Nov. 29, 2017

Ann Campion Riley
Chair, ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Committee

Dear Ms. Riley and Committee members:

I am delighted to submit this letter as part of the nomination packet from Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries for the 2017 ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. As the newest U.S. member of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the first U.S. institution to join ARL in over 15 years, I am confident that the VCU Libraries fully expresses the high expectations for library values, accomplishments, and academic excellence that lie at the heart of the ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries recognition.

Some background about Virginia Commonwealth University and the VCU Libraries may be useful. VCU is a major urban public research university designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as “R1: doctoral universities, highest research activity,” with over $275 million in sponsored research awards in 2016-17 and standing in the top 100 of National Science Foundation rankings of research expenditures by U.S. institutions. It is one of only 61 R1 institutions also recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged Institution. U.S. News and World Report identifies two number one ranked academic programs in the state of Virginia, both at VCU: sculpture and nurse anesthesia. USN&WR also recognizes VCU’s School of the Arts as the nation’s number one ranked public school of arts and design, ranked number two overall only behind Yale University’s arts school; it ranks 13 of VCU’s degree programs in the top 25 nationally. VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 226 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities, including programs on VCU’s comprehensive medical education campus encompassing allied health professions, dentistry, nursing, medicine, and pharmacy.

The VCU Libraries consists of James Branch Cabell Library on VCU’s Monroe Park Campus, Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences on VCU’s Medical College of Virginia (MCV) Campus, the Community Health Education Center in the MCV Hospitals, and the VCUQatar Arts Library at VCU’s School of the Arts on Qatar’s Education City campus (a campus shared by Texas A&M, Cornell, Northwestern, Georgetown, and Carnegie-Mellon). Its mission statement reflects both the diversity and the distinctive culture of VCU: “The VCU Libraries transforms our communities by enriching scholarship, learning, and clinical care through our teaching, our collections, and our leadership.”
To carry out that mission, the VCU Libraries has developed collections of rare and unique materials that make a distinctive contribution to the scholarly record. Appropriate to the top-ranked standing of VCU’s School of the Arts, the VCU Libraries has long focused on building a comprehensive spectrum of collections related to the arts. In addition to extraordinarily strong research-level collections of arts publications across all fields of performing arts, fine arts, and design arts, the VCU Libraries has built nationally-recognized collections of rare and unique materials related to comic arts, book art, art exhibition catalogs, and fine art. The university’s permanent collection of art, with over 3,000 items ranging from works by Vincent Van Gogh to Andy Warhol, became part of the VCU Libraries’ collections in 2015-16 and is housed and made available through the Special Collections and Archives department. The VCU Libraries proudly is the sole national repository for materials from the annual Eisner Awards, the “Oscars of comics” awarded each year at the national ComicCon convention. It also is a repository for the Women’s Studio Workshop, the largest publisher of handmade artists’ books in the United States.

Important to the region and VCU’s Community Engaged Institution classification, the VCU Libraries builds collections that document minority and activist communities in Virginia and the region that are not addressed by other libraries and cultural heritage institutions. Oral histories of civil right leaders, the papers of regional organizations devoted to women's rights and civil rights, and materials documenting the LGBT community in Virginia form the core of this research collection. In 2016 the VCU Libraries acquired the Social Welfare History Project portal, a unique and powerful online resource on social welfare history, and has since upgraded it to become a major resource on the history for social welfare movement. Web use data indicate that secondary schools and 4-year colleges particularly make heavy use of the Project’s articles. The newly unveiled Social Welfare Image Portal, developed in collaboration with the University of Minnesota libraries, Baylor University libraries, Cornell University libraries, and other cultural heritage institutions, expands and enriches the Portal.

Beyond these distinctive collections of rare and unique materials, the VCU Libraries has developed a high degree of engagement with programs and initiatives that address contemporary research library issues, from scholarly communications to service excellence. The VCU Libraries accepted an invitation to join the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) October 2017, the first U.S. institution to become a member of ARL in over 15 years, joining the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech as the only Virginia members of ARL. The ARL Membership Committee’s report recommending membership recognized the vitality and engagement of VCU Libraries on many issues affecting contemporary research libraries. The results from the 2017 LibQUAL survey at VCU (the 6th at VCU since 2004) support this conclusion. Not only have all scores improved beyond the level of meeting minimal expectations for all survey elements; the VCU Libraries now achieves the highest possible score (100) for question AS-2, “Giving users personal attention”, a rare showing for any library anywhere, and a demonstration of the commitment to user-centered service excellence that has long been a hallmark of the VCU Libraries.

Creating extraordinary user experiences lay at the heart of VCU’s recent major construction of library space, which focused on creating a library unique to Virginia and exemplary in the U.S.
The new James Branch Cabell Library redesigned user engagement with VCU’s 31,000+ students; added engaging spaces unique to libraries in Virginia, such as a reading porch with windows that open, an outdoor terrace on the third floor, a large multi-function lecture hall with attached catering kitchen, and the state’s largest and most active coffee bar (according to Starbucks corporate); and created the Big Screen video display on the exterior of the building, using a technology found nowhere else in Virginia, that has led to new levels of engagement with students and curricula in VCU’s top-ranked School of the Arts. As a result of the exciting vision for academic libraries expressed in the new building, Cabell Library was recognized in September 2016 with the Library Journal National Landmark Libraries Award, one of five libraries receiving the award, including North Carolina State University’s Hunt Library and the University of Washington’s Odegaard Library.

In addition to its focus on user experience, the VCU Libraries fosters a deep institutional commitment to intellectual and cultural dialog through a vigorous and highly successful series of programs and events that enjoy among the highest attendance of any cultural events at VCU, regularly drawing thousands of students, faculty, staff, and community members annually to the library. Events range from the VCU Cabell First Novelist Award and the Levis Reading Prize, to the Brown-Lyons Lecture on Judaica, the annual Black History Month Lecture, the Sanger Series Lectures on ethics and science, and other programs on a wide range of topics. Featured speakers have included a diverse cast, from commentator Melissa Harris-Perry, Innocence Project co-founder Peter Neufeld, and in 2017, National Book Award winner Colson Whitehead, to former National Science Foundation president Dr. Bruce Alberts, open access advocate Dr. John Willinsky, and renowned poets Yusef Komunyaka and Philip Levine. The elegant and flexible new Lecture Hall in the new Cabell Library, opened in January 2016, has become a premiere and highly-sought space for cultural and engagement programs at VCU, hosting 263 events with over 30,000 attendees in 2016-17, including 101 events with 22,000 attendees sponsored by the VCU Libraries. The university’s new Make It Real capital campaign chose Cabell Library to launch its effort, bringing the university’s most loyal and generous donors into what has become VCU’s most dramatic and visionary new space.

Because of its successful track record, the VCU Libraries has come to play a leading role in implementing crucial institution priorities when they can benefit from library expertise. For example, the library system leads the university in its work on affordable course content to reduce textbook costs, with a VCU librarian as one of two system leaders for the Open Textbook Network in Virginia. It continues to expand and enhance its institutional repository and publishing platform, Scholars Compass, to include original published work, including peer-reviewed journals from scholarly societies with faculty affiliates at VCU. In partnership with the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Innovation, the VCU Libraries recently became an early adopter of the Open Science Foundation’s Open Science Framework Initiative to further develop overall data management and curation capabilities at VCU and other research universities.

The achievements of the VCU Libraries in leadership of the profession and in collaborative engagement with many institutions demonstrates a serious commitment to efforts that fulfill the
leadership obligation that closes its mission statement. VCU librarians have a distinguished record of national leadership, serving as president of the American Library Association (1997-1998), twice as president of the Medical Library Association (2006-07 and 2016-17), as president of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (2010-11) and a member of the ASERL Board of Directors (2009-2012), and as a member of the Board of Directors for SOLINET (2001-05) and OCLC Members Council (2005-08). Librarians from VCU also have served the profession in a wide range of other commitments, from the SPARC Steering Committee (2014-2017) to leadership roles in ALA, ACRL, and other state, regional, and national organizations. VCU librarians have a strong and distinguished record in scholarly publications and editing for professional and research publications. In 2016, a librarian from VCU became one of the few librarians from a non-ARL institution to participate in the ARL Leadership Fellows program. Health sciences librarians from VCU have played a major role in programs developed and sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of MLA and in the national organization. A statewide advocacy effort on behalf of the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) originated with the university librarian at VCU and continues to find leadership from VCU, resulting in significant increases in state funding to VIVA since the advocacy effort started in 2003. In 2015 the VCU Libraries initiated its Community Digitization Program, a distinctive effort to collaborate with other libraries and cultural heritage institutions in Virginia to digitize their materials and expose them to students and scholars worldwide. The program has generated great interest and has resulted in two intriguing collections thus far, the Ancarrow Wildflower Digital Archive and the archives of the Mighty Pen Project (writings by armed forces veterans), with others in progress.

This letter outlines how the VCU Libraries embraces and implements the high expectations for academic excellence required by the ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. The attached materials, along with the most recent annual report (https://www.library.vcu.edu/about/annual-report/), give much greater detail on the many initiatives and accomplishments of VCU’s library system. I look forward to the Committee’s review, and stand by to answer any questions or supply additional information the Committee may need.

Sincerely,

John E. Ulmschneider
University Librarian
Virginia Commonwealth University
ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Submission
Executive Summary

Data (VCU Libraries by the Numbers)

Transforming Spaces

Chapter 1: Transforming Teaching & Services
Enhancing Students Success
Innovation in Teaching and Services

Chapter 2: Transforming Research
Advance Research at VCU
Provide Expertise and Materials

Chapter 3: Transforming Scholarship
Foster Scholarly Expression
Provide Access to Information

Chapter 4: Transforming Our Community
Shaping New Understanding
Using an Inclusive Lens

Chapter 5: Transforming Our Organization
Bolster Leadership Development
Conserve Human and Capital Resources

Letters of Support

Project manager
Sue Robinson and the Office of Communications and Public Relations

Designer
Katherine Williams (School of the Arts, 2017)

Design consultant
Jeff Bland

Contributing writers and editors
Anne Dreyfuss, John Duke, Laura Gariepy, Jimmy Ghaphery, Gregory Kimbrell, Brian McNeill, Sue Robinson, Leila Ugincious, John Ulmschneider, members of University Public Affairs staff

Photographers
Robert Benson, Clement Britt, Tom Kojcsich, Julian McBain, Joe Mahoney, Jay Paul

Photo illustrations from the Surreal Series combine VCU student models with architectural photographs of our buildings and settings. The students posed against a green screen in The Workshop’s photography studio. These images suggest new ways of looking at real library places and spaces.

Photographer
Jay Paul

Designer
Jeff Bland

Models
Kirby Desierto, India Gardner, Abigail M. Huston, Natalie Morales, Alvin Ruiz, Christine Wyatt

Letters of Support

4

5

7

15

25

37

47

59

73
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. On March 15, 2016, we celebrated the opening of the new, expanded James Branch Cabell Library, an award-winning, critically acclaimed design. The building immediately took its place as the intellectual, technological and cultural hub of VCU’s Monroe Park Campus.

