

2009 ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Program

ENTRY FORM

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES
A Division of the American Library Association

The signed entry form and supporting documentation must be electronically submitted to the ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Program. For further information, please visit our Web site at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlawards/excellenceguidelines.cfm>. Faxed entries will not be accepted.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT THE FOLLOWING:

Name of Nominated Library Wyndham Robertson Library

Name of Institution Hollins University

Name of Library Director/Dean Joan Ruelle

Address P.O. Box 9000

City Roanoke State VA Zip Code 24020

Phone (540) 362-6232 Fax (540) 362-6756 E-mail jruelle@hollins.edu

Institution's Mission Hollins is an independent liberal arts university, established in 1842, dedicated to academic excellence and humane values. Hollins offers undergraduate liberal arts education for women, selected graduate programs for men and women, and community outreach initiatives.

TYPE OF LIBRARY (Please Check One):

Carnegie Classifications are available at www.carnegiefoundation.org/classification.

University

- Doctoral/Research Universities-Extensive
- Doctoral/Research Universities-Intensive
- Master's Colleges and Universities I
- Master's Colleges and Universities II

College

- Baccalaureate Colleges-Liberal Arts
- Baccalaureate Colleges-General
- Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges

Community College

- Associate's Colleges

Submitted by (Full Name/Title): Luke Vilella / Public Services Librarian

Name of Institution Hollins University

Name of Library Wyndham Robertson Library

Address P.O. Box 9000

City Roanoke State VA Zip Code 24020

Phone (540) 362-6592 Fax (540) 362-6756 E-mail lvilella@hollins.edu

I understand that applications will be kept in the award pool for three years. If my institution is selected for the Excellence in Academic Libraries Award, I will organize and sponsor a ceremony on campus for the presentation of the award.

Signature of Library Director/Dean of Nominated Institution John D. Park Date 12/05/08

(All entries must be received by December 5, 2008. They become the property of ACRL and will not be returned.)

Wyndham Robertson Library
Hollins University

Application For:

ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award

December 5, 2008

Introduction

The Wyndham Robertson Library at Hollins University is proud to present this document in support of its application for the ACRL Award for Excellence in Academic Libraries. We appreciate the committee's work in reading and judging these applications, and we thank you for your consideration.

We take great pride in our can-do attitude; our flexibility; our strong sense of community among the library staff; and our high level of engagement with the larger campus community. We hope these traits are clearly visible through this application.

Context

Hollins University is an independent liberal arts university, established in 1842, dedicated to academic excellence and humane values. Hollins offers undergraduate liberal arts education for women, selected graduate programs for men and women, and community outreach initiatives. The Hollins curriculum and co-curricular programs prepare students for lives of active learning, fulfilling work, personal growth, achievement, and service to society.

The university draws its undergraduate population of approximately 800 students from 43 states and 11 countries, and more than 85% of our undergraduates live on campus. The student/faculty ratio is nine to one; 86% of our classes have fewer than 20 students.

In the graduate program, the vast majority of the nearly 300 co-ed students are enrolled part-time in a variety of degree programs –M.F.A.s in children's literature, creative writing, dance, playwriting, screenwriting and film studies and M.A.s in children's literature, liberal studies, screenwriting and film studies, and teaching. Hollins is nationally known for its creative writing program; other areas of strength are film studies, visual arts, dance, psychology, communications, and the riding program.

The Hollins University library encompasses three buildings on campus: the Wyndham Robertson Library, which houses the vast majority of our collection; the Music Library; and the Library Annex, our storage building.



Wyndham Robertson Library

The library staff consists of five professionals, including the library director, six paraprofessionals, and approximately 30 student assistants.

Our library's mission is to "enrich the intellectual life of the University through the integration of resources and services to foster the discovery and effective use of information," and we believe this mission statement is reflected in the activities referenced in this document.

I. Creativity and innovation in meeting the needs of our academic community.

Programming and Outreach

Our library has made it our mission to become fully integrated into the life of our campus community, and we have succeeded on multiple levels – with students and faculty, and inside and outside the library.

