

# History of the Undergraduate Library at the University of Washington

Written on the Occasion  
of the 25th Anniversary of the Construction  
of the Odegaard Undergraduate Library



Paula Walker  
University of Washington Libraries  
Seattle, Washington  
November 1997

The Odegaard Undergraduate Library stands as the embodiment of the University of Washington's commitment to undergraduate education. The teaching of undergraduates has always been an important part of the mission of the University of Washington, and library service to undergraduate students reflects these University concerns. Many of the past UW Presidents have taken a personal and active interest in supporting the expansion of the collections and the facilities of the University Libraries. But it was Charles E. Odegaard (President from 1958-1973), whose vision, leadership, and continual support for an undergraduate library resulted in the construction of the library building later named in his honor.

1997 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Odegaard Undergraduate Library building, and it seems fitting in this year to reflect upon the accomplishments of the Undergraduate Library and the long history of library services to undergraduate students at the University of Washington.

*What is an undergraduate library?*

"Undergraduate libraries have been established with the primary mission of meeting the library and information needs of undergraduate students enrolled in the large university environment". This statement is the first sentence of the "Guidelines for Undergraduate Libraries", published by the Association of College and Research Libraries. The guidelines delineate the levels of service, collections, and staffing essential for a successful undergraduate library.

Undergraduates can easily become lost in the maze of library resources available to them at a large university. The presence of a separate undergraduate library, with librarians and staff dedicated to supporting students in their quest for information, can make all the difference to a student's academic success. A collection geared to the undergraduate curriculum with additional information on careers and other areas of high student interest will encourage student exploration. Besides printed books and journals, an undergraduate library collection includes audiovisual materials and access to the widening world of digital resources. Perhaps

the most important service an undergraduate library can offer is to teach the critical thinking skills necessary for using an academic library. Finally, an undergraduate library provides a place for students to ask questions, to think and ponder, to share ideas, and to pursue knowledge. It is a vital partner in an undergraduate's total educational experience.

#### *The undergraduate library movement.*

The concept of creating a separate undergraduate library was part of a national trend at large universities in North America, beginning in 1949 with the Lamont Library at Harvard. Reasons for separate undergraduate library facilities varied, depending on the institution. In some cases the research library had closed stacks which only faculty and graduate students could access, and it was felt that undergraduates needed their own, open-stack collection of books and journals, tailored to the undergraduate curriculum. Extra space for study seating was emphasized, recognizing that undergraduates who lived in dormitories needed a quiet place to study. The librarians who were chosen to staff such a library were to be specialists in working with the undergraduate student and would team up with faculty to integrate library instruction into the undergraduate coursework. In general, there was a feeling that undergraduate students at a large university should be taught navigational skills in the undergraduate library which they could then use in the research library.

Approximately 25 - 30 undergraduate libraries were created over a period of 30 years in the United States and Canada. Many of them were housed in separate buildings with separate circulating and reference collections, large reserve collections, instructional staff and classrooms, and often an audiovisual center. Other undergraduate libraries were housed on a special floor or in a separate area within the research library. Most undergraduate libraries were established in response to a specific need at their institutions, and the staff developed creative and distinct services that became an important part of the undergraduate educational experience.

#### *The early University of Washington Library*

The first campus library was opened in 1861 with the founding of the UW. It was housed in a small room located within the University building on the original site of the University in what is now downtown Seattle. After the

University's move to its present site in 1895, the library increased in size. It wasn't until 1909, however, that the University Library was housed in a separate building, the former Washington State Building constructed for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition which was held on the campus that year.

The first building designed to be used as a library on the campus was the Suzzallo Library, which began serving students and faculty in 1926, with the completion of the first wing. The second wing, which opened in 1935, added more space for collections and study space, as did a small addition in 1947. By the early 1950's, however, the Suzzallo Library stacks and study areas were extremely crowded, and plans were made for a large addition to the building.