2. VCU Libraries worked closely with generous donors to set new records for philanthropic giving. In December 2015, we received a $1 million challenge grant from the Cabell Foundation, the first such opportunity in our history.

3. Cabell’s innovative service environment and design bring together our teaching, learning and information faculty and professionals into one cohesive unit. This gives us new energy and focus with renewed emphasis on helping students in their first two years. The three floating desks in the lobby are visual evidence of this change, but the backbone of this warm, approachable, student-focused environment is in our human resources.

4. The Scholarly Communications and Publishing Division, our first new senior-level department in more than 20 years, was founded in April with the appointment of James Glassophy as its Associate University Librarian. The division strategically aligns staffing and funding to support faculty, staff and students communicating scholarly findings in today’s rapidly changing academic climate. It immediately launched the Open Access Author Publishing Fund to encourage VCU authors to publish in high-quality open-access journals, partnered with the VCU Department of History in “Mapping the KKK,” an acclaimed digital humanities visualization project, and helped acquire the Social Welfare History Project, a national online information portal documenting the impact of the social welfare movement on our country.

5. To ensure the best possible environment for an expanding workforce, VCU Libraries created the senior-level post of Assistant University Librarian for Organizational Development and recruited Kathy Bradshaw, a librarian and a human resources professional, to the position in fall 2015. Bradshaw brings new rigor and professionalism to our personnel practices and is undertaking a vigorous reassessment of diversity and climate issues within the libraries. The results from the 2016 ClimateQUAL, nationally normed survey of library cultural metrics provides us with guiding data for organizational development in the next academic year and a stronger commitment to workplace diversity and fairness.

6. The Community Digitization Program, launched in 2015, collaborates with other libraries and cultural heritage institutions in Virginia to digitize materials and expose them to students and scholars worldwide. Its distinctive approach to intellectual property rights combines with the technological abilities of VCU Libraries to dramatically improve the availability of valuable primary source materials. The program created two intriguing collections in 2015-16: the Ancarrow Wildflower Digital Archive and the archives of the Mighty Pen Project (writings by armed forces veterans). Others are under development. We also partnered with the Valentine to host digitized oral histories of Historic Fulton and with professors from VCU and John Tyler Community College to create a digital exhibit on the history of the Goochland County Rosenwald Schools, including a large number of digitized oral history interviews from students who attended the schools.

7. VCU Libraries embraced an aggressive collections effort that included renewed membership in the Center for Research Libraries, new and more extensive streaming video services, member status in the Open Library of Humanities and significant new collections for Special Collections and Archives. Acquisition of the Anderson Gallery Collection, more than 3,000 pieces of fine art, further cemented our commitment to serving as a center for preserving, displaying and sharing art.

8. Scholars Compass, VCU Libraries’ institutional repository for the VCU community, grows rapidly and strategically. With more than 9,000 items and 400,000 downloads, projects in 2015-16 included new collections documenting university history from the University Archives, peer-reviewed journals, proceedings of symposia, posters, theses, dissertations and more. Scholars Compass makes VCU’s scholarship available to the world.

9. Our cultural and scholarly programming continues to attract high numbers and provide meaningful engagement with the many communities we serve. Events include VCU’s first African-American Read-in, the annual Brown-Lyons Lecture, the ongoing Sanger Series on issues related to the conduct of scientific research and cooperative projects around the VCU Common Book. With the opening of the new Cabell Lecture Hall in spring 2016, participation and attendance skyrocketed. We held 69 events in the new Lecture Hall with an attendance of more than 12,200.

10. Implementation of the new Strategic Framework, a powerful single-page statement developed in 2014-15 that captures core elements of our strategic plan, guided leadership in the University’s 2016 ClimateQUAL, nationally normed survey of library cultural metrics provides us with guiding data for organizational development in the next academic year and a stronger commitment to workplace diversity and fairness.

By the Numbers

**February 2016**

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Our Patrons

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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90% of the new space is for faculty and students, not for offices or book storage.

$50.8 million from the state.
$6 million from private funds.

4.3 million visitors used Cabell in 2015-16. Projections suggest 2016-17 visits could exceed 2.4 million.

Four 3-D printers to help students take ideas to a new dimension.
A laser cutter that allows students to prototype intricate designs instantly.
Two sewing machines that help students stitch together their wildest dreams.

A new makerspace called The Workshop provides vital resources including:
Virginia Commonwealth University’s newly expanded and renovated James Branch Cabell Library adds 93,000 square feet of new construction and 63,000 square feet of improvements to the existing Monroe Park Campus library, providing VCU’s roughly 32,000 students with a library designed specifically to meet their needs for research, study and collaboration.

“The intent of the new library was to not only create new space for students, but to create premiere space in Virginia — the kind of space that our students and faculty can feel proud of, and the kind of space that exhibits and expresses the pride they feel in VCU,” said University Librarian John Ulmschneider.

The primary goal in expanding VCU’s library was to simply add more space for students and faculty to study and conduct research. The new library doubles the total number of seats to around 3,000.
The new library offers a huge amount of flexible workspace and study areas. Adjoining a two-story lecture hall on the new library’s third floor is an outdoor terrace, providing students and faculty a spot to gather and great views of campus.

- Fan District Association awards James Branch Cabell Library its Excellence in Commercial Renovation Award.
- Respected local architecture critic hails new Cabell as an “instant landmark.”
- Library Journal named Cabell a “New Landmark Library.”

“…we’ve always brought together people and space and books and journals and microfilms and all those things. But the one thing that VCU didn’t have was enough space. We had the books; we had the other resources, but we didn’t have enough space. Students were sitting on the floor — literally sitting on the floor — in an overcrowded Cabell Library. This [new] building gives our students the space they need and the best possible space they could have to do their academic work.”

–University Librarian John E. Ulmschneider
Hello World

Visitors find friendly faces and easy conversations at Information Desk pods.

Cabell Library’s new Information Desk is composed of three pods that facilitate side-by-side interactions between staff and patrons. The idea is to enable a more teaching-focused discussion with students and faculty who are learning to use the library website and research tools. It also creates a more inviting atmosphere than the behemoth desks of library days of old.

As a gateway to many services, the Information Desk is often the first, and sometimes the only, interaction users have with the library. The goal is to provide friendly services ranging from lending library materials, assisting in the research process and ensuring library users are having the best possible experience they can. Referrals are made to other services or staff at VCU Libraries who can best assist people with more specialized information needs.

Just how busy are those desks? The year saw 31,811 in-person transactions. (Many workers at these desks also answer questions by phones, texts, chats and emails.) That face-to-face figure, equivalent to VCU’s total enrollment, does not count the visits to the desks that involve checking out 60,000 books.

The Workshop

Advances collaborative learning and teaching environments through innovative technologies.

The Workshop, new to Cabell Library’s Lower Level, offers a comprehensive variety of multi-media resources and services, including a 4K video studio, loanable media equipment, an array of video editing and graphic design stations, an audio studio, a video game lounge with six gaming consoles and a makerspace featuring 3D printers, a laser cutter, sewing machines, a computerized tabletop router and much more.

“We support any kind of hands-on creation, both digital and analog,” said Eric Johnson, head of innovative media for VCU Libraries. “It’s not just about having fun — though that’s really good way to learn — it’s about enabling people to create objects that are important to them. It’s about providing tools and expertise to support the scholarly exploration of what I sometimes call ‘multimedia and matter.’”

The Workshop is open to all VCU students, faculty and staff, and it’s aiming to be accessible to both beginners and more experienced users.

“We want to make the technology very approachable. We want to have a low barrier to participation,” Johnson said. “We don’t want someone to walk in and feel like there’s so much high technology that they don’t feel comfortable. But at the same time, we want to support more advanced users, too. We have to make it accessible, but also make sure that we can support a lot of users.”

The Innovative Media staff serves both campuses and invites meetings with faculty to discuss multi-media projects as course assignments.
CHAPTER 1
TRANSFORMING teaching & services
How do you accurately report scientific results or progress for non-expert readers? How can a researcher clearly explain the work to mass media audiences? These are among the thorny questions students explored in a new hybrid course (MAC 491) funded by a Quest Innovation Grant.

The innovative mass communications course aims to prepare students to explain science to the world. The new course tackles the complexities of science journalism from perspectives of both the reporter/writer/editor and also the creator/inventor/researcher.

The course also breaks down some walls of the traditional classroom experience: Two sessions were open to the public. One is a panel presentation by national science writers. The second is a workshop for grad students in science fields. In addition, Google hangouts with national science writers were open to anyone interested.

The Robertson School of Media and Culture and VCU Libraries launch a groundbreaking course with a Quest Innovation Grant

In this team-teaching collaboration between the Robertson School of Media and Culture and VCU Libraries, Professor Jeff South taught how to write news stories on scientific subjects and Librarian Sara Williams crafted lessons on research strategies.

To give students a firm grounding in how to research scientific topics, subject matter specialist librarians from both the Monroe Park and MCV campuses taught students how to find credible sources to fact-check, explore nuances, read data correctly and understand scientific methods, as well as identify gaps in research areas and grasp the context of scientific discoveries.

Blending theory with practice, the class also published an online magazine, The Scope, featuring students’ articles on science.

For journalism students, the class will help you think like a scientist; for science students, it will help you think like a journalist. And for all students, the course will help you communicate often-complex scientific discoveries to a mass audience.”

– The syllabus

Students taking this fall’s new Science Journalism course at VCU interviewed graduate students about their research at a recent workshop at Cabell Library.

“Students in the class get something tangible, which they can put on their resume, and the research gets out to the public.”

– Jeff South, associate professor, journalism and director of undergraduate studies
Innovation in Teaching and Services

Inspiration and Innovation

Games with cultural and artistic value form new strand of collection

A lways working to meet faculty and student needs, VCU Libraries collects video games that have significant artistic and cultural value to meet the growing interest of students and faculty in the fields of animation, multimedia, digital worlds and gaming. The impetus of the collection, which started with 11 games, came from a faculty request to add both board and digital games to support a course.

The early collection (2014) features games across various platforms, and additional new releases are expected to be added soon. The games in the collection include critically acclaimed titles such as “Journey,” “Flower,” “The Last of Us,” “Shadow of the Colossus,” “Katamari Damacy,” “BioShock” and “Child of Eden.”

In 2015-16, the libraries began to collect games only available as downloads — important for representation of smaller, independent game developers. “Never Alone” and “Firewatch” are two significant titles. Also new is an “Alienware” gaming PC. This super powerful computer is located in The Workshop. A diverse collection of a dozen games includes “Papers Please” and “That Dragon Cancer.” These works are catalogued and they appear in library records, only for in-house use. This is significant because many libraries avoid downloads, which limits the collection parameters, or they don’t catalog games and instead rely on a finding aid. VCU Libraries catalogers developed creative, flexible workflows to manage these new-age materials.