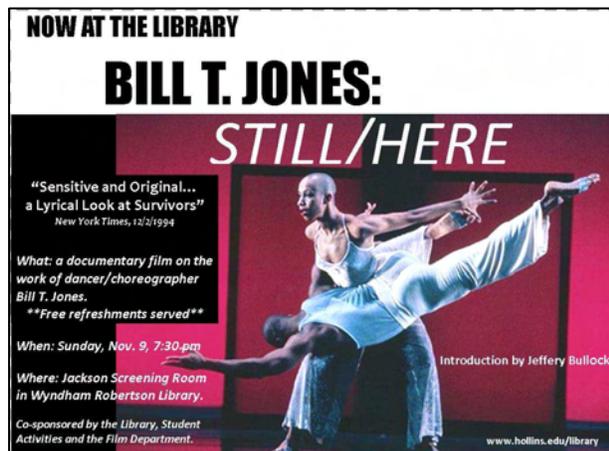
Our staff seeks out opportunities across campus to increase our visibility. We:

- offer programming during Family Weekend (this year: “What is social networking?,” co-presented by a librarian and a student assistant).
- set up at a table at such campus events as the annual academic fair (to showcase our holdings in various disciplines) and the student club fair (where our archivist encourages student organizations to save items and create records of their organizations).
- sponsor a team in the SHARE Olympiad every fall, in which library staff partner with student assistants in such events as the three-legged race, tug of war, and karaoke. SHARE (Students Helping Achieve Rewarding Experiences) raises money for a local organization that provides food to the homeless.
- provide customized orientations for our first-year students, including new non-traditional students and graduate students; for their parents; and for resident assistants, orientation team leaders, and student success leaders.
- offer programming in the library, including literary readings; a documentary film series; and an annual Constitution lecture.



2008 Share Olympiad: our Dewey Decimators show their skill at egg-and-spoon racing

The Beanstalk literary series is the result of an endowment jointly awarded and administered by the Library and the Graduate Creative Writing program to promote the visibility of both areas. While the larger goal of this program is to make the library at Hollins a national literary destination, the mission of the endowment encourages creativity in this approach by stating that its goal is “to bring readers and writers together at the Wyndham Robertson Library and Hollins University.” Notable series readers have included poet laureate William Jay Smith, historian Anna-Lisa Cox, cultural critic Mark Edmundson, and playwright Naomi Wallace.



“Now at the Library,” advertised in the student newspaper

For the documentary film series (“Now at the Library”), which began this fall, our outreach coordinator approached the Student Affairs Office. As it turned out, the office was looking for weekend programming for the students, and we partnered with them. Student Affairs provides refreshments; the library administers and publicizes the shows, provides the space, and coordinates faculty speakers to provide brief intros to each film. Attendance for these monthly documentaries (all films for which we have public performance rights, and selected to correspond to ongoing campus events) has averaged 15 per showing.

The Constitution Lecture was established when an exhibit on the U.S. Constitution drew thanks from the university administration for ensuring Hollins' compliance with federal law. Seeing an opportunity, the government documents coordinator suggested that the university fund an annual lecture, to be organized and hosted by the library. For the past three years, the Constitution Lecture has been delivered by distinguished speakers from Virginia institutions (for example, a University of Virginia Law School professor). The event has become an opportunity for the library to collaborate with the Political Science faculty to select an appropriate speaker, and with student political groups to organize a post-lecture reception. Our 2008 lecture, “Where have you gone, Ruth Bader Ginsburg?”, drew a standing-room only audience of more than 100 people.

The extended hours and free coffee and snacks we offer during finals are also a product of cross-campus collaborations. Student Affairs contributes monetary support for the snacks, such as ramen and soups (we listen to our students, and they ask for small meals more than salty/sweet food), that we make available during our popular late-night hours. We keep the library open 24 hours on Reading Day, and extend our opening hours from midnight to 2 a.m. both the weeks before and during exams.

“Thank you so much for the coffee and help over the year!”
(Student comment card)

Our library also takes advantage of informal opportunities across the campus. Every Friday during the fall and spring semesters, a faculty member offers a 30-minute presentation on their research during lunchtime. Although librarians do not have faculty rank at Hollins, all of the library’s staff has a permanent invitation to attend Faculty Lunch, and most attend every week. In addition, the library is frequently given an opportunity to present: past sessions have included an introduction to new library databases (in pecha kucha format); an in-depth examination of the Internet Archive; and the library’s Greatest Hits (our favorite resources).

Participation in campus events is part of every library staff member’s job description. For example, our new night circulation assistant (hired in April 2008) wrote the script for the annual new faculty/staff skit during Tinker Day (a Hollins tradition in which the Hollins community takes the day off from classes, climbs a nearby mountain, eats lunch, and then performs a variety of skits). By the end of Tinker Day, and after a dance-off to decide the skit winner featuring our night circulation assistant, the crowd was chanting, “Library, Library, Library.” The festivities still resonate today via videos posted to Facebook.

