Library Launches Campaign for Information and Learning Commons

THE CASE – for the Information and Learning Commons at Ryerson University Library

Libraries across North America have been changing to reflect the impact of digital information on their operations. Given these changes, spaces, sometimes called Information or Learning Commons, are being constructed or reconfigured by university libraries to ensure the effective delivery of digital information in a variety of formats and to provide related support services to students and faculty in their use of electronic information. In many instances, the development and maintenance of these facilities are based on cooperative approaches that draw on the expertise and resources of libraries, computing centres, and a range of services designed to support faculty research and teaching and student success. Major Commons sites in Canada include the Scotiabank Information Commons at the University of Toronto, the Dalhousie Learning Commons at Dalhousie University, and Seneca@York, a joint project of Seneca College and York University.

An Information Commons is not just a computer lab in the Library! The CASE for an Information and Learning Commons at Ryerson looks at four key elements – Content, Access, Space and Expertise – that will provide the foundation for the development of a Commons at Ryerson.

CONTENT - Investing in Information

All the technology in the world is of no value unless it provides access to a rich depth of content, the scholarly record of publication upon which sound teaching and research are based. The job of librarians is to identify, evaluate, acquire and make accessible this wealth of scholarly information. The Ryerson Library spends over $1 million annually to acquire digital resources – including e-books, e-journals, citation and numeric databases, government and scholarly publications, maps, sound files and images. The Information and Learning Commons, populated with several hundred computer workstations linked to the University’s gigabit backbone, will provide a venue in which the effective retrieval and delivery of this rich depth of content is assured.

ACCESS - Providing a Link to Resources and Services

Access to information, access to technology, and access to related support services are central to teaching, learning and research in today’s university. Web-based navigational tools and instruction provided by library staff will ensure that Ryerson students and faculty are able to identify and retrieve relevant sources of information. Interlibrary loan and document delivery services will provide users with content extending beyond the boundaries – physical and electronic – of the Ryerson Library.

Librarians from universities across Ontario are working together to create uniform modes of access to the wide array of electronic resources offered. For example, Scholarsportal (http://www.library.utoronto.ca/scholarsportal/) is a collaborative project of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) that provides a common search interface to journals from several publishers. Partially funded by the Ontario Innovation Trust, Scholarsportal brings together a growing number of scholarly digital resources. It currently provides access to the full text of over 3,203 journals published by Academic Press.

While not the actual plan, this architectural rendering by Sterling Finlayson Architects hints at the possibilities of what the Information and Learning Commons could be.
Learning Commons continued

Press, Elsevier Science, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Kluwer Law, Kluwer/Renum, Springer/Verlag and Wiley. Another component of Scholarportal is the Virtual Union Catalogue (Rear), which provides access to all Ontario university library collections through a single search point (described in more detail on p. 5).

The Library will explore opportunities with several campus groups and organizations to ensure that the range of services the Commons delivers will meet the information and instructional needs of students and faculty who use the Commons' resources. This proposed sharing of space and pooling of expertise will ensure seamless referral to appropriate individuals, groups and services based in the Commons.

SPACE - Building for the Future

Establishing an Information and Learning Commons in the Ryerson Library represents an opportunity to create a new and more visible gateway to the Library's resources and services to the Ryerson campus. Situated at the top of Victoria Street, just steps from the Ryerson Parking Garage and the Dundas Subway Station, the Ryerson Library is at the crossroads of most pedestrian and vehicular traffic entering campus. Given this prominent location on the Ryerson campus, the Information and Learning Commons will provide a showcase for Ryerson's investment in digital resources and information technology generally.

The Information and Learning Commons will provide the environment and facilities necessary to ensuring that the organization of information and the delivery of instruction undertaken by Ryerson's librarians address the information needs of Ryerson's students. Classrooms equipped with presentation technology, wired seminar rooms, and clusters of networked computer workstations will be available to ensure the delivery of formal and informal instruction by librarians.

INVESTING IN THE COMMON GOOD

Realizing the Library's vision of the Commons will require a significant commitment of resources on the part of the University, as one of the key initiatives in the Technological and Electronic Advancement component of the University's Invest in Futures campaign, the Commons initiative is seeking $4 million in funding. Making a contribution to this initiative will enable Ryerson to be in the vanguard of innovation by helping its students to realize their potential in a knowledge-based economy.

A more detailed version of the CASE document on the Commons proposal can be found at http://www.ryerson.ca/library/commons.

Olé OLA: Ontario Library Association Conference

Ryerson librarians played a significant role in the outstanding success of the 2003 Ontario Library Association Conference, held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from January 29th to February 1st this year. The OLA annual "Super" Conference is the largest annual conference to be held in Canada, and attracts over 3500 information professionals from across the continent to over 300 sessions, plenaries and events.