“There’s a great interest in video games and virtual worlds in the School of the Arts and across the campus,” said Arts Collections Librarian Emily Davis Winthrop. “Gaming is emerging as a key area of research. We hope that this collection will support the growing research interests of our patrons and provide inspiration for the many creative endeavors occurring across campus.”

“We are purchasing games for research, teaching and learning — not necessarily for entertainment,” Davis Winthrop said. “We’re looking for games that have certain aesthetics, that are important to the history of video games and that have significant artistic direction, unique narrative or cerebral gameplay.”

ABOUT THE GAMING ROOM

The library’s Innovative Media department provides hardware support for the gaming collection and game developers in a dedicated gaming and group viewing room in The Workshop. Six video game consoles — Sony’s PlayStation 4, PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 2, Microsoft’s Xbox One and Xbox 360 and the Nintendo Wii U — provide users with the means to explore a wide range of game worlds. For computer-based games, the room is equipped with a high-end Alienware Area 51 gaming PC with gaming keyboard and mouse. Games and videos are displayed on a 47-inch, high-definition, 3D-capable LED monitor, and sound is supported by an LG wi-fi streaming sound bar with wireless subwoofer. Users reserve time in the room through an online scheduling system, checkout games and components at the information desk and seek help from knowledgeable staff about hardware, software and game play.
As teachers, VCU librarians are constantly in classrooms, on webinars, giving workshops, developing instructional videos and other online teaching tools and conversing in one-on-one sessions. We teach an information literacy segment to 95 percent of VCU’s first-year students who take the required UNIV 200. Liaisons to the School of Medicine and Nursing teach orientation sessions for all incoming students. In every school on both Monroe Park and MCV campuses, librarians teach discipline-specific sessions: 1302 of them in 2015-16. We also customize instruction to fit into particular courses or meet a faculty member’s specific need—whether it be teaching evidence-based medicine practices or how to do primary source research for a history class. We are flexible and knowledgeable. These sorts of teaching roles are how many librarians spend most of their time.

Librarians also take on leadership roles and invent fresh ways to share information and serve our diverse users who have specific learning needs. Among recent innovations are these.

1. **HOW-TO TALKS BY POSTDOCS**
   VCU postdoctoral researchers shared hands-on knowledge and insights in a new speaker series for the VCU health sciences community. How-to Talks by Postdocs was sponsored by Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences, the VCU C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research (CCTR) and the VCU Postdoctoral Association. Each 45-minute talk was followed by discussion and networking. Topics included “Causal analysis: How to examine mediation and moderation of treatment or experimental effects,” “How to detect and isolate stem cells” and “Teaching STEM so that your students actually learn.”

2. **BIOINFORMATIC WORKSHOPS**
   VCU Libraries and the CCTR collaborated on creating and teaching a new summer workshop series. The sessions of 30 attendees each introduced researchers to genetic and genomic databases. Databases and tools discussed in the series included NCBI Gene, NCBI BLAST, NCBI Variation Viewer, NCBI Gene Expression Omnibus, The Cancer Genome Atlas and the newly launched Genomic Data Commons. Researchers who attended four of the five sessions and completed the workshop activities received a Certificate of Completion.

3. **COPYRIGHT FOR CREATORS**
   In the digital age, everyone is a publisher or a maker or a creator. Understanding copyright is a foundational skill today. VCU Libraries, in concert with the VCU School of the Arts and arts librarians, introduced a new series for 2015-16 on the nuances of copyright for artists, designers and art scholars. The presenter, VCU University Counsel Madelyn Wessel, is an authoritative voice on the complex intersection of creators’ and copyright-holders’ rights with creative and scholarly expression.

4. **ADVANCE YOUR RESEARCH**
   In addition to continuing with well-attended all-day Saturday workshops, this project added online webinars in 2015-16. The inaugural webinar featuring a medical librarian focused on planning and conducting a systematic review. Topics included creating a protocol, the investigator’s role and how librarians can help throughout the process. Workshop topics for the year included poster presentations, STEAM, copyright, literature reviews, conducting interviews, scientific images and more.

5. **DANCE IMPROVISATION**
   Students of DANC 105 met in Cabell Library to integrate library research, artists’ work, online music collections and short literary works in a dance improvisation exercise designed by Professor Robbie Kinter. Dancers used library resources to create an in-class performance before a backdrop of artwork on the large screen.

6. **ENGINEERING SUMMER CAMP**
   VCU’s School of Engineering and a local youth center hosted a summer engineering day camp for rising sixth through eighth graders. Students in this five-day program developed an idea and a budget for an invention, focused on planning and conducting a systematic review. Topics included creating a protocol, the investigator’s role and how librarians can help throughout the process. Workshop topics for the year included poster presentations, STEAM, copyright, literature reviews, conducting interviews, scientific images and more.

Librarian Jenny Stout teaching first-year students.
7. **GRADUATE RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION ON BLACKBOARD**

VCU Libraries created a robust new online resource within Blackboard for all M.T., M.Ed. and certificate students in the School of Education. Each program area has its own collection of recommended databases, selected e-journals and related course/subject guides. Categories of resources applicable to all program areas include research tips, literature reviews, citations, writing resources and measures, statistics and data.

8. **QUESTIONING CINEMA**

A pilot program at Cabell Library combined a film with discussion about critical thinking and information evaluation. Inaugural attendees explored the science and social impact of robotics, artificial intelligence and human/computer interaction as portrayed in Alex Garland’s 2015 science-fiction drama *Ex Machina*. After the screening, librarians led a discussion that included how to use library and online resources to question the film’s content.

9. **REAL LIFE FILM SERIES**

Tompkins-McCaw Library updated and rebranded its long-running monthly lunchtime documentary series with a new name and supplemented film viewing with discussions. Experts from the MCV campus lead attendees in discussion on topics covered in the film.

10. **TEACHING IN THE HUMANITIES: USING ELECTRONIC DATABASES IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

This interactive workshop in collaboration with the Humanities Research Center explored strategies for creating meaningful assignments that use electronic databases such as EEBO, EECCO, Old Bailey On-line and others. Facilitated by humanities faculty, the workshop provided specific examples of assignments faculty have used as well as the opportunity to discuss the pedagogical implications of these assignments. A humanities research librarian provided insights into available databases, successful assignments and digital collections as teaching tools.

11. **LATEX WORKSHOPS**

Multiple sessions on LaTeX for a large class included high-tech, experiential learning components. What was new? The media-rich classroom in Cabell Library allowed student groups to create samples and models in class.

12. **SPIT FOR SCIENCE LAB**

This collaboration between faculty researchers and an interdisciplinary team of librarians furthered connections with faculty in psychology and biology. Sessions covered library databases and an overview of the scientific process.

13. **SYSTEMS MODELING AND ANALYSIS SEMINAR**

Multiple instructional sessions were embedded in this three-part seminar series for graduate students. This program is offered by the Department of Statistical Sciences and Operations Research and the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics. Library-session topics included how to search for literature, reference management, LaTeX, organizing sources for a literature review, data visualization and finding where to publish.

14. **WEBINARS**

VCU Libraries conducted two successful one-hour webinars. “How to Start Your Lit Review” with humanities research librarian John Glover drew 105 online attendees in September, 2015. “Getting Started with Systematic Reviews” with medical librarian John Cyrus delivered 35 online attendees in March 2016.

15. **HEALTH AWARENESS SESSIONS**

The Community Health Education Center, part of Tompkins-McCaw Library housed in the hospital’s Gateway Building, offered a monthly consumer health education session. Topics for these expert-taught sessions ranged from managing diabetes to mindfulness, from weight loss surgery to chronic tendon disease and more.
Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library offered 95 teaching or outreach events in 2015-16. Most of these instructional sessions were book art classes featuring some of the 4,285 items in the Book Art Collection. Unlike many museums or libraries that collect book art, VCU Libraries doesn’t simply store, preserve or display the art. Ours is an active collection for teaching and research. Artists find inspiration in the many forms and creative expressions of the works. It inspires researchers: Dissertations have drawn heavily from the holdings. VCU Libraries also loans items to galleries and museums for exhibitions.
Mapping the Past and Facing Forward

Digital history project points to the next steps for scholarship

A 2015 VCU Libraries project shows for the first time how the Ku Klux Klan spread across the United States after World War I. The project also illustrates how fast scholarship can spread in the digital age. Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1940 is an animated, online map that illustrates the rise of the second Klan, which started in Atlanta in 1915 and spread rapidly across the country to total more than 2,000 local units, known as Klaverns, in all 50 states with an estimated membership between 2 million and 8 million.

The news release about the project generated an impressive 9,261 VCU page views. On social media, the project received 245,586 impressions, with a total engagement of 9,053. The map itself received 6,862 visits from 70 countries. Interview requests included one from “With Good Reason” and the tweets came from as far away as the Irish Times. (See sidebar listing coverage.)

“The project is using technology to demonstrate, and make available for people to contemplate, the nationwide spread of the Ku Klux Klan,” said John Kneebone, Ph.D., associate professor and chair of the VCU Department of History in the College of Humanities and Sciences. “This map shows that you can’t just say ‘Oh, it was those crazy people in the South.’ The [KKK] was in the mainstream.”

The map, he said, invites the viewer to learn about the Klan in their own area, and to reflect on how the Klan’s message of racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism appealed to so many millions of Americans.

Kneebone built a list of local KKK chapters by piecing together information culled from the hate group’s official publications, including newspapers and magazines with such names as The Fellowship Forum, Kourier Magazine, Indiana Fiery Cross and Imperial Night Hawk.

Digital librarians used his research to map the KKK chapters and illustrate their chronological rise across the country.

“This project models innovative collaboration between libraries and scholars,” said Jimmy Ghaphery, who served as head of digital technologies during the project’s timeline. “Building on the extensive research and scholarly context that Dr. Kneebone brought to bear, the VCU Libraries was able to provide support for data normalization, data visualization and a publishing platform. In publishing the raw data set, the door remains open for other researchers to jump in and join us.”

The project was significant for VCU Libraries because it marked the first time digital librarians worked directly with a faculty researcher to develop a digital visualization of their work.

“It indicates where libraries are going in general, moving more into the digital humanities realm, where we’re working with scholars to find new ways to disseminate scholarship,” said Erin White, who worked on the project. White is now head of digital engagement. “This is really exciting from our perspective because it’s a new thing that we’re exploring that has great potential for us as an institution.”

Kneebone pointed out that the Klan was not just a southern thing. “Wearing white robes and hoods, members of the Ku Klux Klan parade on Grace Street in Richmond circa 1925. Image courtesy of The Valentine.”