Our staff also leaves the building for more traditional reasons. Two of our staff members teach classes on a regular basis. Library director Joan Ruelle is an adjunct instructor in the Gender and Women's Studies Department, and teaches a class every other year. Maryke Barber teaches a non-Western theater class offered every other year.

The Library Building

Although we enjoy leaving the library frequently to integrate ourselves into the community, we also recognize that our library building is one of our greatest strengths. Opened in 1999, the Wyndham Robertson Library attracts a great number of people to us. The library celebrates Hollins University's contribution to the literary world as Virginia's first National Literary Landmark (a designation received from the national organization Friends of Libraries U.S.A.). The Hollins Room, located on the top floor of the building, is one of the premier meeting locations on campus, and is the usual location for Board of Trustees meetings. The Jackson Screening Room, located on the library's ground floor, offers theater-quality lighting and sound and can seat 40 people.



Instruction Session in the Lewis Reading Room

The attractiveness and comfort of our building make the library a destination for many students. Food and drinks are permitted, and can be purchased from vending machines in a café-style area. Both the first-floor Lewis Reading Room and the second-floor balcony that overlook it offer beautiful vistas of an untouched hillside. The Lewis Reading Room also hosts our annual Rock the Stacks concert. At this event, a collaboration with Admissions and Student Affairs and part of a spring visit for potential students, the band sets up on the first floor, and attendees (50 in 2007 and 100 in 2008) can enjoy the music in the reading room, or from the balcony above.

Our third-floor "living room" features sofas and lounge chairs for relaxation, while our loft, perched above the third floor and complete with large pillows, is a popular destination for students who wish to really get away to a quiet place (and yes, sometimes sleep!).

For those who wish to use the building as work space, we have 40 public computers (all with office productivity programs installed). Ten are located in our library instruction room, which is made available as a computer lab when not in use. We also are committed, even as a private institution, to allowing the general public access to our computers.

Students who bring laptops to the library have the option of either accessing the Internet via wireless, or by using one of the wired ports available at most of the study carrels in the library.

Our collections

As popular as our building is, we also work hard to make sure the depth and breadth of our collections are visible to the students. We are extremely proud of the resources we can offer given our size.

Our communications coordinator produces monthly newsletters that are posted in the library and across the campus. Monthly table tents are also distributed on library tables and in the dining hall. Library announcements (about upcoming events, new resources, etc.) are regularly posted to the campus online portal (my.hollins).

We also take advantage of the fact most Hollins undergraduates live on campus by setting up bookmobiles in the campus dining hall once a month. We bring either themed materials (e.g., horror stories at Halloween) or simply a sampling of new books and DVDs. During those two hours of bookmobile time, we average 20 check-outs. Even more valuable than the steady circulation of materials is the interaction with the many students, staff and faculty who stop to browse the materials and chat with the librarians (after a year and a half of bookmobiles, we now recognize several “regulars” that stop and browse every time). We get a lot of positive comments regarding this service; conversations also regularly lead to reference follow-up when the bookmobile packs up and returns to the library.



Bookmobile: staff members Amanda and Maryke advertise new books and extended library hours for exam week.

Our faculty members are heavily involved in building our collection, and in some cases spend all the materials order money allotted to particular departments. The librarians do retain money for discretionary spending, so that they may balance the collection as needed. Our current collection consists of nearly 240,000 volumes, and we added 4,854 volumes to the collection in the most recent year (while withdrawing 934 volumes).

When the campus released its new strategic plan in 2006, two of the four emphases were on leadership and sustainability. The library responded with efforts to align collections and services with the greater campus effort. That same spring, a budget line was established to purchase materials for leadership studies; a staff member enrolled in library school was encouraged to evaluate the existing collection and work with leadership program administrators and faculty, to assess program needs and develop purchase lists. Her semester-long project resulted not only in new acquisitions, but also a library exhibit and brochure to highlight them, along with a pathfinder page on the library website.

Similar collection development efforts in the area of environmental sustainability resulted in additions on the subject of a sustainable campus, as well as materials to support the university's new major in environmental studies. Our library has worked to support the effort to "green" our campus with new initiatives to increase materials recycling, and reduce energy use. These efforts have even been noticed by students; when a campus environmental group organized an informational "energy fair" this fall, they invited the library to participate with an environmentally oriented bookmobile.