#### *Crowded conditions*

In fact, the Library was so crowded that open access to the general collection was denied undergraduate students. At some point between the construction of the 1935 wing of the Suzzallo Library and 1956, access to the general collection in the stacks became limited to faculty and graduate students. Undergraduate students could request books at a service desk but could not enter the stacks to look at the books. A letter dated January 1, 1956, written by the University Librarian to the "General Patrons of the University Library", announced a new plan to allow access to the stacks to undergraduate students as well. The reason given in the letter for restricting access previously was "congestion in the stacks." By the date of this letter, the plans for what would be the 1963 addition to the Suzzallo Library were well underway. The 1963 addition was built specifically to add more stack space so that the general collection could be open to all.

The expansion of the University Library between 1940 and 1963 paralleled the expansion of the University itself. The University of Washington experienced considerable growth in student population and academic programs after the end of World War II. Enrollment, which stood at 7,000 students in 1945, had increased to over 18,000 by 1960, with the expectation that it would reach 25,000 by the mid 1960's. Between 1945 and 1960 there was a new emphasis on research at the UW, with large amounts of funding from the federal government and other grants and contracts. The University had become a major research institution. At the same time, demands for undergraduate education at the UW also increased.

An important factor in the support of undergraduate education was library service for undergraduates.

### *The beginning of the Undergraduate Library*

Early in President Odegaard's tenure at the UW, discussions began in earnest to plan a separate Undergraduate Library. On November 20, 1958, a meeting was held by President Odegaard's assistant, Dr. Thieme, with all of the librarians at the Suzzallo Library, to discuss library development on campus. During the meeting, Dr. Thieme said that the planned 1963 addition to Suzzallo was to be a "stack wing" to increase the collection space within Suzzallo to 1,500,000 books. User seating would be increased to 1,000. It was within this 1963 addition that the first Undergraduate Library was to be housed. However, Dr. Thieme also said that the University of Washington needed to build a separate undergraduate library with seating for 4,000 and that he expected it to cost \$5 million.

Parallel planning occurred after this time concerning the Undergraduate Library. The planning for the first Undergraduate Library, within Suzzallo, moved ahead in time for the opening of the addition to Suzzallo in 1963. Simultaneously, a major effort was initiated by the Director of Libraries, Mr. Marion A. Milczewski, to begin the planning process for the construction of a separate undergraduate library building.

A key player in the development of plans for the future Undergraduate Library was Mr. Kenneth S. Allen, Associate Director of Libraries and the person responsible for long-range facilities planning within the Libraries. In January 1960 he completed a document entitled "The Requirements for the Construction, Staffing and Stocking of an Undergraduate Library at the University of Washington". The document recommended types of materials to be included in the book and periodicals collections and in the reserve and reference collections, and stressed the need for the Undergraduate Library to give complete reference service. In 1961, Mr. Milczewski appointed Mr. Allen to coordinate all aspects of the planning for the future Undergraduate Library. This assignment included making the first location, within Suzzallo Library, a reality, but it went far beyond, to the planning of the eventual, separate Undergraduate Library that we know today as OUGL. As construction of the 1963 wing of the Suzzallo Library proceeded, preparations began to create the new collection that would be housed in the

Undergraduate Library. In January 1962 a special appropriation came to the Libraries from the University Administration of \$137,920, to purchase and process 50,000 books, 300 serial titles, and a reference collection of 1500 books. Space was leased close to campus where the collection could be processed and stored prior to the opening of the library. UW faculty were enlisted in the process to select books for the Undergraduate Library. Between April - July 1962, over 125 faculty members visited the Undergraduate Library Processing Area to go through the University of Michigan Undergraduate Library Shelf List and the bibliography of the best 1,000 books published in 1961 for college libraries, which were used as guides in building the collection. The faculty continued to visit the Processing Area during the last half of 1962, bringing in bibliographies of books they felt should be included in the collection. As soon as the books began to arrive, they were catalogued and placed on shelves, ready for the move. In addition to the purchased books, many duplicate titles from elsewhere in the Libraries were moved to the Undergraduate Library collection.