Editors’ Choice: Digital Map Shows Spread of KKK (Digital Humanities Now)

Commentary: Teaching hate, learning hate (Journal-Courier–Jacksonville, IL)


This Map Shows the Rapid Growth of the KKK (WHP/ Radio IQ)

Virginia Commonwealth University Project Maps the Spread of the Ku Klux Klan (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education)

Online Project Highlights 20th Century Growth of the KKK (Afro-American)

VCU historian: Records show KKK spread across the U.S. like measles (Richmond Free Press)

Digital map shows the appeal of the KKK through America in the 20th century (History News Network)

Digital map shows spread of KKK across United States like ‘a contagion’ (E! Science News)

VCU history professor maps spread of second Ku Klux Klan (Richmond Times-Dimespatch)

Shocking map shows the appeal of the KKK through America in the 20th century (History News Network)

KKK was not just a southern thing (History and the News Blog)

Editors’ Choice: Digital Map Shows Spread of KKK (Digital Humanities Now)
Collections of Distinction support research, teaching and discovery

The “Collections of Distinction” initiative focuses on expanding and improving collections that provide crucial and unique materials for teaching, research, discovery and enjoyment. Collections of Distinction exemplify VCU’s mission to inspire and foster creative ideas that celebrate diversity, inclusiveness and engagement on campus and beyond.

Supporting established or emerging areas of research, Collections of Distinction receive funds to strengthen knowledge in the identified areas — with the goal of elevating them to national and international stature. At the fundamental level, however, they support and foster teaching, research and discovery by VCU’s faculty and students.

Current Collections of Distinction

• Economic Botany/Medicinal Plants
• Experimental Digital Animation
• Forensic Science
• Leadership Education
• Poetry
• Special Education and Disability Policy
• Traumatic Brain Injury

The library has been exemplary in embracing change; in taking steps, for example, to make sure we have access to electronic books, digital archives and other online resources. “

— Emily Block, a student in VCU’s MFA in Creative Writing Program
Tools and Teaching for the Future

Medical librarians and library resources at the crux of evidence-based practice and patient care

"Evidence-based medicine empowers patients," Mark Ryan, M.D., said. "It puts patients increasingly in control of their own health care decisions in a way that would not necessarily be the case in other models of care."

Ryan, an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Population Health at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, was one of more than 30 clinical faculty from VCU Health who participated in a 2015 three-day evidence-based medicine conference on the MCV Campus. During the workshops, physicians and medical librarians practiced efficiently finding evidence to use in clinical practice and critically appraising medical literature. The conference was led by Dr. Gordon Guyatt, a distinguished professor at the McMaster University Department of Medicine, who in 1992 coined the phrase "evidence-based medicine" in a Journal of the American Medical Association article.

"With evidence-based medicine comes understanding, and always with understanding comes power, in this case, greater effectiveness in helping our patients," Guyatt said.

In 2013, the VCU School of Medicine launched a new curriculum that was designed to instruct students on how to think critically. The curriculum redesign included the addition of a longitudinal course called Population Health and Evidence-Based Medicine. Students learn evidence-based medicine and critical review skills in the course that runs through all four years of medical school.

In 2015, the Association of American Medical Colleges developed the core Entrustable Professional Activities for Entering Residency, 13 activities that graduates should be able to perform on the first day of residency. One of the 13 is forming clinical questions and retrieving evidence that advances patient care.

"This is where medical education is headed," said John Cyrus, research and education librarian at Tompkins-McCaw Library on the MCV Campus. "Having one of the EPAs directly address major components of evidence-based medicine is a good indication that it is a central part of what people say is not only essential in the training but also in the practice of physicians."

During the conference, Cyrus led a workshop on how to stay current with new evidence as it becomes available as opposed to going back and trying to find evidence retroactively. The workshop also included a lesson on how to retrieve evidence quickly.

In his role as a liaison librarian for the School of Medicine and VCU Health physicians, Cyrus works with learners at all levels of medical education to help them identify sources of high-quality information or research that meets their immediate need.

The libraries are a major source for the evidence in the practice of evidence-based medicine. We provide the tools for physicians to make the right decisions when they need to."

—John Cyrus, research and education librarian at Tompkins-McCaw Library

He also employs his expertise in using library resources to retrieve evidence for clinical decision-making and to support research projects conducted by residents, fellows and faculty.

"A lot of the education we do focuses on how to get in, get what you need and get out without wasting precious time in the clinical setting," Cyrus said. "It’s about helping the physicians get the most out of what the library has to offer."

Cyrus estimates that he handled about 100 consultations this year and led more than 60 education sessions. In addition to working one-on-one with people who come to him for help, he also co-teaches an evidence-based medicine course to third-year medical students and works with third-year psychiatry residents in their evidence-based rotation to teach them about the resources that are available at the library.

In addition to Cyrus, other librarians at Tompkins-McCaw Library serve the Schools of Pharmacy, Dentistry, Allied Health Professions and Nursing. They, too, teach evidence-based practices.

"“
Virtual Library

Building a global information infrastructure to treat and cure addiction, inform clinicians and leverage joint resources

Scientists around the world, including many at VCU, are working to understand addiction to prevent, diagnose and treat it. Now, a VCU Libraries effort is building an information infrastructure for a forward-thinking global program.

Envisioned as a model for resource sharing in the digital age, this collaboration may be adapted to other international degree programs. Beyond that, this effort may become a model for building similar knowledge hubs that address intractable health and welfare problems.

Librarians on three continents developed the virtual library and classroom materials for the International Programme in Addiction Studies. This master’s degree program is offered by three leading universities in addiction sciences: VCU, King’s College London and the University of Adelaide, Australia. Its faculty and students—a cohort of some 50 per degree-cycle—will use the new materials.

Physicians, government workers, policy advocates, nurses, substance abuse clinicians, health care administrators, social workers and researchers from six continents are among the program’s students who have access to this virtual library.

Bringing together the expertise of VCU Libraries faculty with librarians from around the world demonstrates the power and importance of cross-departmental and inter-professional teams. By working together, access to information is improved and richer experiences are provided to all involved. This program serves as an exemplar in collaboration.”

—Emily J. Hurst, head of the Research and Education Department at Tompkins-McCaw

Research data has unrealized potential. Often relegated to lab notebooks or isolated computers, it is often inaccessible beyond personnel working on a research project, whether basic scientists or social scientists. As our world has become more networked, more funders require that scientists present a plan for data management as a condition of funding and, peer-reviewed journals often require authors to make the data behind publication accessible on request. These are among the many factors that shape the work of VCU Libraries’ office for Research Data Management.

Highlights of recent work include:

- Participating in Ready, Set, Grant! workshops on competitive grant writing offered by the Office of Research and Innovation and the first Quality in Clinical Research Conference held by Clinical Research Services.
- Hosting the two-day Virginia Research Data Management Bootcamp organized with six other Virginia university libraries.
- Surveying VCU Teaching and Research faculty
- Receiving the Harris Manchester College Summer Research Institute 2016 Fellowship. As one of two recipients from VCU, the director worked on the project “Research Data: From Policy to Implementation” studying data management practices at Oxford University.
- Wrapping up the two-year National Library of Medicine Informationist Award in May 2016. A multi-disciplinary librarian team effectively worked with a multi-disciplinary research team. Based on the evaluation of the grant, both teams gained from the collaboration. The National Library of Medicine was interested in the model and invited VCU Libraries to Bethesda to present with the librarian leaders of other informationist model teams.

Librarians have long organized knowledge-based information for search, retrieval and sharing. “By being involved at the beginning of the research process, librarians can assist in the research enterprise and share their expertise earlier in the research process.”

—Associate University Librarian and Tompkins-McCaw Director Teresa L. Knott

Data management expertise benefits many on campus

Data Management Bootcamp
VCU Libraries was the 100th institution to join Flickr’s The Commons, a project that shares hidden treasures from the world’s archives. As part of The Commons, VCU Libraries’ image collections that have no known copyright restrictions are discoverable through the photo-sharing platform Flickr, as well as through search tools that pull public-domain images without known copyright restrictions. With this significant step forward, VCU joined an international group of institutions with the goal to increase public access to copyright-free images. This advances our educational mission and greatly increases the discoverability and potential use of VCU Libraries’ image collections. It will also allow the public to share their knowledge of the images, potentially enriching our collections with comments and tags.
TRANSFORMING scholarship
The first new VCU Libraries division created in some 20 years merges efforts in scholarly publishing, scholarly communications and data management into a coordinated strategic framework. James Ghaphery leads the team as Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Communications and Publishing. Staff and other assets will be added as appropriate to pursue university priorities, such as more use of open educational resources and affordable class content.

Faculty see enhanced support for:

• Digital scholarship projects
• Writing or purchasing more affordable textbooks to ease students’ financial burdens
• Community engagement initiatives that can involve digital scholarship or research or other materials that need to be protected and made widely available
• Navigating copyright and open-access publishing issues
• Data management and data sharing in compliance with emerging Federal mandates
• Managing journal publications, conference proceedings and other scholarly output in VCU Scholars Compass

“I look forward to hearing from anyone within the VCU family about how we can advance our understanding and support of the scholarly and artistic endeavor. At this stage, no ideas are too big or too small, from a specific copyright question to launching new publications to partnering on large grants. We are listening.”

—James Ghaphery, Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Communications and Publishing

“This is an exciting time,” says Ghaphery. “VCU is at the center of national discussions on diversity, copyright, creative expression, open access, scientific reproducibility and community engagement. We are excited to facilitate success in all of these endeavors through an expanded emphasis on scholarly publishing and outreach.”
CHAPTER 3 | Transforming Scholarship

A Firm Foundation

Scholars Compass protects and publishes VCU’s intellectual output and shares it with the world

Launched in summer, 2014, VCU Scholars Compass took off in 2015-16. Outreach to faculty reaped thousands of scholarly articles, presentations, research findings and data produced at Virginia Commonwealth University. This work is now available to the public.

VCU Scholars Compass is VCU’s repository for the intellectual output of the university’s faculty, researchers, students and staff. “This is a foundational, strategically important investment for this university and this library system,” says University Librarian John E. Ulmschneider. “We absolutely had to build this in order to make sure that this maturing research university has the research library infrastructure to support it.”

As of June 2016, more than 8,700 papers and other scholarly materials have been uploaded to Scholars Compass, and items have been downloaded nearly 400,000 times. “We have a commitment to keeping these things for the long term — not just five years, but 50 years, 100 years,” Ulmschneider says. “That’s what we do. We are going to keep everything that our scholars publish for a long, long time so that scholars in the future can have access to them. That’s part of our tradition.”

A Sampling of Scholars Compass Content

• VCU THESIS AND DISSERTATIONS: All theses and dissertations produced by VCU students since 2009. Alumni have been invited to submit their papers as well.

• SUPPLEMENTAL MAPS: UNC Press book When the Fences Come Down: Twenty-First-Century Lessons from Metropolitan School Desegregation by VCU provided by School of Education Professor Genevieve Siegel-Hawley.

