WIU Library Assessment  
African American Studies  
Fall 2012

The vision of University Libraries is to serve as a portal to the information landscape. In implementing that vision, our mission is to identify, collect, organize, preserve and provide access to information resources and services in support of the values of Western Illinois University. One way to assess the quality of resources and services is to periodically examine library support for each academic program. To insure that an examination of library support occurs on a timely and consistent schedule, the WIU Libraries evaluates its support for each WIU department during its program review, which is mandated by the Illinois Board of Higher Education every eight years.

The mission of the WIU Department of African American Studies (AAS) is to graduate students who are fully equipped to succeed in their future careers or graduate training endeavors, and who will be leaders in shaping our global society. It will be a department where teaching, research, and community outreach programs are at their highest standards. The University Libraries plays an active role in the education of AAS students at WIU. This role is outlined below.

Services

The University Libraries consists of the main Malpass Library and three branch libraries—Music, Physical Sciences and Curriculum, on the Macomb campus, and a library at the Moline campus. The main library is open 102.5 hours a week during the regular semester, and reference services are available 65 hours per week. Both general open hours and reference hours are adjusted for branch libraries according to needs. In addition to face-to-face meetings for reference, library users may contact library faculty and staff by phone or by instant messaging during scheduled reference hours. Also, email may be used at any time. Library faculty and staff also provide help targeted at specific groups such as graduate and international students.

The University Libraries also offers instructional services, which are designed to develop WIU students’ research skills. Instruction sessions may be scheduled by any university teaching faculty member. By working with faculty, librarians are able to design sessions to meet specific curricular needs of the course. Requests by the faculty may be submitted on the Web at any time. The number of requests by the AAS faculty has varied from semester to semester, from a high of 5 to a low of 2. For each session, the librarian creates a library guide to help assist student with their research. For examples, see http://wiu.libguides.com/cat.php?cid=23382.

Another vital library service is the Liaison Program. The Library Liaison Program helps establish and maintain an open channel of communication between librarians and the 43 academic departments. As liaisons, librarians help fulfill the mission of identifying, collecting and providing access to information in support of teaching and research at Western Illinois University. A library liaison is appointed to each academic department on campus. The current library liaison to AAS is John Stierman. He holds an M.A. in history, as well as an M.A. in librarianship. For more, see Personnel below.

Since most humanities professors and many social scientists continue to rely on books, many of which are out of print and difficult to access locally, the department relies upon interlibrary loan services provided by the University Libraries. Professors make book and article requests online, and are alerted
by campus email when the desired item has arrived. Scanned journal articles are posted on the Web for retrieval at the convenience of the requester. Most books are available from member libraries of the state consortium, CARLI. Other requests may be submitted and progress tracked on an interlibrary loan management system. Books may be picked up any time the library is open. It is understood that interlibrary loan requests are subject to copyright and privacy regulations. Between 7/1/2008 and 8/1/2012, the AAS faculty and its students submitted 311 ILL requests.

Students and faculty also look to the library for computer access and support. If users have trouble connecting to the wireless network, scanning, or accessing a printer, Malpass Library offers 47 hours of computer support per week, including some evening and weekend hours. The support includes hardware, software and peripherals. The Library Computer Services Unit also maintains all equipment housed in the libraries. In addition, there is support for digitization, maintenance of electronic resources and web services. When the Computer Services staff is not available, users can turn to the Reference and/or Access Services for support.

Learning Outcomes

WIU librarians work with students every day, at reference desks and in the classroom, to promote academic excellence. Librarians work with professors to design assignments for instruction and work closely with them to constantly refine library instructional sessions. University Libraries provides the opportunity for any professor to schedule library instruction sessions. Over the past eight years, instruction librarians have worked with several AAS faculty to design assignments and library guides that help develop the information literacy of their students, as mentioned above under Services.

In addition to formal library instruction sessions, the University Libraries offers one-on-one reference assistance at the main Reference Desk, the Government and Legal Information Desk, in Archives and Special Collections, and at the branch libraries. User guides are created for academic topics and are available through various library Web pages. The Instruction Unit has also created instructional videos on many basic library-related tasks to further help students.

Access

Western Illinois University Libraries provides access to many resources, both physical and virtual. Through an online catalog that may be used anytime and anywhere, the Libraries provides full access to all materials owned, to which it has subscriptions, or to others where University Libraries has access rights. In addition, through participation in a statewide consortium, all library users have access to holdings at more than seventy member libraries. Through other resource-sharing tools, users can also view and request bibliographic and holdings information at many other libraries world-wide.