When it opened, in time for Autumn Quarter 1963, the Undergraduate Library held 55,000 volumes in the Undergraduate Reading Collection and another 20,000 volumes in the separate Reserve Book Collection. Staffing consisted of 3 reference librarians, a head librarian, and 6 library assistants (classified staff members).

Located on the Ground Floor of Suzzallo, the Undergraduate Library consisted of a reserve book room, a general reading collection in a separate room, a reference desk and reference collection, and a circulation desk.

The Undergraduate Library in Suzzallo was in operation between 1963 and 1971. By 1970, the size of the collection was 113,500 and there were 7 librarians and 12 classified staff members on the Undergraduate Library staff.

### *The separate Undergraduate Library*

Planning for the separate Undergraduate Library building continued, and in December 1965 the University Administration made the commitment to construct this building with an estimated cost of \$4.5 million. At the January 1966 Board of Regents meeting, the Seattle architectural firm of Kirk, Wallace, McKinley and Associates was named to design the new Undergraduate Library.

Mr. Kenneth Allen continued to serve as the primary coordinator from the University Libraries for the project, working with the University Architect's Office to prepare the program outline. Desired program features listed for the library were:

- An approachable and visible reference counter (a counter was specified because it was felt that students might be reluctant to approach a desk)
- A circulation desk and work area near the building entrance
- Several general group study rooms
- Equipped study rooms for students with visual disabilities
- A library instruction room
- A periodicals room near the reference area
- A large and efficiently arranged reserve book area
- An audio-visual facility
- A photocopy room
- Comfortable reader seating areas
- Collection space for over 150,000 volumes in the circulating collection

Every effort was to be made to make the book arrangement as efficient and simple as possible so that students could easily find the books they wanted. Also in the program statement is a note that a "light food and beverage service should be provided nearby."

Another library document from the mid 1960's, the "Library Long-Range Development Plan", dated December 10, 1964, notes in the section on the Undergraduate Library that "space should be provided for a computational facility even though its functions are not immediately applicable to an undergraduate library. Use for such instruments is not distant; space

adequately wired and insulated for such purposes does not now exist in the University Library and the opportunity of providing such space de novo will spare expensive remodeling later." Unfortunately, the funding for the Undergraduate Library as it was built did not allow for this farsighted planning.

In the 1965-67 Capital Budget Request, the cost estimate was revised to \$6,075,000 for the building and \$1,050,000 for the equipment, furniture, and shelving.

In the end the actual amount funded for the Undergraduate Library was \$6.3 million, but this figure also included the interior finishing and the furnishings as well as the construction of the food services floor underneath the library.

The Undergraduate Library was designed as one of three buildings to be located on the new Central Quadrangle complex. The other new buildings were a lecture hall (now known as Kane Hall) and a performing arts building (the Meany Hall for Performing Arts). The following description comes from the architect's statement: "The Undergraduate Library is conceived as a series of reading rooms grouped around a central three-story, covered atrium lighted by a high clerestory. A central stairway system serving as a visual index for the three library levels is located within the atrium. A perimeter circulation space around the central atrium leads directly to the study spaces."

The design of the Undergraduate Library made use of natural light from the clerestory and the many windows to provide a pleasant and welcoming environment for students. The central stairway would encourage a student to proceed from the entrance lobby to the upper floors where the reading stacks were to be located, while window alcoves around the perimeter provided cozy, well-lit study spaces. The service desks were to be located on the first floor, easily visible from the main entrance.

Construction began in August 1969 and continued through January 1972. Even though the building was not quite completed, all of the Undergraduate Library collections and staff moved from the Suzzallo Library to the new building within a two-week period, from December 16 to 31, 1971.