• JOURNAL OF SOCIAL THEORY IN ART EDUCATION: The official journal (1980 to present) of the Caucus of Social Theory in Art Education, an issues group of the National Art Education Association, is available. The editorial board includes several faculty from the VCU Department of Art Education. In addition to presenting the articles, Scholars Compass also includes a publishing toolkit for managing submissions and peer review. This resource is valuable to public school art teachers who otherwise would not have access to this material.

• CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS: The inaugural Biology and Medicine through Mathematics Conference held in Richmond with the help of faculty from VCU Department of Mathematics was managed through VCU Scholars Compass, which houses the conference schedule and refereed abstracts for each session. The Division of Community Engagement also leveraged the platform to share resources with the broader community. This work includes conference proceedings from the Community Engagement Institute (co-sponsored by the VCU C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research).

• MCV/Q, MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA QUARTERLY: In collaboration with University Archives, Scholars Compass offers MCV/Q journal, volumes 1 (1965) - 16 (1980). Designed primarily for the postgraduate education of physicians, MCV/Q published articles of original research and reviews in basic and clinical sciences. Another important collection from University Archives is VCU Course Bulletins.

• UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH POSTERS: More than 200 posters presented during VCU Research Week’s annual Undergraduate Poster Symposium organized by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program provide inspiration. This collection highlights the wide-ranging intellectual curiosity of VCU students with topics spanning Disney princesses, health care, songbirds, medicine and Netflix. Other student work, such as the School of Engineering Capstone Design Expo Posters, has been added to VCU Scholars Compass.

• SCHOOL OF MEDICINE STUDENT SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP POSTERS.
Open Access Fund

Introduced in fall, 2015, VCU Libraries’ Open Access Publishing Fund supports the publication of research articles in peer-reviewed journals that are available to all on the web without charge. Some open-access journals charge author fees to cover costs of peer review and other services common to all scholarly journals. The Open Access Publishing Fund helps with paying these fees, thus minimizing the financial barrier to publishing in open-access journals. Open-access journals are available for nearly every area of research; a comprehensive list is found in the Directory of Open Access Journals. In its inaugural year, faculty from 10 different departments received funding totaling $10,400. They were: CSBC, Focused Inquiry, management, mechanical and nuclear engineering, medical physics, microbiology and immunology, pediatrics, physical therapy, psychology and surgery.

Why Open Access?

• Satisfies the trend of public and private funding agencies that require researchers to make articles open access.
• Provides an alternative to high-cost, unsustainable commercial publishing.
• Encourages new forms of scholarly communication.
• Promotes accelerated discovery, allowing researchers to read and build on findings without restriction.

Redefining Scholarship

Not every course assignment these days is a 20-page paper. The Innovative Media staff stands ready to assist faculty in developing projects, assignments and providing the technical training to support this new-age work.

"The staff of The Workshop is always standing by to think through multimedia assignments with faculty. Faculty are subject experts. We are ready to help with the technical aspects with which they may not feel as comfortable. They tackle the why. We help with the how.”

— Eric D.M. Johnson, Head, Innovative Media
Volunteers transcribed and encoded two 17th-century manuscripts from the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library at VCU Libraries’ inaugural “transcribathon.”

Part of the Folger’s ongoing Early Modern Manuscripts Online project, the event drew nearly more than 50 people. The Folger project aims to provide scholars and the public with convenient online access to transcriptions, images and metadata for a variety of one-of-a-kind English manuscripts from the 16th and 17th centuries. These works include letters, diaries, wills, coats of arms, literary pieces, recipe books and more.

“The purpose is to make difficult-to-read manuscripts accessible to and searchable by scholars, teachers and students,” said co-organizer Claire Bourne, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Department of English in the College of Humanities and Sciences. “The work of those participating in the VCU transcribathon will be in the service of future scholarship and learning.”

For VCU Libraries, the transcribathon was seen as an excellent example of digital learning through collaboration, said Kevin Farley, Ph.D., assistant professor and humanities collection librarian. “This aligns perfectly with the advancement of digital scholarship at VCU Libraries—an openness for all who wish to participate in a collaborative learning and creating environment,” he said.

VCU’s librarians are activists in scholarly communications. Panels, programs and one-on-one consultations cover many topics

- Compliance with recent federal government requirements to make the published results of federally funded research freely available to the public within one year of publication and requiring researchers to better account for and manage the digital data resulting from federally funded scientific research. This includes many agencies VCU researchers receive grants from such as the NIH, DOD, DOE, NSF and NASA. Many VCU researchers are already familiar with the NIH public access policy, established 10 years ago to provide public access to peer-reviewed journal articles.
- The importance of keeping track of the final peer-reviewed manuscript version of an article, even after a copy has been provided to the publisher.
- Understanding author’s rights to articles and data and agreements with publishers that allow the author to comply with any public-access policy.
- Considering costs for open-access publication and data deposit or storage in grant proposals.
- Broad understanding of policies that various agencies have released and specific questions about when to use PubMed Central and when a deposit in institutional repositories will meet public access requirements and when will it not.
- Exceptions to public-access policies, such as regulations protecting publications and data for national security, privacy and other reasons.
- Mastering the use of copyrighted materials in educational settings, publications and online. For example, “Copyright for Creators” was a three-part workshop series presented by University Counsel in partnership with the School of the Arts.
- Knowing the difference between public-access and open-access, and why researchers should consider going beyond public access and making their work even more openly available.
TRANSFORMING our community

USING AN INCLUSIVE LENS
VCU’s Anderson Gallery was a leading venue for contemporary art in the Southeast for more than 40 years. It presented the work of regional, national and international artists, as well as the annual graduate and undergraduate student exhibitions. Its closing in 2015 brought the 3,100 piece Anderson Gallery Collection to Special Collections and Archives. The improved, climate-controlled housing will ensure the longevity of the collection. It is rare for a university to transfer gallery holdings to an academic library and also for the library to rotate art displays. “This project — the closing of the gallery and moving the collection — has been carefully and thoughtfully planned over a roughly two-year period,” said Joseph H. Seipel, then-dean of the School of the Arts. “It strengthens an already close connection of VCU Libraries collections to VCUarts, which is a chief user of materials from the book arts and comic arts collections. For the first time, items from various artists instrumental in the history of VCUarts will be consolidated in one place.” In the library, the collection will be much more accessible, according to Ashley Kistler, longtime director of the Anderson Gallery. “As we’ve been reviewing the collection with a fine-tooth comb, I’m reminded of the wealth of potential research projects that are just waiting to happen.” Special Collections and Archives is open to all and works closely with students, faculty, visiting scholars, K-12 educators and community researchers. VCU Libraries also displays items from the collection on a rotating basis, providing greater visibility for these works.

It’s important for people to understand that the heart of the Anderson Gallery is not the building. It’s the collection of extraordinary art.” — John E. Ulmschneider, University Librarian

Legacy Lives On
3,100 pieces in the Anderson Gallery Collection preserved, protected and accessible for researchers and teaching.

From the Anderson Gallery collection: Untitled, Morris Yarowsky (top) and “Rock” 1989, Philip Knoll (above).
CHAPTER 4 | Transforming Our Community

Art Appreciation

VCU Libraries exhibits, collects and documents diverse pieces of artworks that are graciously given by donors or created by students or professionals.

“Beach” 1999, Gerald Donato

Meaningful Relationships

Connections evolve and strengthen collections and create new possibilities

All-Negro Comics No. 1

This extremely rare comic book written and drawn solely by African-American writers and artists is “one of the holy grails of comics,” says Cindy Jackson, library specialist for comic arts. She oversees VCU Libraries’ Comic Arts Collection, which has roughly 175,000 items, including more than 125,000 comic books. “It is so important to the history of comics. I’ve been in this job for 20 years, and I never thought I’d ever hold one of these in my hands. And now we have one in the collection for researchers to use.”

The copy of All-Negro Comics No. 1 was donated to the Comic Arts Collection by VCU alumnus Dave Anderson (D.D.S., 1982), who practices dentistry in Northern Virginia.

All-Negro Comics No. 1 is a 48-page anthology comic published in June 1947. It is noted not only for being the first comic by African-American creators, but also for its positive portrayal of African-American characters. Characters such as detective Ace Harlem and Lion Man, a college-educated scientist superhero, were pioneers in an era in which most African-American comic book characters were racist caricatures.

The Holocaust Torah

A Sefer Torah, a powerful symbol and moving presence in Jewish worship and community life, was restored and prepared for display in 2015-16. Presented by an alumni couple with deep connections to the university, it is held and safeguarded by the VCU Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives. Donors Martin L. Johnson, MD, and Olinda Young, have ties to both MCV and Monroe Park campuses. Johnson did his residency (house staff, plastic surgery, 1980) at MCV, and Young holds dual degrees, a bachelor’s of science in education (1975) and a master’s in public administration (1981). They are avid and eclectic collectors of global art, antiques and artifacts. The Torah scroll, on parchment scribed in the...
The Ancarrow Wildflower Digital Archive

From 1968 to 1971, noted environmentalist Newton Ancarrow documented and photographed more than 400 species of wildflowers along the banks of the James River in Richmond.

VCU Libraries, in partnership with the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden’s library — which owns the collection — and the VCU Rice Rivers Center, has digitized and posted Ancarrow’s wildflower photography online. On view are 354 images and supporting documentation, including field notes and an audio presentation by the environmentalist.

“These slides are special because they’re a snapshot in time at the very early beginnings of the James River Park System — before, during and maybe even a little bit after it was created,” said Anne Wright, director of outreach education for the VCU Rice Rivers Center and an assistant professor in the Department of Biology in the College of Humanities and Sciences. “So, as a time capsule, they’re very interesting.” Wright is the director of Science in the Park, an online collection of videos, lesson plans and activities, narrated walking tours and guides to the geology, flora and fauna of the James River.

customary Hebrew, was composed in Romania around 1750. During World War II, it was confiscated by the Nazis. It is believed to be from an area of Transnistria, known as the Romanian Auschwitz. Registration numbers and stamps confirm its provenance and also that the scroll was held by the Communists. It was repatriated to Israel in 2003. Israeli authorities released the scroll for private ownership. It is considered to be in excellent condition, according to the rare books and manuscripts appraiser who authenticated the artifact.

VCU Libraries will unveil the Torah at a future event. It will be on display and available for use by researchers and classes. “We look forward to making this symbol of survival and hope available to our entire community for teaching, learning and remembrance, always with appropriate reverence and respect,” said University Librarian John E. Ulmschneider.

“Silent Witness” honored the lives of Virginians killed as a result of domestic violence. Students in “CRJS 352: Crime and Delinquency Prevention” created the exhibition and a companion campus wide prevention program aimed at reducing intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Library research was a big part of their effort. They reviewed subject literature and examined evidence-based practices for advocacy.

“There is no substitute for authentic learning experiences like these. Lectures are great. I can present my students with a host of statistics and analysis, but learning through action allows my students to achieve real objectives for the community and gives them a deeper understanding of the skills needed to address a complex public health issue like domestic violence,” said Wilder School Assistant Professor Amy Cook, Ph.D.