Don Kinder co-ordinated and planned the overall conference for the Ontario Library Association and will continue to serve in this role for the 2004 Conference next January.

Brian Cameron co-presented a session entitled, "The Impact of Impact Factors", a critical look at how Citation Index databases are compiled and used and the subsequent implications on scholarship and academic publishing.

Diane Granfield co-presented a session entitled, "Collaborative Virtual Reference Services: The Future of VR", which examined the Ryerson Library's Internet-based "chat" reference service and its joint venture with the University of Guelph Library and York University Library to offer expanded, "outside the box" reference service to the university community.

Suzette Giles co-presented a session entitled, "GIS and Digital Map Reference for Non-Map Librarians", which explored the potential of geospatial and digital map data products for reference, research and teaching applications. Sue also convened the session: "Get Familiar with Canada!" an examination of the 2003 Census Canada information currently available.

Daniel Phelan convened the session "Blogging, the Theoretical and Practical Bases are Compiled and Used" and the subsequent implications on scholarship and academic publishing.

Trina Grover convened the session "Making Television and Making History: Behind the Scenes at Canada: A People's History", by Ryerson journalism professor and producer of the series, Gene Allen.

Susan Patrick convened the session "How to overcome the obstacles in the way of creating open access archives", a look at the reform of scholarly publishing in the wake of the Budapest Open Access Initiative.
When Brian Segal was President of Ryerson in the 1980s, his office contacted the University Archives in the hope of finding critical information for proposed changes to the Ryerson Act — another step on the road to Ryerson’s eventual designation as full-fledged university. Thanks to a solid collection and the Archives’ long-standing focus on vital records (including records at the senior management level), pertinent records were found and the query satisfactorily answered.

The Archives’ collection policies have been successful in developing holdings which have served the Ryerson Community well. Archival sources have proved invaluable and, in many cases indispensable, in such diverse activities as course related student assignments, fundraising campaigns, and even the University’s day-to-day administrative and academic business. The University is fortunate to have had in place a solid framework for a records management program, although it has lacked the resources for its full implementation.

For every successful story of records custodianship, however, there are many with less fortunate endings. Indeed, as Canada’s National Archivist lamented several years ago, poor records-keeping, more than ever, threatens our national memory and our ability to bequeath information to future generations.

Obsolescent technology

At Ryerson, the Archives has experienced first-hand the problems of technological obsolescence and the difficulties in preserving related information and records. This is perhaps best illustrated by the acquisition, some years ago, of an early videotape of a 1960s Ryerson hockey game, which could not be played because the last suitable machine had been discarded two years earlier. (Only the National Archives in Ottawa had workable equipment capable of accommodating the tape.) Similar problems are on the rise today, as more and more departments are producing digital information — sometimes exclusively — in formats and technologies which may not be suitable for long-term preservation.

In a modest attempt to stem the tide of digital and technological obsolescence, the Archives has recently undertaken two initiatives. One is the conversion, to DVD format, of a collection of 225 3/4-inch videotapes produced by the former Ryerson Media Centre which can no longer be played on reliable equipment. With the generous assistance of the Rogers Communications Centre, and with the Library’s own resources, they will be digitally transferred to a more stable and long-lasting medium.

The second initiative is the addition of a special section to the Archives and Records Management official Policy-Procedure (no. 1-441), which has been recently updated and should be available shortly. Entitled Digital and Electronic Records, it offers individuals and departments basic guidelines on the retention and disposition of: e-mail; word processed documents and databases; data migration; the documentation of systems and formats; and the selective preservation of various generations of hardware and software. A preliminary copy is available on the Archives Web site at www.library.ryerson.ca/archives. Although by no means definitive, this document may also encourage the University to consider and examine the larger context of its record-keeping practices — with its many attendant issues and complexities — in order to help it manage its records more effectively and preserve information which is vital to its mission and operation.

Claude Doucet, Ryerson Archivist

www.library.ryerson.ca/archives
Focus on Students

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Dialing for Dollars

A big thank you to the “Dialing for Dollars” students. During the past year, approximately sixty Ryerson students, typically working in two three-hour shifts a week in a computer lab, made phone call to students’ parents for the Ryerson Annual Fund Campaign, which supports a number of areas in the university. Through their hard work, the students raised a significant amount for the University (from May 2002 – April 2003, over $200,000), with more than 90% of the pledges from parents designated for the Library.

Shelvers move “half the Library”

And another big thanks to our student shelvers. Twenty-nine Ryerson students were employed part-time by the Library during Fall and Winter terms, working over 3300 hours, and shelving, along with our five full-time shelvers, a total of more than 260,000 items – the equivalent of shelving more than half the Library collection! Well done all.