It is amazing that the move to the new quarters could occur in such a short time; however, it was crucial that the Undergraduate Library be ready to open by the first day of Winter Quarter – January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Planning for the move took vast amounts of time during most of 1971, but through the concerted efforts of all levels of staff, the Undergraduate Library opened as scheduled. Apparently not all of the furniture had arrived by opening day, however, as evidenced by the first comment below.

Some reactions to the new library were reported in the Libraries staff newsletter, dated February 1972:

- The carpeting is great!! Don't put any chairs in; it's great to sit on the carpet.
- It's so easy to find books here.
- The Media Center makes me want to go back to college again (from a University official visiting the library).
- Never felt like I could study in the old place, but I really think I can here. All my life I have tried to figure out how to get out of a library as fast as possible; now I try to stay longer. Doesn't even look like a library.
- (And from a visiting colleague): It's by far the best Undergraduate Library facility around the country.

At the time of the move, the building was called the Undergraduate Library. However, in May 1973 the University Regents renamed the building the "Odegaard Undergraduate Library" to honor President Charles Odegaard in a fitting tribute to him for his service to the University of Washington.

In October 1973 the Seattle Chapter of the American Institute of Architects gave an honor award to the Odegaard Undergraduate Library and to the firm of Kirk, Wallace, McKinley and Associates who designed it.

### *Collections in the Undergraduate Library*

A comprehensive collection development policy was not written until after the move into the new building. However, in September 1969, a University Libraries Conference on Library Planning lists these guidelines for the Undergraduate Library collection:

- Maintain a highly selective collection of books and periodicals to meet course needs of all undergraduate students.
- Material selected will support courses through the 400 level with the exception of foreign languages and in the fields of science and technology.
- Materials selected must be in print.
- Material selected must be in the English language.
- Material selected may duplicate material in other parts of the Library system.

The intent of the Undergraduate Library collection as it was established was to provide the bulk of materials needed by most undergraduate students in one location. Undergraduate librarians would encourage students to seek more specialized books and journals in the 20 or so other campus libraries, depending on the subject of their courses.

Shortly after the move, in 1973, a formal collection development policy statement was drafted and discussed with the Group on Undergraduate Library Policy, the Libraries' Collection Development Officer, and various selectors in the University Libraries. A major revision occurred in 1976, and there have been other, subsequent revisions to the collection policy document. However, the objective which the policy is intended to achieve remains -- to provide a collection of materials which supports current undergraduate curricular and informational needs and which will facilitate independent reading.

An early special collection located in the Undergraduate Library was the "Contemporary Issues Collection". Established in 1968 for the Suzzallo Library, the Contemporary Issues Reading Center housed a collection of books, periodicals, and pamphlets dealing with current national and international issues. In 1968 the topics included the 1968 Presidential Election, Vietnam, Black American History and Culture, the Migrant Worker, and Poverty in America. Other topics such as Women, the Environment, and the Occult were added in the early 1970's. In 1971, in anticipation of the move to the new Undergraduate Library building, the responsibility for the Contemporary Issues Collection was transferred to the Undergraduate Library. This collection remained a separate and active one through the mid 1980's, at which time the books and periodicals in it were absorbed into the regular OUGL collection.

In the early 1990's, special collection of books on careers and job-finding was created by OUGL in cooperation with the career counselors on campus. This collection proved to be very useful for all UW students.

### *Periodicals*

The core collection of 300 periodical titles established with the founding of the Undergraduate Library in 1963 has remained an important part of the OUGL collection, although some titles have been discontinued and new titles have been added in response to student needs. In 1982, OUGL began converting the bound volumes to microfilm in order to combat the problems of stolen and mutilated periodical issues and to make more efficient use of space. Automated indexing to journal articles first became available in OUGL in 1986 with a laser disc product called InfoTrac, followed in the early 1990's by the University Libraries locally-mounted databases which provided indexing for many more periodicals and newspapers. Undergraduate students welcomed the new technology and increased their use of the periodical literature during this time period.