“It puts the students — not me — in charge of their education. And in the process, they tap into all of their senses. Experience enhances understanding and understanding leads to more effective action. Not to mention a better prepared professional.”

The visual display featured six life-size wooden silhouettes of Virginians—men, women and children—each painted red and bearing a golden shield with the details of the victim’s story.

CHAPTER 4 | Transforming Our Community

A Crossroads of Ideas

VCU Libraries hosts many short-term exhibits of broad interest to our communities
A Center for National Exhibits

National Library of Medicine displays visit Tompkins-McCaw annually

Exhibits of medical artifacts and curated shows about the history of medicine are staged regularly at Tompkins-McCaw Library. It’s also a regular center for National Library of Medicine traveling exhibits. Tompkins-McCaw Library hosted the traveling National Library of Medicine exhibit “Pictures of Nursing: The Zwerdling Collection.” Drawing from the extensive Zwerdling Collection of postcards housed at the National Library of Medicine, the exhibit explores how nursing was seen during those times.

The library generally hosts two of these exhibits annually. Also on view in 2015–16 was “Frankenstein: Penetrating the Secrets of Nature.” The exhibit draws from a variety of sources, including materials documenting medical discoveries from the time of Mary Shelley, to explore the scientific backdrop and lasting impact of her famous novel’s title character.

Image: “A postcard commemorating the 16th International Council of Nurses held in Tokyo, 1977,” from the Japanese Nursing Association

Community Digitization Program

In 2015, the VCU Libraries initiated its Community Digitization Program, a distinctive effort to collaborate with other libraries and cultural heritage institutions in Virginia to digitize their materials and expose them to students and scholars worldwide. The program has generated great interest and has resulted in intriguing collections thus far, the Ancarrow Wildflower Digital Archive and the archives of the Mighty Pen Project (writings by armed forces veterans), with others in progress. VCU Libraries has successfully partnered with the following organizations and individuals in building some of our existing Digital Collections.

- Historic Richmond: Broad Street Old and Historic District, Richmond
- Kay Seidenberg: Nursing Postcard Collection
- Lyrasis Digitization Collaborative: VCU Yearbooks
- Museum of the Confederacy: Robertson Hospital Register
- Individual Donors: Farmville 1963 Civil Rights Protest, Rarely Seen in Richmond
- U. S. Army: PS Magazine
- Valentine Museum: Through the Lens of Time, Historic Fulton Oral History Project
- Dr. John Kneebone, VCU History: Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1940
- Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and the VCU Rice Rivers Center: The Ancarrow Wildflower Digital Archive
- VCU Yearbooks
- Rarely Seen Richmond
- PS Magazine
- Historic Fulton Oral Histories
In the new gallery space on the second floor at Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences, an exhibit displayed artifacts from Base Hospital No. 45, a unit of physicians and nurses trained at the Medical College of Virginia who served in France during World War I. The exhibit and a companion online exhibit highlighted what the unit from MCV did during the Great War, but also reflected what health care and medicine was like at the time. Dr. Stuart McGuire, who at the time was dean of the Medical College of Virginia, commanded the unit, which was deployed to France in July 1918. The exhibit featured a surgeon’s uniform that belonged to Dr. Robert Grant Willis, who graduated from the University College of Medicine in 1913 and was commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Army in October 1917. It also featured the outdoor nurse’s uniform of Ethlynde Smith, a 1915 graduate of the Virginia City Hospital, two steamer trunks from Base Hospital No. 45, a surgeon’s field kit and dental instruments, photos and more.

“Edith Cavell: A Nurse Who Did Her Duty,” at Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences, showcases an icon of the war effort and the nursing profession. The exhibit showcased a collection of rare World War I-era postcards that depict a British nurse who heroically treated soldiers from both sides of the war before she was executed by the Germans. “She is quite well known in Great Britain,” said Jodi Koste, university archivist and head of Tompkins-McCaw Library Special Collections and Archives. “The British used her as a propaganda weapon both in recruiting soldiers for the war effort and for general support at home of the war effort. She definitely became a martyr.”

The postcards are part of a collection donated to Tompkins-McCaw Library Special Collections and Archives by Art and Kay Seidenberg. Art Seidenberg, Ph.D., is a biologist who taught in VCU’s College of Humanities and Sciences and retired as assistant dean, and who serves on the board of the Friends of VCU Libraries. Kay Seidenberg graduated from the VCU School of Nursing in 1985. The new exhibition coincided with VCU Libraries’ launch of a digital gallery of the Seidenberg’s postcard collection.
TRANSFORMING our organization
Early adoption of new technological foundation puts VCU on the leading edge, ensures broad access to digital materials and introduces vast staff and management efficiencies.

Libraries use automated systems to purchase, catalog, circulate and otherwise manage their collections. In 2011, VCU Libraries was at a crossroads with its automated system. Nearing the end of its lifecycle, the Aleph system was limited in a fast-changing web environment. It ran on expensive servers that were scheduled to be replaced within the year. Windows interface programs had to be installed and maintained on all staff computers.

Updates were planned several years in advance and were laborious to test and install. The parent of Aleph, Ex Libris, approached VCU Libraries with an offer to become one of a handful of early adopters of a replacement system, Alma, that was in development. The nascent system lacked some functionality. But library leadership had confidence in the company’s ability to deliver a superior product, improved in iterations through feedback and direction from early-adopter librarians.

A cost-benefit analysis made the move to Alma attractive. VCU Libraries went into production with Alma in October 2012. As of 2015-16, VCU’s calculated risk is paying dividends of higher quality users experiences and more efficient internal operations.

• Staff and funds previously devoted to maintaining servers and clients are now being applied to enhancing the environment for the VCU community.
• The cloud-based system is updated monthly, so users are able to take advantage of the latest technological developments.
• Though it supports all resource types, the system is optimized for processing digital objects, which has become the dominate feature of the VCU collection.
• A single web-based interface has provided a powerful platform for staff to use the system wherever they are located, breaking up the silos among types of resources.
• Automated, configurable workflows are a key feature of Alma. Tasks are automatically routed to different areas of the library, which has reduced the turnaround time for materials and lessened the number of misdirected requests.
• A final key component of Alma is its rich analytics, making for evidence-based decision making. More than ever, VCU Libraries is looking to the expressed behavior of its users, activity of its peers and industry benchmarks to guide its continual adoption of the future.

The technological foundation of Alma puts VCU Libraries on the leading edge of library automation. Research libraries are accelerating their migration to Alma, and VCU is frequently consulted on how to make optimum use of the system. Alma has introduced a high level of collaboration among user libraries. The advent of a “community zone” means that thousands of records — or in some cases hundreds of thousands — in a digital collection can be made instantaneously available to users, which would have been impossible with previous systems. Alma is built upon open standards and open APIs, emphasizing even more the need for large-scale cooperation among libraries and industry.

“The community zone promotes standardization among libraries, making it much more efficient to share information and lessen the time spent on preparing records,” says Senior Associate University Librarian John K. Duke. He led the team that implemented the new system. “Already, a half dozen colleges and universities in Virginia are using Alma, with more in the planning stage. Discussions are underway at VCU on how we might extend Alma for cooperative collection development and shared circulation, so collections can be shared easily among cooperating libraries. This will create new savings and efficiencies across the commonwealth.”

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Moving in the Right Direction

Three big achievements in fundraising mark the fiscal year

1. PROMISE OF A $1 MILLION MATCH
   The Cabell Foundation, known for its strategic and generous support throughout Richmond and Virginia, awarded a $1 million challenge grant to VCU Libraries. Money raised will assist VCU Libraries in fully outfitting and equipping the new James Branch Cabell Library, as well as provide funding for future needs. The grant, awarded in December, 2015, challenges VCU Libraries to raise $1 million in new gifts and pledges by June 30, 2017. When VCU Libraries reaches that goal, the foundation will commit $1 million, bringing the total raised to $2 million for the new library. Half the funds raised will support the New Building Fund, which will outfit and equip the new library with the kind of furnishings and equipment not provided by state funds. The other half of the funds will create a permanent Library of the Future Fund, an endowment earmarked to continually update technology in the building and to replace worn-out, broken and outdated furniture.

   The Cabell Foundation is such a tremendous friend and partner of VCU. Their visionary support over many years has forever impacted the university, and for this, we are most grateful."

   — VCU President Michael Rao

2. A RECORD YEAR
   On June 30, VCU Libraries closed the books on a record year of fundraising with $766,294 in gifts and pledges given by 803 donors. Our new building and new spaces inspired many to give for the first time: We more than doubled the number of donations from 378 last year to 803 in FY16. The types of gifts varied — from the 117 individuals who donated books for future book sales to the 172 individuals who joined or renewed membership in the VCU Friends of the Libraries (a 12 percent increase) to those who made gifts of stock, five-year pledges and planned gifts.

   For many years, the Friends of VCU Libraries held an annual book sale to raise funds to support library programs. The annual fall sale was not held in 2014 and 2015 during construction of the new library. During the hiatus, the development office and the book sale committee evaluated the sale and decided that it, like the building itself, was due for a makeover.

   While the book sale provides income for Friends programming, it also requires an investment of hundreds of hours of staff and volunteer time to organize and manage the sale. “Nationwide, lots of libraries hold book sales. Generally, as a fundraising tool, they’re not terribly efficient. They’re hard, dusty work and they demand lots time,” said Kelly Gotschalk, director of development and major gifts for VCU Libraries. “Their greatest value is in their community

3. STAFF AND FACULTY GENEROSITY
   VCU Libraries played a significant role in the university’s inaugural faculty and staff giving campaign. Library faculty and staff made gifts and pledges in excess of $32,000 to the New Library Fund and the Library of the Future Fund. Many library faculty and staff also supported other areas of VCU, including Virginia’s Caring Scholarship, VCU Athletics and the Massey Cancer Center. Non-library employees gave more than $5,000 to the libraries. We are humbled by and grateful for the financial support of our many generous colleagues.

   The Friends of the VCU Libraries and the VCU Emerging Leaders Program forge winning partnership

Stronger Together
engagement aspects. People rally around the sale and like to help. For book lovers, it’s the ultimate reuse-recycle shopping experience, and you can buy wonderful books for very little money.”

How could VCU’s book sale move to the next level in its community service and be better managed in the future? The answer Gotschalk arrived at: tap VCU’s deep student talent pool.

The libraries turned to the Emerging Leaders Program. This initiative of the Division of Student Affairs matches 40 first-year students with 20 sophomore to learn about leadership through both study and action. Students work on service projects that directly impact the quality of life at VCU or in the greater RVA community. Students need to raise funds for these projects.

The student leaders group and the Friends agreed to a labor and profit-sharing partnership with the book sale. Students help promote and staff the sale that yields funds that rollover into their own community service projects.

“A portion of the money generated from books donated to the libraries will immediately and directly benefit important student-centered projects on campus,” said Gotschalk.