Library News

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Library’s Free Document Delivery Service Extended

A recent users’ survey (results to be published later) indicates a high level of satisfaction with CISTISource, our fully-subsidized “self-serve” document delivery service for faculty and graduate students. This service will now be expanded to include Research Assistants and 4th year students. See: http://www.ryerson.ca/library/info/cisti.html for details.

Staff Notes

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Jadwiga Kiebalo is now the collections assistant ... responsible for donations to the Library collection. Helene De Souza will be the new Serials assistant, replacing Jadwiga who previously held that position.

And, between the receipt of this issue and the next one, long time employee Adrian Bevis of Audio Visual Services will be retiring. We wish Adrian well! Stop by to do the same when you are next in the Library!

What’s in a name?

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Henceforth, our building at the corner of Victoria and Gould, formerly called the LRC – Learning Resources Centre, will be known officially as the Library! We would like to remind all members of the Ryerson community that all publications, course outlines, brochures, Web sites or directions should refer now to the Library building. Room numbers will begin with the three-letter identifier LIB, as in LIB282.
Beginning in Fall 2003, Ryerson faculty and students will have access to RACER, a brand new interlibrary loan system, which provides “Rapid Access to Collections by Electronic Requesting”. RACER is the Ontario Council of University Libraries’ (OCUL) latest resource-sharing project, implementing a state-of-the-art ILL management system called VDX (Virtual Document Exchange), a product selected by academic and public libraries such as the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand, the University of California Libraries, Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN), and the Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS). Users can search simultaneously and in real-time the holdings of all Ontario university libraries and selected world catalogues, and then instantly submit an interlibrary loan request to the Ryerson Library’s ILL department, without having to re-key the bibliographic details derived from the search. Users will be able to monitor the progress of their requests and receive e-mail notifications of items received.

For a preview of the searching function, visit the Library Web page at http://www.library.ryerson.ca/libcat.html and select “OCUL Virtual Union Catalogue (Racer)”, or directly access the RACER Web site at http://racer.scholarsportal.info/. Choose the “bibsearch” option to search across your selection of library catalogues. The ILL component, which requires user registration and login, will be available later in the year.
Did you know that you can also support student learning and excellence at Ryerson by designating your contribution to the Library’s Information and Learning Commons campaign project?

[Image of Ryerson Pledge Form]

**RYERSON UNIVERSITY PLEDGE FORM**

Did you know that you can also support student learning and excellence at Ryerson by designating your contribution to the Library’s Information and Learning Commons campaign project?

- □ $1,000
- □ $500
- □ $250
- □ $125
- □ $75
- □ Other ______

I prefer to make payments against my pledge:
- □ by payroll deduction (Ryerson employees only)
- □ with post-dated cheques monthly □ quarterly
- □ cheque (Payable to Ryerson University)
- □ I would like to designate my gift to the Library’s Information and Learning Commons

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Dept: ______________________________________________________________

My preferred method of payment is:
- □ MasterCard
- □ Visa

Card Number ____________________________ Expiry Date ________
Signature ________________________________

I wish to remain anonymous in donor recognition listings.

All gifts to Ryerson qualify for income tax credit.

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Thank you for investing in our students and in the University’s library.

**Speaking of the LIBRARY**

**Presentations by Librarians at Ryerson’s 12th Annual May Conference, May 14 and 15.**

Ophelia Cheung and Lucina Fraser, librarians from the recently formed Borrower Services team, poster session: “One-stop inter-library loan: the RACER system and CISTISource direct ordering.”

Maps, Data and GIS Librarian Suzette Giles and Systems Librarian Sally Wilson: two different workshops, “Finding the hidden treasure in Canadian survey data!” and “Census 2001 — finding what you want.” Also, Suzette Giles with Susan Laskin, Elizabeth Carlson, and Stephen Swales from the Department of Geography, the workshop “Get more from your data — map them.”

Librarian Richard Malinski, along with Sandra Dicresce from Human Resources, both of whom have taught organizational behaviour in class and via the Internet: “Online learning — from ‘sage on the stage’ to ‘guide on the side’ — facilitating the online learning experience for our students.”

Librarians Zita Murphy and Susan Patrick: “Web to you: featuring the latest in electronic resources in the Ryerson Library.”

The following people have been instrumental in the production of this NEXUS issue: Bob Jackson, Claude Doucet, Ophelia Cheung, Cathy Matthews, Bruce Hurley and Publications Committee: Lucina Fraser, Don Kinder, Diane Granfield, Brian Cameron

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