“Hurray for the library go green!
You all are great!”
Renee Godard
(Professor of Biology and
Environmental Studies)

Our collection also benefits from a long-standing reciprocal borrowing arrangement we established with Roanoke College (a private liberal arts college located eight miles away in Salem). We share our integrated library system and public access catalog, and our students may either use the Roanoke library (this option is particularly useful to nontraditional students who live nearby) or request via the catalog any circulating item that Roanoke owns. The material will be delivered the next weekday by a courier service. In this manner, we have doubled the size of the collection accessible to our students. During 2007-08, the Hollins community checked out 2,420 Roanoke College items, accounting for 15% of the total circulation to Hollins affiliates.

Interlibrary Loan is also an option for our students, faculty and staff. Even as a small library with a limited budget, we provide free interlibrary loan service (in addition, we will also pay to obtain any materials for our undergraduates that we cannot obtain from a free lender.)

Responding to community demand for leisure reading materials, we have subscribed to a bestsellers collection since 2002, and have placed those materials near the library entrance to increase their visibility. This collection was immediately popular, and remains so today. Over the past five years, we have averaged 676 bestseller checkouts each year (with a low of 599 and a high of 768).

We also shifted our DVD collection from a locked storage room in the basement (which required paging from the circulation desk) to a browsable first-floor location in the summer of 2008. Our number of DVD checkouts has nearly doubled, from 1,435 during the 2007 fall semester to 2,601 during the 2008 fall semester.

Our collection of online databases is greatly enhanced by our membership in the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), the statewide library consortium. VIVA includes both public and private libraries in higher education, allowing all to benefit from cooperative purchases.

In the case of many VIVA resources, we choose whether we wish to participate in the initiative through cost sharing. Once recent addition via this route is a collection of nearly 500 hours of PBS videos, available online in streaming video. These videos are included in our catalog, and we have received tremendous response from the faculty in the wake of our publicizing this resource (among the Social Sciences faculty, for example, 10 of the 26 faculty members responded positively within two days of an announcement about the acquisition). It took less than a week for one faculty member to use the streaming video in her class.

Of course, we also provide extensive access to local materials. We make many local primary sources available through our Special Collections and Archives department, integral to the functioning of our tradition-steeped campus. The development office and the marketing office frequently consult with our Special Collections librarian, Beth Harris, regarding Hollins history. She maintains the institutional archive, which features papers of previous administrative officers and faculty as well as official institutional records, student publications, yearbooks, and more. And this material is heavily used – Harris has received more than 90 reference inquiries this fall semester from students,

“It sure was fun digging in those rare books yesterday. I’ll make sure that the students are properly awake, clean and pen- and food-free. This is a very exciting opportunity.”

*Timothy Spence
Lecturer, English*

staff, and faculty regarding materials held in her department. She takes advantage of Hollins' smaller classes to offer students hands-on experience with rare books and manuscripts that they might not be able to obtain at larger schools.

Listening to our community

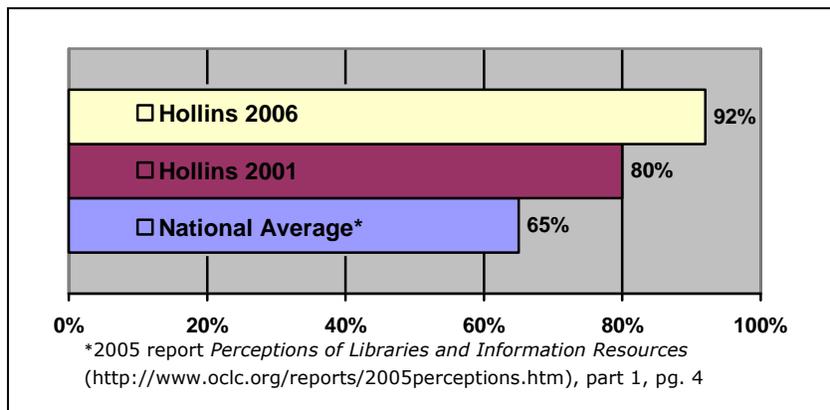
We are responsive to the requests of our community, and are always looking for new ways we can involve the community in our decision-making (for instance, we are currently developing a student advisory committee that will hold its first meeting in February). Our suggestion/comment box is located next to the Circulation Desk on the first floor. All comments we receive in the box are placed on a public bulletin board on the library's first floor, and we place our responses on the board next to the suggestion.