The result of the partnership? A one-day spring sale exceeded $5,000. “The students also brought more students to the sale than I recall participating previously,” said University Librarian John E. Ulmschneider.

LEARNING AND TEACHING
Partner with faculty throughout VCU to provide students and faculty with the skills to be successful students, researchers, scholars and informed citizens.

- Invest in teaching innovation
- Enhance student success
- Engage with online and active education
- Advance collaborative learning and teaching environments through innovative technologies

ADVANCE RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY
Advance research enterprise at VCU by providing expert knowledge of information assets and how to use and manage them.

- Strengthen investments in research-level collections and technologies for using them
- Create robust liaison relationships with faculty
- Lead VCU in building research data management and data curation capabilities
- Collaborate with VCU faculty in research

FOSTER SCHOLARLY EXPRESSION AT VCU
Expand options for students and faculty to expose their intellectual output to the world.

- Develop digital repository technology and program for VCU scholarly output
- Elevate faculty understanding of copyright, author’s rights, new models of publishing and assessment of their scholarly work
- Expand digital content and digital publishing from VCU

A COMMUNITY FOR INTELLECTUAL PURSUIT
Provide spaces and environments that act as a catalyst for intellectual pursuit in all its forms.

- Maximize utility of safe, secure library spaces dedicated to learning, research and collaboration
- Invigorate library physical environment through the use of artwork and exhibitions
- Seek opportunities for event programming and collaborations with cultural heritage institutions that enrich learning and research for the Central Virginia region

OUTSTANDING STEWARDSHIP OF ASSETS
Ensure the most effective use of space, collections and staff on behalf of the communities we serve.

- Establish and support a culture of assessment throughout the VCU Libraries
- Grow private funding support
- Bolster staff development and recognition to create accomplished staff and new ways of working

Creating the 21st century research library at VCU Strategic Framework 2014-2017
Leadership Roles

Teresa L. Knott was sworn in as president of the board of the Medical Libraries Association at its May 13-18, 2016, conference in Toronto. Knott is an Associate University Librarian and Director of Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences. The MLA is the nation’s leading organization devoted to health sciences librarianship.

Dennis Clark was among 28 librarians selected by the Association of Research Libraries to participate in the 2016–2017 Leadership Fellows program. Clark is the Associate University Librarian for Research and Learning. This executive leadership program facilitates the development of future senior-level leaders in large research libraries and archives.

VCU Libraries is a founding member of Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) and the Coalition for Network Information (CNI). It is also a resource library of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) and a member of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL), the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), the Richmond Academic Library of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL), the Virtual of Medicine (NNLM) and a member of the Association and the Coalition for Network Information (CNI). It is also a resource library of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) and a member of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL), the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), the Richmond Academic Library Consortium (RALS) and the Center for Research Libraries (CRL).

Our communities and their needs constantly change and evolve, and we change and evolve with them. Acquiring and managing library materials, teaching our students, and making free and lost-cost textbooks and other course materials available to students to help reduce textbook expenses. VCU Libraries also is focusing significant effort on expanding access to its rare and unique materials in special collections by digitization and other means, and in raising funds to improve library spaces so heavily used by students.”

—University Librarian John E. Ulmschneider

BOLSTER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 5 | Outstanding stewardship of assets

Selected accomplishments and examples of engagement

Samples of scholarship and presentations and contributions to librarianship:

- Ghaphery, J., Baggett, M., McNulty, and Owens, E. (2016). territory folks should all be pals: Qualitative use of search logs to improve confidence in and communication about a library discovery service. Presented at Ex Libris Users of North America Annual Conference.

Medical Library Association Deep involvement

Tompkins-McCaw librarians are active in their profession. Here’s a snapshot of their involvement at just one conference: the 2016 conference in Toronto.

POSTERS

- Be Part of the Big Picture Through Community Engagement: Collaboration and Partnership Provide Summer Library Programs for Middle School Students. Irene Lukber, Dana Ladd and Thelma Mack
- Therapy Dogs in a Patient Library. Dana Ladd

PAPERS

- Seeing the Big Picture: Sustaining Success in Liaison Services. Roy Brown, John Cyrus, Karen Gau, Irene Lukber, Jennifer McDaniel, Barbara Wright and Emily Hurst
- Examining the Pieces: Usability Testing to Improve Outreach to Unaffiliated Health Professionals. Emily Hurst, Irene Lukber, Barbara Wright
- Enhancing Understanding of a Research Discipline Through the Use of Text Mining Analyses. Jennifer McDaniel and Jane Yatcilla of Purdue University

LIGHTNING TALKS

- Crafting a Mosaic: Partnerships Between Health Sciences Libraries, Postdocs, and More. Karen Gau
- Mosaic Collaborations: Research Speed Networking for Clinicians, Engineers and Scientists. Karen Gau and Pam Dillion from VCU CCTR.
COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS
Public relations garner notice in key professional circles

- Award of Excellence, Friends of the Library brochure, ALADN annual conference communications contest, 2016
- Award of Merit, newsletters, “Enews for faculty, a university’s toughest audience,” Virginia Public Relations Society Awards, 2016
- Award of Merit, media relations, KKK Mapping Project, Virginia Public Relations Society Awards, 2016
- Winner, Special Programs, exhibits and events, The Sanger Series, American Library Association’s PR Exchange Awards program, 2015
- Award of Excellence, multicultural public relations, Freedom Now Project, Virginia Public Relations Society Awards, 2015
- Award of Merit, multicultural public relations, Diversity and Identity Poster Series, Virginia Public Relations Society Awards, 2015

- Peacemaker, B. (2016). Finding funding to introduce to grant search tools and resources at VCU. Presented at Ready, Set, Grant! Workshops on Competitive Grantwriting at VCU.
- Roseberry, M., and Peacemaker, B. (2015). Your key(tag) to success: A creative and customizable method to promote research guides. Poster presented at the SLA Annual Conference (All Sciences Poster Session), Boston, MA.
- Stout, J.A. (2015). From books to MOOCs: On becoming the course librarian for a massive open online course. Presented at LOEX conference in Denver, CO.
MCV Foundation grant funds postcard project that inserts replicas of vintage Rarely Seen Richmond in VCU alumni magazines, with some 10,000 circulation.

“Bringing Down Jim Crow” exhibit at the Supreme Court of Virginia features images from VCU Libraries.

Comic Arts Collections holdings loaned to NY Historical Society exhibit on comic arts and Gotham.
Letters of Support
Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

It is with great pride that I submit this letter of support for Virginia Commonwealth University’s application for the ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. The faculty and staff of VCU Libraries exemplify the award’s purpose and have built a vibrant academic focal point for the community through its deep collections, contributions to the university’s commitment to excellence in teaching, research, community engagement and patient care, and leadership in the library and information science profession.

Virginia Commonwealth University is a major, urban public research university that is designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as “R1: doctoral universities, highest research activity” and is also recognized as a Carnegie Community Engaged Institution. VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 220 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities, including programs on VCU’s comprehensive education campus. The VCU Libraries consists of James Branch Cabell Library on VCU’s Monroe Park Campus, Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences on VCU’s Medical College of Virginia (MCV) Campus, the Community Health Education Center at the VCU Medical Center, and the VCUQatar Arts Library at VCU’s School of the Arts on Qatar’s Education City campus.

The deep collections of the VCU Libraries have enhanced the university’s national distinction in areas ranging from arts to medicine. Important to the region and VCU’s outreach mission, the VCU Libraries has committed to building collections that document minority and activist communities in Virginia and the region that are not addressed by other libraries and cultural heritage institutions. Oral histories of civil right leaders, the papers of regional organizations devoted to women’s rights and civil rights, and materials documenting the LGBT community in Virginia form the core of this research collection. The VCU Libraries has the distinction of being the only academic library in Virginia with materials in the opening exhibits of the National Museum of African-American History and Culture. The VCU Libraries has recently acquired the Social Welfare History portal, a unique and powerful online resource on social welfare history.

The VCU Libraries plays a leading role in implementing crucial institution priorities. For example, the library system leads the university in its work on affordable course content to reduce textbook costs, with a VCU librarian as one of two system leaders for the Open Textbook Initiative and ORCHID to further develop VCU’s overall data management and curation capabilities.

Expanding their scholarly expertise and community relationships to address pressing issues of the day, the VCU Libraries fosters intellectual and cultural dialog through a vigorous and highly successful series of programs and events that enjoy among the highest attendance of any cultural events at VCU, regularly drawing thousands of students, faculty, staff, and community members to our campuses. In 2015 the VCU Libraries initiated its Community Digitization Program, a distinctive effort to collaborate with other libraries and cultural heritage institutions in Virginia to digitize their materials and expose them to students and scholars worldwide. The program has resulted in two intriguing collections thus far, the Ancarrow Wildflower Digital Archive and the archives of the Mighty Pen Project (writings by armed forces veterans), with others in progress.

The VCU Libraries maintains deep engagement and leadership roles at the university in teaching, research, community engagement and strategic planning. Librarians hold faculty appointments on university curricular, policy and governance bodies. In addition, librarians from VCU have served the profession with distinction in a wide range of state, regional, and national organizations including the American Library Association, the Medical Library Association and the Association of College and Research Libraries. VCU librarians have a strong and distinguished record in scholarly publications and editing for professional and research publications.

In recognition of these and many more successes as a major research library system, we are delighted that the VCU Libraries will become the 125th member of the Association of Research Libraries. VCU librarians have a strong and distinguished record in scholarly publications and editing for professional and research publications.

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Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Gail Hackett, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

November 30, 2017

Association of College and Research Libraries
Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Committee
50 E. Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611

VCU Libraries

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Gail Hackett, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
November 20, 2017

Dear ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Committee:

I am writing in support of the Virginia Commonwealth University Library’s application for the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. As the Chair of the Department of Focused Inquiry in the University College, I oversee three courses which are the foundation of the Core Curriculum at VCU. These three courses—UNIV 111, 112, and 200—are interdisciplinary, seminar-style, writing-intensive courses taken by nearly 10,000 students first- and second-year students annually. Our department partners closely with the Teaching and Learning librarians at VCU Libraries in order to develop our students’ information fluency skills through course-integrated instruction and online resources to annually review and revise our student learning outcomes focused on information fluency, and to engage students in our Common Book program.

One Teaching and Learning Librarian serves as a dedicated liaison for our department. She attends our Curriculum Committee and our Information Fluency Committee meetings to help us shape our information fluency student learning outcomes and faculty development goals through her disciplinary expertise. These student learning outcomes are developed and annually reviewed in committee and are designed to be useful to students in their UNIV coursework, later university coursework, and their eventual careers. The library liaison also attends numerous faculty development events in order to stay informed about changes in our curriculum and classroom practices. In addition, each faculty member partners with a designated T&L librarian to meaningfully incorporate library instruction, services, and resources into their classes. These two initiatives—the department liaison and designated librarians—ensure effective communication between our units and enhance the quality of instruction and research assistance provided to students.