### *Media Center*

The 1966 program statement for the future Undergraduate Library building included mention of an audio-visual facility. This facility was planned to be an extension of the record listening facility which existed already in the Music Library.

The Media Center began operation in 1972 on the Mezzanine level of OUGL. The purpose was to provide access to course-related audio-visual materials in all subject areas for any UW student, although specialized music materials remained the responsibility of the Music Library Listening Center. The Media Center in OUGL immediately proved to be very popular with undergraduate students and has been used extensively since its opening by faculty for classes in a variety of subject departments. The Media Center's collection is available to students on an individual basis at carrels in the Center through an electronic switching system, and with their fellow classmates in the large media classroom on the second floor of OUGL. Formats available in 1972 were phonograph records, audiotapes, slides, and some 16 mm films. New audio and video technologies have

expanded the formats to include compact discs, videodiscs, and videotapes in the past 25 years.

A major remodel of the Media Center occurred in 1996 with improvements in collection space and staff work and processing areas, making the delivery of user services more efficient.

### Heads of the Media Center:

Harriet Marshall, 1971-1980

Jon Blake, 1980-1983

Charles Edwards, 1984-1989

(Interim period 1989-1991, Media Center reported to the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Services)

Bruce Guter, 1991-1992

Randy Hensley, 1992-1994

Kay Denfeld, 1994- present

### *Library Instruction*

From the beginning, a major component of the services of Undergraduate Library was the Library Instruction Program. Although the new building did not provide a designated instruction room at first, there were Media classrooms which could be scheduled for library instruction sessions. From 1973 to 1976, the undergraduate librarians taught a separate, quarter-long class on how to use the library, funded by the University's General and Interdisciplinary Studies program. They also developed a self-paced library skills workbook for students who wanted to work independently. Audio-tapes on how to use various library tools were produced and made available in the reference area. The undergraduate librarians also provided tours and a wide variety of classroom presentations for individual undergraduate courses at faculty request.

In 1979, librarians from a number of other University Libraries public and technical services areas joined with OUGL librarians to start the program which became known as "BIBLIO LABS", standing for bibliographic instruction and orientation labs. These were a series of one-hour course-related lectures and library assignments which could be adapted to any undergraduate subject course where students had to write a term paper or



do other library research. The Labs were taught in a new classroom created for library instruction, located behind the Reserve area on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of OUGL. In 1981, the BIBLIO LAB Program changed to incorporate graduate students from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) as teachers along with OUGL reference librarians. The OUGL Instruction Librarian taught a three-quarter independent study course within GSLIS, training the graduate students to teach the Labs along with other OUGL librarians. GSLIS students gained a solid grounding in library instruction theory and practice, and the OUGL BIBLIO LAB program could expand to reach many more undergraduate students than could have been accommodated by OUGL librarians alone. As many as 1,500 undergraduate students per quarter took BIBLIO LABS with their courses. As the OUGL instruction program evolved through the 1980's and early 1990's, the name was changed to "Library Labs". Also in the early 1990's the library instruction classroom was moved to a separate alcove adjacent to the Reference desk and was equipped with computers for hands-on instruction.

### *Reserves*

An important function of the Undergraduate Library from its inception has been Reserves. Faculty members can request that required reading from the Libraries' collections be placed on reserve so that all of the students in their classes will have access to it. In 1963, this service was known as the Reserve Book Room, but the collection of materials placed on reserve since that time has included journal article reprints, old exams, audiovisual materials, and physical objects as well as books. Electronic reserves were tested by the OUGL Reserve unit as early as 1995 and are a growing part of the service.

### *Circulation*

The Circulation unit has maintained a high degree of speed and accuracy in the reshelving of the collection over the years that OUGL has been open. This unit was also chosen to test the very first automated circulation system for the University Libraries in the 1980's.