For access to journal articles and other documents, University Libraries subscribes to many databases that provide citation information and abstracts of journal articles. Many of the citations also have links to the full text of journal articles. These tools are generally on the Web for easy and continuous access. Those most relevant to the AAS Department are EBSCO’s America: History and Life and Historical Abstracts. In the past academic year (FY12), students and professors conducted over 15,000 searches in America: History and Life. This is the trend back to FY08, when EBSCO acquired the ABC-Clio databases. For Historical Abstracts, the outside North America database, there were over 14,000 searches in FY12, which is the average back to FY08. ProQuest’s Sociological Abstracts is also a popular AAS database. In FY12, users made over 8,000 searches in Sociological Abstracts. And this has
been the pattern for the past few years, making it one of the Libraries’ most popular bibliographic databases.

In addition to journal databases and online archives, the University Libraries subscribes to a growing number of online resources that deliver online primary source materials to students. They are Black Thought and Culture, Digital Sanborn Maps, the Gerritsen Collection (full text of 4,700 books, pamphlets and periodicals about women), Harpers Weekly, Historical Chicago Tribune, and Women and Social Movements.

Among general databases that also cover topics in AAS are ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, Humanities International Index, InfoTrac, Academic Search Premier, LexisNexis Academic, and Access World News. Through literature guides and aids created by the library faculty and staff, students also have access to many Web resources from professional organizations, federal and state governments and other technology-related agencies.

The library Web site may be accessed by anyone. For those resources that restrict use to university-related personnel, the library provides a proxy server for those in off-campus locations. With authentication, all students and faculty members have use of all library resources. To facilitate off-campus use, there is a direct link from the library homepage for distance learners. In addition, the library liaison to the department has created a guide for students and faculty to easily access relevant resources, including journal articles and government information: http://wiu.libguides.com/aas.

Collections/Resources

The University Libraries provides a learning environment where the infrastructure and available resources are more than sufficient to meet the curriculum and research needs of students and faculty. The Libraries holds more than one million items. African American Studies is interdisciplinary, but the primary Library of Congress call number range is E184.5 through 185.98. Of the 2850 items, 2134 are in the main collection and 393 are in reference.

As a Federal Depository Library Program participant, WIU Libraries also selects 65% of all federal publications from that program - a selection rate comparable to that of large research libraries. Students of the African American experience in the U.S. have the following government resources and documents at their disposal: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Congressional Committee Hearings, Smithsonian publications, National Archives, Library of Congress (e.g., American Memory Project), laws and statutes of the U.S. and their history, American State Papers (1789 to 1838), U.S. Congressional Serial Set (1817 to 1980), U.S. Congressional Serial Set Maps (1817 to 1980), and U.S. State Department publications (e.g., Foreign Relations of the United State historical series). Documents of U.S. military branches and also their many sub-offices, centers, institutes and museums are also available. Students and scholars also have access to Illinois state documents and laws that are in print and online: http://www.wiu.edu/libraries/govpubs/illinois_laws/.

For technology areas, WIU Libraries selects higher than 65% of the resources available through the Depository Program. WIU Libraries is also a Patent and Trademark Resource Center with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. University Libraries’ PTRC provides the campus and community access to a unique body of scientific and technical information and services.
African American Studies students can also access primary sources in Archives and Special Collections. The University Archives is the official repository for university records. Materials housed in the University Archives include records of administrative offices and faculty and student organizations, publications issued by the university, student newspapers, yearbooks, faculty publications, and WIU theses and dissertations, as well as photographs, oral history tapes and memorabilia relating to the university.

Special Collections documents the cultural, economic, and natural heritage of west-central Illinois. Special-interest centers include: the Center for Regional Authors, the Baxter-Snyder Center for Icarian Studies, the Center for Hancock County History, including the Mormon Collection, and publications of the Decker Press, a regional publisher of such noted authors as Edgar Lee Masters. A number of Civil War manuscripts, collections related to naturalist Elton Fawkes, singer Burl Ives, historian Philip D. Jordan and Congressmen Thomas Railsback and Lane Evans, among others, are rich sources for student research. A vast amount of other regional materials, such as county and town histories, oral history tapes, diaries, letters, maps, photographs, and newspaper clippings augment Special Collections, reflecting life as it once was, and now is, in west-central Illinois. The majority of sources on African Americans are interspersed with University Archives, Special Collections and IRAD (see below). There are, however, specific collections relating to the Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center and the Black Student Association and three special collections relating to the black experience in Macomb: VFM 147 (Ardith Thorpe Collection), VFM 148 (David Graff Collection) and VFM 149 (African Americans in Macomb).

