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Your Evolving UNI Library: Spaces, Sources, and Services for Graduate Research

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Your Evolving UNI Library: Spaces, Sources, and Services for Graduate Research

Part of the journal section “Reviews and Responses”

Chris Neuhaus, "Your Evolving UNI Library: Spaces, Sources, and Services for Graduate Research”

Walk through the University of Northern Iowa’s Rod Library and you will certainly notice the changes. Entire collections have relocated, the Youth Library has been reborn, collaborative workstations are multiplying, and comfortable spaces for reflective study, collaborative research, and small group discussion are spreading throughout the building. With input from students and faculty, Rod Library is undergoing a metamorphosis. Yet only a fraction of this ongoing transformation is visible to the itinerant passerby. Changes are afoot that are redefining research and enhancing what is possible in graduate education.

We are entering an age of digital books and digital book collections. For scholars focusing on the literature of pre-1920, this is a golden age. The vast online collections of HathiTrust <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Search/Advanced> and Google Books http://books.google.com/advanced_book_search have placed millions of beloved and forgotten pieces in full text at our fingertips. Commercial collections from vendors such as ebrary and EBSCO offer a wonderful array of recently published e-books, ranging across all the disciplines.

Digital archives and repositories are proliferating and provide the scholar with new avenues for exploration. Across the disciplines we see new initiatives and great progress. Whether wandering the digital halls of the American Memory Project <http://memory.loc.gov>, analyzing the biomedical research in PMC (Pub Med Central) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>, or reading the works of earlier journalists archived in the Making of America <http://moa.library.cornell.edu/> researchers will discover long-neglected treasures. Graduate students will particularly appreciate the online theses and dissertations to be found within the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations <http://www.ndltd.org/serviceproviders/scirus-etd-search> and other online university repositories.

Not all trends have been positive. While the advent of e-journals and databases has augmented the power of the researcher, the costs of these commercially provided resources outpace the budgets of even the wealthiest universities. The Open Access and Scholarly Communication

movements of academia <http://guides.lib.uni.edu/scholarly-communication> have arisen in response to the rapidly rising costs of commercially owned research. The future of journal publishing is unclear and our auguries ambiguous. Yet, at this moment, despite difficult budget decisions and unavoidable journal cancellations, UNI graduate students and faculty enjoy access to a wealth of research only dreamed of by our predecessors.

Our information age is characterized by promise, peril, and plenty of chaos. It takes a library to tame the wilder developments of the Internet, to unite the rapidly increasing and disparate bibliographic elements of our own making, and to calmly and creatively negotiate with avaricious elements of the information world. Much of this goes unseen by the UNI community until a glitch causes the researcher to bemoan some shortcoming. Who among us has not occasionally cursed some idiosyncratic message generated by Find it! @ UNI? Yet on reflection, and nostalgia aside, few among us would trade our online catalogs, databases, powerful search engines, and indeed the link resolving software of Find it! @ UNI, for the card catalog and the bibliogymnastics of yesteryear.

The speed and capacity of searching will increase yet again as Rod Library introduces the EBSCO Discovery System <http://www.ebscohost.com/discovery> during the summer of 2013. This next evolution in research will allow both novices and scholars to delve into multiple formats and disciplines with greater control and sophistication. The print and online library collections will now be searchable in ways that heretofore have been impossible.

Despite technological advances, or perhaps because of them, the research of literature, data, and all things audio and visual, remains challenging. An increase in research power brings the researcher many new choices and decisions. For scholars busy with the demands of classroom and publishing, keeping ahead of these rapidly changing options is difficult. Newly minted graduate students may find that increased expectations call for something more than Google and Wikipedia. Here too the library has much to offer.

Graduate students and graduate faculty will find librarians to be allies in their quest for understanding. Regular research consultations with librarians can help scholars focus their searches, make them aware of additional resources, and almost always save them precious time. Even more minor aggravations and roadblocks are often ameliorated with a call, online chat, or e-mail to the library. Now all these avenues to enlightenment are offered from one location, the Ask Us! option found on most library web pages <http://www.library.uni.edu/ask-us-research-help>.

Whether studying and researching on or off campus, graduate students and faculty will also find an increasing array of services at their disposal. Materials not owned by the library are made accessible via interlibrary loan and now often are provided to the researcher online, via e-mail. Graduate students studying within the library will find digital scanners, color printing, a fax machine, a multi-purpose room, coffee, blessed coffee, and for those rare moments of relaxation, a rapidly growing DVD collection. The Rod Library offers many services specially tailored to

distance education graduate students <http://guides.lib.uni.edu/distance> and the faculty who serve them.

Let the quest for information be accompanied by a search for wisdom. Successful scholars wisely manage their time, marshal their resources, consult with knowledgeable colleagues, and make use of new innovations. Wise graduate students increase their chances of success by utilizing library resources and seeking the advice of librarians. Become a regular. Luxuriate in the wealth of information, services, and guidance provided by Rod Library.



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