

Library Vision Statement

Illinois Wesleyan University

Bloomington, IL

The vision of the Illinois Wesleyan University Library is a learning environment responding to the traditional values of a liberal arts university and to current technological advances, integrating technology within tradition. As the intellectual heart of the campus, the library is the locus where scholarly information, regardless of format, is gathered, organized, and prepared for dissemination to the University community. In addition, the library provides a place for interaction, collaboration, consultation, study and reflection.

Driven by feedback from the campus community, those involved in the planning process envision a structure that is both externally majestic and internally inviting, reflecting the traditional heritage of an academic undergraduate library. On the entry level, library exhibits, new books and periodicals, newspapers, and a specially appointed public reading area will welcome library users. Books will be in full view on all levels, with contiguous, quiet reading spaces that take full advantage of abundant natural lighting. A culture of reflective scholarship will be eloquently captured in the contemplative atmosphere of the University Archives and Special Collections reading room. The new library will also incorporate the substantial collections of an existing, branch music library, making these resources more readily available to the wider university community. Particular attention will be given to a combined Media/Listening Center, bringing together audio/visual materials from various disciplines, while providing close proximity to subject-related print and electronic resources. Important to note is the design accommodation and administrative support for aggressive growth of the print resources collection: the library book collection, as an example, will double within the next ten years.

With careful consideration of the circumstances and environment in which a library researcher (whether faculty, student, or member of the larger University community) approaches and uses information resources, the decision was made to organize information by intellectual content rather than separating resources into collections by physical format. This process of integrating information resources is already taking shape with the library's use of the campus local area network. The library links electronic information resources, whether accessible through subscription, contract, or publicly available on the Internet, through coordinated, subject-based webpages. To further this process within the new library, the periodical collection will be integrated into the book stacks so that journals and monographs in a discipline will be located together. Networked computer workstations will be dispersed throughout the stack areas as well, allowing electronic resources to be used in conjunction with print resources. Viewed as an extension of the collection, these workstations will enable the researcher to gather, analyze, and assimilate the accessible knowledge of a particular field of study. In this way, the library envisions the merging of traditional research methodology with the advantages of state-of-the-art information technology.

Acknowledging that familiarity and understanding of library tools and technology are on a continuum from novice to expert, detailed design consideration has been given to research needs at each stage of inquiry and ability, especially in the Information Commons. The Information Commons consists of multiple users, networked workstations, the print reference collection, group project rooms for collaborative work, and an adjacent instruction lab. The networked lab will serve as the appropriate space for formal, hands-on, interactive instruction of library print and electronic resources. When an instruction class is not scheduled, the lab will be available for general use. The entire Information Commons area benefits from close proximity to expert staff at the service desk. Beyond the Information Commons, the variety, number, and proportion of styles of seating is in direct response to faculty and student input. Solitary researchers will enjoy comfortable, private, reading chairs and carrels, capable of accepting computer technology. A large number of networked group study rooms responds to the campus pedagogical trend of student work in groups. Ubiquitous wiring assures that the new building is as technologically flexible as possible, providing a variety of captivating atmospheres to utilize electronic access.

Technology within tradition: Illinois Wesleyan University's library vision integrates the rich network of digital resources with the culture of traditional academic scholarship. With inviting spaces for both individuals and groups, the new library will serve as both the gateway to campus and as the gateway to the breadth of resources and materials that bridges information into knowledge.

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