Faculty members teaching UNIV 112 and UNIV 200 commonly integrate librarian-led instruction sessions into their course design. Approximately 80-85% of all UNIV 112 sections and 90-95% of all UNIV 200 sections include these sessions every semester. Like our courses, the librarian-led classroom sessions are designed based on active learning approaches and are often tailored to the needs of individual instructors and classes.

Faculty members teaching all three courses rely on the array of online resources to support students in learning how to find, evaluate, and use information. Among these resources created by the library and maintain on the library website, the videos are particularly useful and popular with students. Faculty and students also make use of the highly accessible and student-friendly research assistance available at VCU libraries via one-on-one consultations, drop in help at the Information Desk, and via chat, text, and email.

Our students and faculty alike have benefitted from the new library building. The building includes enticing learning spaces for all types of student work, from individual study spaces to collaborative group learning spaces. As our courses require students to engage in group collaborations including oral presentations, the collaborative group learning spaces are frequently used by our students for planning and rehearsal. We have recently integrated multimodal composition into our curricula, and the Workshop has been invaluable in providing training and access to audio and video recording equipment and editing software to create videos, podcasts, films, and other multimodal compositions.
November 27, 2017

To the ACRL Excellence in Libraries Awards Committee:

It is my pleasure to provide a letter of support on behalf of the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Library and its application for the Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. My experiences working with the dynamic and creative library team are informed by my role as an instructor in VCU’s Department ofFocused Inquiry and as the director of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence. Within these roles, I wish to briefly highlight four modes of engagement that I firmly believe exemplify excellence in library engagement with instruction, faculty development, student resources, and university level general education initiatives.

As an instructor of a writing intensive general education course titled UNIV200 “Inquiry and the Craft of Argument,” the library team has moved beyond that of merely providing support for faculty and students and into the role of a thought partner. By this, I mean that my experiences working with the designated course librarians has been one of equal collaboration in the development of lessons to help guide students through the research and writing process. The VCU library has extensive digital and human resources to assist student research and writing. However, I have found that the most impactful experiences for students are those where I have co-created lessons that align course goals with challenging, but supportive learning experiences. Programmatically, the library team has successfully developed course-integrated instruction sessions for approximately 60-85% of all UNIV 112 sections and 90-95% of all UNIV 200 sections every semester. A good overview of all that librarian-led instruction entails can be found on the Services for UNIV Classes webpage. Although I cannot speak for other instructors, my experiences working with the librarians embodies a unit that is committed to crafting innovative active learning approaches to classroom instruction. My students have benefited from their expertise with strategies to further information literacy. I am hard pressed to think of a time when such care and creativity were dedicated to collectively crafting lessons. I’ve really enjoyed my work with the library team in this capacity. Moreover, these efforts and collaborations exemplify innovative approaches to teaching with strategic attention to furthering university and department goals of cultivating information literacy skills and insights.

As the director of our university’s faculty development unit, I have been impressed with the dynamic efforts the library team has put forth to further faculty development opportunities, create and expand open educational resources for students, and participate in university level general education initiatives. I have been directly involved with the library’s efforts to host faculty development seminars on a variety of topics for faculty. These efforts have taken place on both our main campus and our health campus. I collaborated with librarians to host a faculty symposium on creative library instruction, and have presented multiple time to faculty on the Art of the Engaged Lecture. These events are examples of the VCU library team’s proactive efforts to interface in innovative ways with faculty throughout the university.

The library has also led an effort to work with and sponsor faculty to create and expand open educational resources (OER) for students. This work is directly aligned with the Provost’s priority to reduce financial stress that often act as barriers to retention and completion for students at VCU. I have had the honor to work as a part of the planning team to create seed grants to help faculty develop their OER work. The program is in its first iteration with plans to continue.

A final example I wish to highlight captures the aspirational and strategic vision of the VCU libraries as an active participant in crafting impactful institutional programs. The library regularly dedicates team members to institutional level efforts including the general education task force, strategic planning workgroups, and faculty programs like LOFTI (Learning Outcomes Faculty Teaching Initiative). The library team has played an instrumental part in developing standards for information literacy to be eventually applied across the university. These efforts have positioned library team members as equal thought partners, rather than mere service providers. It has been one of the highlights of my tenure at VCU to work with this team.

It is without reservation that I give my recommendation for the VCU library and its application for this award.

Sincerely,

Enoch Hale, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Teaching & Learning Excellence
Office of Faculty Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University
1000 Floyd Ave, Suite 4102b
Richmond, VA
804-827-2002
November 22, 2017

To the Association of College & Research Libraries:

It is an honor to provide a letter of support for Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries’ application for an ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. My perspective is given as president and supporter of VCU Friends of the Libraries, as well as a member of several VCU alumni boards.

Our librarians and staff work tirelessly with faculty, students, and the community to further our vision of scholarship and inclusiveness. A few of these initiatives are outlined below:

- Our new James Branch Cabell (JBC) Library allowed us to engage alumni, faculty, and students in designing and implementing a mother’s room within JBC. We have a diverse students and faculty who require time with their infants and children while studying and working, and this room is an innovation on the Monroe Park Campus of VCU. It is open to all who need privacy with their babies, and we are using this to engage other Colleges and Schools within VCU to add similar rooms.

- The community outreach by our librarians and staff is never ending, and our programs are free of charge to our students, faculty, and community. To name a few, these events are film series, special collections and archives events, Cabell first novelist awards, black history month speakers, historical speakers, and collaborations with the arts, sciences, and education communities within VCU and the Richmond metropolitan area.

- Our wonderful librarians are true innovators in VCU classrooms as well as our metropolitan area. They educate the students, faculty, community, and Friends of the Libraries about technology, special collection and archives, historical events, medical and scientific advances, while continually celebrating our diversity. The programs bring our community together, and help us to ascertain that through knowledge and understanding one another we become stronger.

Our libraries are the center of research, collaboration, and outreach to VCU and the community. We are continually improving and adapting to the changes within the University and society. It is my opinion, that VCU Libraries will be a wonderful recipient of your Excellence in Academic Libraries Award.

Sincerely,

Stephanie L. Holt, President
VCU Friends of the Libraries
Stephanie.L.Holt@comcast.net
Dear Review Committee:

I write with enthusiasm in support of VCU Libraries’ candidacy for the ACRL’s Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. My first encounters with VCU Libraries came some 30 years ago, as a co-editor of the Dictionary of Virginia Biography project, when I explored the collections, especially strong on Richmond’s recent history, and recruited talented Library faculty to contribute to the project. Technology has revolutionized librarianship (and scholarship) since then, but VCU Libraries’ commitment to the university and its urban mission has held true.

During my fourteen years at VCU, the History Department and the Library have become close partners. Both undergraduate and graduate research seminars welcome Library faculty for bibliographical instruction, and our historical methods courses would be incomplete without visits to the Library’s special collections. Meanwhile, faculty are making creative use of the Library’s digital collections in the classroom. My undergraduate seminar on 20th-century Richmond, for instance, includes bibliographical instruction, online digital sources, and original manuscript materials, with students developing research topics out of those Library resources.

In addition to being a highly satisfied Libraries user, I was involved in one of the community digitization projects, Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1940. I brought to a team at the Library a data collection on Klan units across the U.S. The team worked to map the data and then guided me through preparation of the accompanying explanatory texts. It was a great experience to work together and to present to an audience that spanned schoolchildren to academic scholars.

The Libraries’ team ensured national publicity for the project, and we continue to hear from people interested in the project. The community digitization project carries on the VCU Libraries’ engagement with Richmond and its history. The Libraries document VCU’s history, the histories of powerful civic associations and leaders, and also collect the records and stories of less-powerful Richmonders. That foundational work promises creative scholarship in the future. The Libraries themselves are campus hubs, full of energy and welcoming places for students and faculty.

The VCU Libraries enable scholarship, engage with the community, and encourage innovative teaching and learning. I consider the Libraries’ faculty my colleagues in a shared endeavor, and colleagues from whom I learn nearly every day. I wish that I could package the collective energy at the Libraries for the committee to experience! Please do look well at the VCU Libraries’ application.

Sincerely,

John T. Kneebone
Chair, Department of History
VCU Libraries has been an invaluable asset in another area: identifying and sharing outside contacts for select services. For the preservation of outdated audio and film formats, the library staff has provided connections to local and national sources for museum quality archival digitization and preservation. The staff has also provided consultation and expert guidance on formatting choices for usage, display, and storage options. This has facilitated the sharing of final project materials among multiple partners for multiple usages and has been a huge benefit to our researchers and community users.

A last of the library services that I continue to use and benefit from are the resources available at The Workshop and Innovative Media. This space allows students and faculty to try out the latest media tools for creating photographic, audio, and video products with assistance from knowledgeable and encouraging staff and student interns. Using these resources has been enormously helpful in expanding my skills in a variety of new media formats and in making informed computer, software, and license purchases. As an example, in collaboration with an Innovative Media intern, we produced a light-based art piece for a high visibility public exhibition in 2016. As faculty, being able to sample current technologies along with assistance and consultation on copyright and intellectual property issues has added immensely to the production of my educational and outreach materials.

In summary, I strongly feel that VCU Libraries is an excellent candidate for this award. They have visionary leadership, a breadth of knowledge that spans many disciplines, a dedication to enriching and supporting both student and faculty creativity and learning, and a commitment to our community that is far-reaching and sincere. I really cannot say enough positive things about the resources and people of the Libraries, and I hope that you find them worthy of this wonderful award!

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Anne Wright
Director, Life Sciences Outreach Education
Assistant Professor, VCU Department of Biology
abwright@vcu.edu

November 27, 2017

ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Awards Program
Association of College & Research Libraries
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2788

To the Awards Committee:

I am pleased to add this letter of support to the VCU Libraries application for the ACRL Libraries Excellence Award.

Over the past several years, I have worked with VCU Libraries on several collaborative projects and have taken advantage of the services provided by several library units to expand and enhance my skills. In all instances, the leadership, librarians, staff, and facilities have been superior, and I consider VCU Libraries to be one of the most progressive and valuable resources available within our university system for our students, faculty and for our community.

Since 2014, the Libraries Digital Collections has been my cornerstone partner in a community research effort to preserve a historical floristic data set from our city’s iconic James River Park System. The original materials date from the 1960-1970s and consist of Ektachrome slides of 400 plant species found within the Park and a number of associated notebooks, writings, species lists, audio recordings, and films. Digital Collections’ Community Digitization Program is nearing completion of a complete digital archive of these materials. When introduced to the slides and concept of preserving this unique ‘time capsule’ of the park’s early history, the library team immediately embraced the essential role they could play in the projects’ execution. The archive will be used for future research, comparative projects, and guidance for land management practices within the park. This asset for our community is largely due to the foresight, expertise, and generosity of the Libraries directorship and staff and the many hours that they have committed to the project.

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