Repeated requests for popular reading material have led to increased efforts on the part of our staff to feature such materials in exhibits -- our current student-designed "literary guilty pleasures" exhibit is an example (in which various librarians and professors on campus confess to their "guilty" reading pleasures). In a similar vein, in response to requests for manga, one of our student circulation assistants created an exhibit of manga and other graphical materials (graphic novels, comics) in the collection.

Because of these frequent requests for types of materials that are not necessarily aligned with the institution's scholarly research mission, we created a co-curricular collection development fund (in concert and with support from the Student Government Association) that we award yearly to a student proposal. Anime and community gardening collections have been built in this manner.

In addition to the comments received through our suggestion box, we survey our community once every five years to better understand our users' needs and wishes. From the most recent survey, in 2006, we found that our students come to the library more frequently than they did in 2001, and much more often than the national average.

Percentage of college students who use the library at least once a month



II. Leadership in developing and implementing exemplary programs that other libraries can emulate.

Training and developing student assistants

Our library has been at the forefront of the campus movement to turn campus jobs from the traditional “work-study” label into the Hollins Student Employment Program, with an emphasis on helping students understand how their work is important to the daily functioning of the campus and how their work may benefit them when they enter the workforce.

Our circulation coordinator, Margaret Airey, who supervises the majority of our students, has been a part of the committee that has redesigned the campus student employment experience and expectations. One impending change: instead of random allotment of students to various departments, future students will be expected to apply for their work-study jobs.

The library has been recognized around campus for its leadership in instilling a sense of good customer service and responsibility in our student workers (we were an early adopter of the FISH philosophy in 2004), and has been asked in previous years to help Information Technology create the same spirit in its students who staff the campus Help Desk.

In 2006, the library became the first department on campus to recognize our students as a part of the National Student Employee Week. Prior to this, there had been no campus wide appreciation of student employees. Following the library’s lead, this is now a campus-wide program headed by Career Services.

In 2008, the library has once again taken the lead with a new program – the Student Peer Coordinator program, designed in partnership with the Batten Leadership Institute on campus. This program offers seminars to develop the skills of our four student weekend supervisors, in charge of the building when no full-time staff members are present. The monthly sessions give them the training needed to be role models and mentors for the other students who work at the circulation desk.

Going green

The library has responded to a strong campus initiative to reduce campus carbon emissions and model environmentally sustainable practices. Hollins created an Environmental Advisory Board in 2006, which provides the university president with advice and leadership regarding identification, assessment, creation, and implementation of environmental planning and policies for the university. In 2007, Hollins University became a charter signatory of the American College and University Presidents Climate Agreement, which commits the signees to take steps in pursuit of carbon neutrality.



University librarian Joan Ruelle paints a recycling bin as part of the annual Battle of the Bins.

The library has taken a leading role in pursuing environmentally friendly outcomes. In the past year, library staff members have found a location that will recycle our deselected books (those ineligible to be reused through Better World Books) and bound periodicals. Regular trips are now made to this recycling center to dispose of these materials. In the fall, the library began a program of turning off all of our public computers and monitors every night. Only when they are used the next day are they turned back on.

On-campus delivery to faculty

Our library enjoys excellent support from our faculty, and we believe a large part of that support derives from the assistance we offer them in their teaching and research. One service that many faculty rely on is our FLEX delivery, in which we deliver books, articles, and anything else to offices, mailboxes, and e-mail.

The faculty member just has to know what item they want – we take care of the rest (catalog search; scanning and e-mailing; check-out; ILL request; etc.)

Some faculty members will send us a list of citations via e-mail; others will flood the online form with requests; others will make requests from Roanoke College through the online catalog. Whatever their method of request, we will deliver the material to their office, department mailbox, or e-mail.

“Hi, Joan,
Just came back to my office to find
Queen Bees on my desk. What service
– all around!! Can’t wait to dive into it.
So many thanks,”
Jill Hufnagel
(Assistant Director,
Batten Leadership Institute)

Created in 2004, FLEX has grown rapidly, from 561 deliveries in 2005 to 982 deliveries and counting in 2008. Such is the popularity of FLEX that during a recent website usability study, in which we had a group of faculty participating, one faculty member wrote unbidden on the study sheet, “I love FLEX!”

