey Decimal-Library of Congress conversion chart. An outline of the LC system will also be posted in the area where the LC books are shelved. The library’s Discovery Systems team is working on a plan to convert the hundreds of thousands of books already in Dewey.

What would you think if you were told that you had to sit for hours in front of a high-walled, wooden “box” with approximately 20”x36” of desk space? Torture, right? Well, in the library, these are called carrels and, believe it or not, they are hotly-sought-after items on campus. In fact, some students form such strong attachments to “their” carrels that they decorate them with pictures, lamps, and assorted soft items like stuffed animals and pillows.

In the past, students were asked to visit the library and fill out a paper form to request a carrel for the following academic year. This year, for the first time, students were able to request carrels using a Web form. This allowed the library to reach on-campus students as well as students participating in study-abroad programs. Students loved the convenience of the Web interface and within 24 hours of the Web form going live, 233 students had submitted their requests. In total, 408 requests came in during the open registration period. The library actually had to add carrels on two floors to accommodate this record number of requests. Nonetheless, staff have ensured that some carrels remain unassigned so that anyone who needs a quiet place to work can still find one.

“Org Chart” Has a Makeover

Earlier this summer, the library embraced a new organizational structure that will enable staff to offer additional services while still maintaining the great quality of service that users expect. The library now has four divisions, each led by an assistant director. Learn more about the assistant directors by reading Q & A’s below.

Access and Acquisitions, led by Jean Coates: This department joins the functions of acquisition and circulation/interlibrary loan/reserves to coordinate buying, borrowing, and sharing of resources.

How long have you been an employee at Davidson College? What positions have you held?

I have worked at Davidson for 18 years. I started out as the secretary in the football office and worked with Dave Fagg. Then, I moved to the library and held several positions: Assistant for Interlibrary Loan, Circulation Coordinator, and Assistant Head of Public Services for Circulation and Interlibrary Loan. Currently, I am the assistant director for access and acquisitions.

What projects will occupy your time in the upcoming year?

I will be learning all about the world of acquisitions, and I will be coordinating the work of my new team.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I love working closely with the student employees. I don’t ever want to lose direct contact with Davidson students. They keep me young and ener-
“Org Chart”

give me! There is always a sadness at the end of each academic year when beloved student employees graduate. But this is followed by joy in the summer, when a new batch of students arrives. I also enjoy providing services for all of our patrons—students, faculty, and staff.

How have services to faculty and students changed over the last several years?

There is faster access to almost everything. The number of electronic databases and online journals we have access to comes first to mind; students have access to these wherever they are—at home, abroad, on vacation, etc. Interlibrary Loan article turn-around time has also become so incredibly fast, with scanners and electronic delivery. Often, delivery is made within hours instead of days.

What is at the top of your wish list for the library?

I hope that we grow together as a team to give our faculty, staff, and students the most a library can offer. I also hope that we always keep people as the central focus of what we do, no matter how many technology advances come in the next several years.

Discovery Systems, led by Craig Milberg: This department concentrates on making the library’s unique resources most useful for teaching and learning and on the interfaces between users and information systems. It incorporates archives, special collections, cataloging, and library automation.

What is exciting in the library world?

Speaking about libraries in general, I think the opportunities and challenges posed by mobile electronic devices and Web 2.0 technology, especially social media. These things are rapidly changing how individuals learn, obtain information, and judge information quality. Optimizing services in such a rapidly changing environment is a huge challenge, but very exciting.

What is the most interesting bit of trivia about the Davidson College Library that you have learned?

I learned that the original library was in the Carnegie Guest House, where I spent my first night. Not the first time I slept in a library, but probably the first time I was supposed to.

What made you decide to become a librarian?

When I was a chemist and looking to change careers, I realized I had always enjoyed literature and online searching. I thought that being a librarian would allow me to continue using technology and doing research. In addition, my father was an academic librarian for many years, so to some extent it is a family business.

What advice would you give to a student starting out at Davidson?

The same advice I would give any young person. Enjoy the college experience and concentrate most on learning how to learn rather than simply gathering information.

What is the last book that you read?

An Ancestor’s Tale by Richard Dawkins. It traces the evolution of life on earth borrowing the style of The Canterbury Tales. It isn’t an easy read, but it is very interesting.

Information Literacy and Content Selection, led by Susanna Boylston: This department leads the library’s efforts in student learning and the selection of resources to support student, faculty, and staff information needs. It brings together instruction, reference, and collection development.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Working with students and faculty! In particular, I love to see students gain confidence and expertise in finding, evaluating, and using information. After helping them with their research, it’s also a joy to see what they produce. Sometimes, they will bring me copies of their final papers, or I may get to attend their presentations.

What is exciting in the library world?

As a profession, librarianship is fast-moving and ever-changing; in higher education, librarians are also often in the vanguard, helping to introduce and lead change in areas such as access to information, intellectual property, scholarly publishing, funding, digitization, and more.

What are the biggest challenges we face at Davidson?

The economy and the space shortage in our library. The first is a challenge that all higher education institutions are facing now. As for the space shortage, we are taking steps to make the best use of our existing space, even as we plan for a new or renovated building.

What is the best part of being a member of the Davidson College community?

There is a real sense of community at Davidson; the people—students, faculty, and staff—make this place so special. I feel privileged to be a member of this community.

How have collections and services changed over the last several years?

Thanks to the digital collections that we’ve acquired over the past few years, our students and faculty now have access to resources that used to be
available only in major research libraries. More and more materials are being digitized all the time, and more print materials (journals, reference tools, books) are moving online as well. As a result, information literacy is more critical than ever; with so much information available to them, students need to be able to find, evaluate, select, and use the best sources for their needs. The rapid growth in digital collections not only highlights the need for information literacy; it is also changing the ways in which scholarly research is conducted and disseminated. I’m really excited about the future of digital scholarship.

What is at the top of your wish list for the library?

There are two things that top my list: 1) endowed funds for electronic resources (which, unlike print resources, often have ongoing costs) and 2) funding for a new or renovated library building.

What advice would you give to a student starting out?

Ask questions (and don’t be alarmed if there aren’t ready-made or easy answers); explore your interests (learning is never wasted); be curious; give yourself the license to be creative; take advantage of the resources available to you here; don’t worry too much about the future; and don’t assume that you can find everything you need in JSTOR.

Operations, Finance, and Facilities, led by Denise Sherrill: This department supports the others and handles the behind-the-scenes business management, building maintenance, and personnel administration.

How long have you been an employee at Davidson College? What positions have you held?

I started at Davidson in 1992 and worked for Business Services in accounts receivable and cash management before transferring to the library in September of 1996.

What projects will occupy your time in the upcoming year?

I will be learning about serials and periodicals as well as adapting our current space to accommodate the way students study.

What is the best part about being a member of the Davidson College community?

The college has always been a warm and nurturing workplace and we all care about each other—just like family.

What is at the top of your wish list for the library?

Our building really needs a renovation, and I’m looking forward to that happening in the future. I’m hoping that we will gain a variety of student study areas, group study rooms, reading rooms, meeting space, and learning centers. I want the library to be a dynamic, interactive environment where students, faculty, and staff can participate in learning.