### *Reference*

OUGL reference librarians have held to the goal of providing personalized and individual service to undergraduate students in a variety of ways. From maintaining long hours of staffing at the reference desk, to developing innovative instruction and orientation programs, to devising an effective term paper consultation service, the librarians have created a welcoming library atmosphere for undergraduates. Many a student has returned to the OUGL reference desk to share the excitement of a successful term paper with the librarians who have helped with the library research.

### *GULP*

The Group on Undergraduate Library Policy, known as GULP, was established in 1973, soon after the move to the new building. This advisory group, composed of undergraduate students, faculty and advisors who work with undergraduate students, and OUGL staff, serves as a sounding board for OUGL policies, providing advice and reactions to proposed new services and suggesting ways for the Undergraduate Library to better serve its constituents.

### *UWired*

OUGL librarians eagerly participated in the creation of the 1994 pilot project which soon became known as the UWired Program. A cooperative venture by three UW entities, Undergraduate Education, Computing & Communications, and the University Libraries, the initial focus of UWired was on integrating information literacy and information technology into the course curriculum for entering freshmen. By the end of the 1995-96 academic year, OUGL had provided the location for three UWired Collaboratories (classroom computer labs designed for collaboration) for students and the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology for faculty, TA's and librarians. The UWired Commons opened on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of OUGL in Fall Quarter 1997. UWired expands and changes each year to encompass more of the educational aims of the University and OUGL joins UWired in this exciting and positive program to provide information literacy training for all levels of undergraduate students.

### *In Conclusion*

In his inaugural address, given on November 7, 1958, President Odegaard traced the development of the phrase "community of scholars" as it has applied to universities since the Middle Ages. Odegaard said that the community, by embracing both the faculty and the students, could enlarge the capacity for learning and teaching in this collective enterprise beyond any individual achievements.

The Odegaard Undergraduate Library was designed to become a vital, integral part of the community of scholars by providing a place where students could gather, individually or collectively in groups, to pursue intellectual ideas. The resources in place to support these pursuits when the new library building opened in 1972 were books, journals, and audiovisual materials, attractive study spaces for groups and individuals, and librarians who were specialized in working with undergraduates. During the succeeding 25 years, these resources have expanded and changed, but the original purpose remains valid today and for the future.

### Heads of the Undergraduate Library

1962 - 1971

Marie Gosebrink

1971-1973

Millicent Abell

1973-74

Nina Cohen, Acting

1974-75

Anne Passarelli, Acting

1975-77

Marilyn Sharrow

1977-78

Edith Johnson, Acting

1978-83

Sharon Hammer

1983-84

Paula Walker, Acting

1984

Nancy Baker

1984

Paula Walker, Acting

1985-1991

Paula Walker

1991-1992

Randy Hensley, Acting

1992-1996

Paula Walker

1996-1997

Kay Denfeld Acting

Jill McKinstry

1997-



## Resources Consulted

Those with an interest in the history of the University of Washington are referred to Charles M. Gates' book, The First Century at the University of Washington, 1861 - 1961.

The history of the undergraduate library movement has been documented in Roland Person's book, A New Path: Undergraduate Libraries at United States and Canadian Universities, 1949-1987.

The full text of President Odegaard's inaugural address appears in the book Man and Learning in Modern Society: Papers and Addresses Delivered at the Inauguration of Charles E. Odegaard as President of the University of Washington, November 6 and 7, 1958.

For a history of the buildings on the UW campus, see The Fountain and the Mountain: The University of Washington Campus 1895-1995 by Norman Johnston.

The *Guidelines for University Undergraduate Libraries* were published in College and Research Libraries News, May 1997. The Guidelines are the most recent revision of the document first written and published as the *Model Mission Statement of a University Undergraduate Library* in 1979 and revised in 1987.

I would also like to acknowledge the resources and assistance of the Manuscripts and University Archives Division and the Special Collections and Preservation Division of the University of Washington Libraries and of the staff at the Odegaard Undergraduate Library.

Paula Walker  
Assistant Director of Libraries/  
Special Assistant to the Director