Reference tracking and workshops

In the past year, we have begun to more closely monitor the activity taking place at our reference desk. Prior to 2008, we kept only a tick-mark sheet at the reference desk to track activity. However, in a quest to more fully document the work done at the desk, we created a free online database to collect and manage our reference queries. All reference questions are now logged, along with the time, date, reference provider, mode of inquiry (chat, in-person, etc), and type of question. The person entering the question may also enter their answer.

The database has become immensely popular among our seven reference staffers (our five librarians plus two paraprofessionals). The ability to view the questions and to see the approach others took in answering questions has proven extremely valuable. Although our Public Services Librarian is responsible for collecting and analyzing the data, any of our staff members may view the database entries. Staff members are encouraged to view the recent entries when beginning a reference shift.

Along with the ongoing informal review of questions, we discuss the queries in our newly created monthly workshops. Everybody who is willing brings one or two interesting questions to share with the group. These questions are sometimes examples of good reference; more often, they are questions that we are not sure whether we handled 100% correctly. All those present learn from the question, which is

especially valuable in a small library where any individual person may not handle that many reference questions during a given week.

The reference questions database is now being used throughout the library. In an attempt to catalog all the reference work taking place, we have begun recording all personal reference inquiries we receive. As we continue to monitor our reference activities in this way, we can use the number of personal contacts to better reflect our workload and the relationships that we have built with students and faculty.

Staff dynamism and openness to change

At a reference staff meeting one day in August 2008, we were brainstorming ideas to improve our reference service. One frustration expressed was our location – when our building was built in 1999, a permanent reference desk was built to the immediate left of the library entrance. Although we were next to the door, nobody could see us when they entered, because they would have to look behind them. In addition, the location did not offer good sightlines to the circulation desk .

After discussions regarding possible solutions, we took action. We walked downstairs, looked at possible locations, and started measuring tables. Thirty minutes later, our reference desk was in a new location; the next day, it had a working internet connection, and our reference staff became immediately visible to everybody entering the library’s main doors. The change has been dramatic.

In the spring of 2008, we answered 201 in-person reference questions at the desk – with two weeks remaining in this fall semester, we have answered 365 in-person reference questions at the desk. Although this isn’t an apples-to-apples comparison (we cannot compare to fall 2007 because we had not yet switched to our current statistics reporting), we do believe it is partly a reflection of our heightened visibility. We have also been able to intercede more often at the circulation desk, as we can now see and hear the activity taking place there. Through these carefully managed interruptions, we have built closer relationships with our circulation student assistants. We make sure to show both the patron and the student assistant the answer to the patron’s question.

The reference staff similarly jumped into Instant Messaging reference without a moment’s hesitation. Prior to the 2008 spring semester, we created IM accounts for the reference desk and placed a Plugoo chat box on the library home page, allowing anybody to easily start a conversation with somebody at the desk. Its popularity was immediate: our 85 chat inquiries in the spring semester represented 13.8% of our total reference desk business and more than our phone and e-mail services combined.

“This IM feature is very neat,
btw ☺”
Student, after asking a
question via IM

Our staff’s flexibility and willingness to try new approaches can be attributed to the character of our employees and to a camaraderie built through monthly staff meetings, yearly retreats, and informal connections. Our library director stresses the importance of community (both within our library and campus-wide) and engagement with the everyday life of the campus. As mentioned previously, staff are encouraged to take work time to attend events across campus.

When decisions need to be made within the library, library director Joan Ruelle seeks broad participation in strategic planning and decision making. When we have attained organizational agreement on these big picture issues, the functional decision-making is given to the individuals with expertise in that function. Our staff knows that Ruelle will support our decisions so long as they resonate with our larger goals. This has brought about a greater sense of ownership, enjoyment and creativity in the work of our staff.

When the public services librarian and outreach coordinator decided to try a new approach to library orientation this fall, every single library staff member pitched in to help – for a rather unordinary orientation. The library hosted a poker run for all the new Hollins students. Small groups of students visited seven locations in the library, then took their hand of playing cards to the finish. At each location, a staff member greeted the students with words about that spot (whether study rooms or the DVD shelves), then handed them a card. And each staff member did this cheerfully, while wearing a tiara with playing cards attached to the top (to help students easily identify the people they needed to see).

“Kudos for the awesome activities y'all have had to get to know the library :)”

Kelcy Mueller,
Student Success Leader,
Hollins Class of 2010

Our staff excellence goes beyond intra-staff cooperation. We are also invested in efforts to participate in the community of libraries across our area, our state, and our nation.