Archives and Special Collections also house the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD), one of seven centers for local government records in the state of Illinois under the auspices of the Illinois State Archives in Springfield. The WIU-IRAD covers a 16-county area of west-central Illinois. Because of its location and the nature of its collection, the holdings in the WIU-IRAD nicely complement the WIU Special Collections. Holdings and research policies of the WIU-IRAD can be accessed through the Illinois State Archives’ webpage.

In regard to journals, WIU Libraries has a total of about 60,000 journals in electronic format accessible through the Web. When citations are accessed in databases mentioned above, when applicable, links allow direct access to full-text articles. As preferred, these can then be printed, downloaded, or emailed as attachments for further use.

The University Libraries currently subscribes to 12 journals selected by the AAS Department faculty. But this number does not scratch the surface of the journals available through the University Libraries’ periodical databases and online archives. The University Libraries’ subscription to JSTOR provides access to 19 scholarly journals in African American Studies and 55 in African Studies. Many more can be found in related areas, such as history, economics, religion, political science, area studies, anthropology, and paleontology. Since January of 2010, WIU students and faculty have downloaded 2067 full text documents in the African American Studies collection and 1200 in the African Studies collection. These numbers do not reflect other full-text articles in the EBSCO history databases.

Since the early 1990s, the University Libraries Reference Unit has spent thousands of collection development dollars on scholarly encyclopedias and handbooks. At present the reference collection has 97 titles in the E184/85 LC range. African American Studies students and scholars also have access to such online reference tools as Encyclopedia of Race and Racism, Encyclopedia of African American Society and Encyclopedia of Black Studies. They also have access to such general reference sources as

In addition to resources owned by WIU Libraries or through subscription, students of African American studies can search WestCat for resources in the Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center, located in the Multicultural Center. Western Illinois University Libraries also has membership in a state-wide consortium with 76 members, which allows access to holdings of over 36 million items. Except for limited circulation items such as reference or archival materials, all of those items may be requested by WIU library users. The requested items are delivered through a statewide courier system. When time allows, library users can also use interlibrary loan services for materials identified through other sources such as WorldCat, which is international in scope.

**Facilities**

The University Libraries consists of the main Malpass Library and three branch libraries—Music, Physical Sciences and Curriculum—on the Macomb campus and a library at the Moline campus. The main library is open 102.5 hours a week during the regular semester. The library on the Moline campus is open 63 hours per week. Hours are curtailed during semester breaks and expanded during the final exam week. Physical space is about 200,000 sq. ft. for Malpass Library with seating for 1,300 people, and 2,400 sq. ft. for the riverfront campus in Moline, with seating for 40 users. The Physical Sciences Library is 4,417 sq.ft, with seating area for about 100. The Curriculum Library has an area of 6,134 sq. ft. with seating for 70.

All of the library buildings support wireless access. There are over 100 computers for use in Malpass Library. There are two computer classrooms in Malpass that may be scheduled for instruction. Also available are several other computer clusters with specialized software and general use computers. Each branch library also has computers for public use. The library also provides computer support, including some evening and weekend hours. The Digital Commons area in the main library has just become available, housing 20 dual-boot computers with space dedicated for collaborative work with large displays and other specialized hardware. This area is the demonstration model for other university buildings.

**Library Governance, Finance and Administration**

The Dean of University Libraries reports directly to the Provost and participates in university governance at the same level as Deans of the four Colleges of WIU. Budgeting and administration of the libraries are carried out in similar manners as the colleges, under the same institutional and state regulations governing higher education. Details and proposed changes and adjustments on governance, finance and administration are all described in the annual plan that the Dean of University Libraries submits to the Provost.

**Personnel**

There is a liaison from the library faculty assigned to work with each academic department. That person is responsible for communication between academic departments and the library, including collection development issues. There are also reference librarians and other staff members available at
various service points during scheduled time when the libraries are open. There are also instructional personnel available for scheduled sessions.

The current AAS department liaison holds a Master’s Degree in history and has taught an introductory American history class, from the peopling of the Americas to the end of Reconstruction, for the History department. He oversees the selection of library materials for the University Libraries’ monographic collection, with active support from the AAS faculty, and has a seat on the reference materials selection committee.

Evaluation

This narrative presents an evaluation of library support for the African American Studies department, which is up for program review. The University Libraries is eager to participate in the evaluation process and is available to provide follow up information regarding this review if necessary.

(John P. Stierman, October 9, 2012)