Our information technology librarian has been selected for the 2009 class of ALA's Emerging Leaders. Our arts liaison and technical services librarian (who, we are sad to say, is leaving us in mid-December for her new job at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Libraries) is the Publicity Officer for the Music Library Association. Our public services librarian was elected to the chair-elect position of the Public Relations and Marketing Section of LAMA for 2008-09, and was the 2008 chair of the Virginia chapter of the Association of College & Research Libraries. Our library director team teaches an ACRL course, “Teaching Portfolios for Librarians,” and serves as the representative of the private institutional libraries on the Resources for Users Committee of VIVA, the Virginia statewide library consortium.

Our outreach coordinator, Maryke Barber, who will complete her master's degree in library and information science in December, is on the board and is a former vice-president of the Roanoke Valley Library Association, an organization of public, school, and academic libraries in our area. Barber will soon be filling one of the professional librarian positions – she has been hired as our new arts liaison librarian.

As seen through Barber's promotion, library director Joan Ruelle is committed to providing opportunities for professional development and advancement to all of our staff members. Our travel budgets are generous for a library of our size, allowing our staff to take part in state and national organizations. Eight of our eleven staff members attended either the 2008 ALA Midwinter Conference in Philadelphia or the 2008 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim. Hollins has also served as host for multiple SOLINET training sessions in past years, and hosted a regional meeting of the Virginia chapter of the ACRL in 2007.

Opportunities for professional development do not only take place outside the workplace. If a staff member wants to learn more about a particular aspect of libraries, just ask. For example, our Interlibrary

Loan coordinator came to us in May 2008 with an MLIS, but had focused on special collections during her studies (in addition to working in the university's interlibrary loan department). Now she was interested in getting broader academic library experience. In less than a year at our library, she has gained reference desk experience and team-taught multiple library instruction sessions with experienced instructors – all while doing a superb job of running our Interlibrary Loan and FLEX operations.

III. Substantial and productive relationships with classroom faculty and students.

Our library has developed strong relationships outside the classroom with faculty through the FLEX service and the regular Friday faculty lunches, as noted in the sections above. In part because of the informal networking opportunities available to us, and in part due to a greater institutionalized dedication to research skills, we have established a thriving instruction program.

Nearly a decade ago, Hollins created the Skills and Perspectives curriculum, which established a baseline of skills and perspectives that students needed in order to graduate. Classes were designated as containing particular skills (oral communication, applied research, basic quantitative reasoning) and/or perspectives (aesthetic analysis, global systems, etc.).

The applied research skill is described thusly:

“Information literacy is an essential element in the education of a lifelong learner. It involves not only recognizing the need for information, but also having the ability to locate, gather, use and document that information to effective ends. Students must be information literate if they are to be successful in their undergraduate careers, their professional work and daily lives.”

There are three goals associated with the skill:

- To identify and select the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems.
- To identify, locate, and retrieve information.
- To use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Suggested criteria for courses with the applied research skill are also provided. It is recommended that students work on one or multiple research projects that include a bibliography of at least 10 sources; that at least 20% of the final course grade be based on the research project; and that instructors, librarians, or a combination of the two, spend at least two hours instructing or coaching students on research techniques.

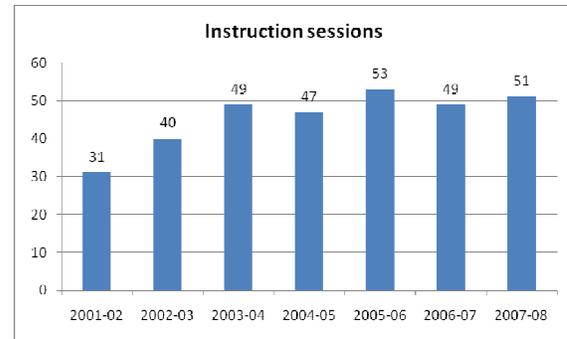
“It’s like team teaching when you (a librarian) get involved.”

Jen Boyle

Assistant Professor of English

Prior to the applied research skill being established in 2001-02, our library taught an average of 26 instruction sessions per year in the three prior years. The number of instruction sessions grew rapidly beginning in 2001-02, from 31 that year to 40 in 2002-03 to 49 in 2003-04. We have consistently maintained that level of instruction since 2003-04, averaging 50 instruction sessions per year since then. We maintained

the same level of instruction in 2007-08 (teaching 51 sessions) even following the departure of two librarians in the spring/summer of 2007, and the introduction of two new liaison librarians. And just in the fall semester of 2008, we have taught 44 sessions, putting us on pace to easily surpass our previous highs.



The 2007 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools report of the reaffirmation committee found that Hollins “has shown that students are involved in regular and timely instruction in the use of information resources. Indeed, its instruction program is exemplary.”

Much of the credit for our growth in instruction can also be attributed to the subject liaison model introduced in 2003. No longer was one librarian responsible for the majority of the instruction sessions. This has led to increased communication between faculty and librarians, and stronger relationships. Faculty members know that when new liaison librarians arrive, they will be their primary point of contact for instruction, collection development, and any other library-related need.

2007 saw the introduction of another essential component to the library’s growing instruction program. The university began a program of first-year seminars to improve the quality of the educational experience and the engagement levels of first-year students. These four-credit classes are taught by faculty members in an area of their expertise, and often feature “fun” titles – for example, “Heroes: Not the TV Show.” When the model of these courses was constructed, the faculty agreed that the applied research component should have a place in all courses, giving the library a new route to reach the campus’ first-year students. After offering instruction sessions for eleven of the sixteen first-year seminars in 2007, we taught at least one session for twelve first-year seminars this fall (teaching multiple sessions for six of those twelve).

The library is also working to assess its impact on the first-year seminars. This year, to complement our traditional instruction sessions assessments (which ask for the students to rate the usefulness of the session, tell us what was the most important thing they learned, etc.), we are taking a more qualitative approach. In partnership with several of the first-year-seminar instructors, we arranged for a preliminary bibliography assignment. Librarians received the bibliographies and offered suggestions and comments on the students’ sources and search strategies. Internally, we assigned numerical ratings for each preliminary bibliography. The instructors will also share the students’ final projects with us, and we will compare both bibliographies to analyze how much the students grew as researchers over the course of the semester.

The individual feedback offered via the preliminary bibliography assignment has been very well received by students:

- “He gave me a search term I could use that was helpful. I really appreciated the time he put into it, I was surprised. He’s been really supportive.”
- “I received great feedback, very reassuring. (I very much like getting feedback from a source outside the class!)”

We hope that experiencing this kind of individual assistance will encourage students to continue to contact librarians for help on future research.

Our library is also placing an emphasis on personal assistance for thesis writers. As a trial run in the fall, and by arrangement with the senior seminar advisor for international studies, the students in this thesis-writing course were required to consult with the social sciences liaison for assistance. They contacted the librarian in advance to make an appointment, and the librarian spent an hour or more prepping prior to their visits. When each student arrived, he was ready to share a variety of relevant resources.

This kind of personal attention is a hallmark of our integration into the classroom, and will hopefully make us as indispensable for students as we are for many of our faculty. Beyond the instruction we offer for their classes, faculty members also rely heavily on us for assistance with their own research. Michelle Abate, an assistant professor in English, acknowledges our assistance in her 2008 book, *Tomboys*, and art professor Kathleen Nolan has told us that we will be named in the acknowledgements of her forthcoming book.

“I want to extend special gratitude to University librarians Joan Ruelle, Amanda Hurst, Renee McBride and Maryke Barber, who skillfully tracked down countless references and whose good cheer brightened many long days spent in front of my computer.”

Michelle Abate

Assistant Professor, English

From the Acknowledgements of her 2008 book,
Tomboys

Conclusion

Small academic libraries are often seen as handicapped by their size; lack of a large collection and a sizeable technology department can make a library seem less than equipped for supporting the needs of a modern institution. At our library we treat our size as a strength, with cross-trained staff who are tapped into the university community. We use low-tech methods such as the bookmobile and the poker run orientation to connect directly with faculty and students; they in turn feel connected to their librarian, who might answer their instant message query one day, teach information literacy in their first-year seminar the next – and face them down in a campus-wide kickball tournament on day three. Small also means flexible: with precious little hierarchy to navigate we have in a relatively short time instituted major changes such as changing the librarian-faculty relationship to an effective liaison model, starting an IM reference service or even moving the entire reference desk.

No matter our size, none of this would be possible without a dedicated staff that is committed to working together and in partnership with the university community. It is on their behalf, and on behalf of the students, faculty and staff at Hollins that have benefitted from the library's service, that we submit this application.