



## Reading and Thinking Deeply in a Screen-Obsessed World

**Greetings!** I hope you have enjoyed many relaxing and fun activities this summer! I appreciate summer's slower pace and wish there were more time to enjoy the sunshine with a good book and a tall glass of iced tea. This summer, I especially enjoyed reading *Meet Me at the Museum* by Anne Youngson, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein, and *How Good People Make Tough Choices* by Rushworth Kidder.

In May, *The Atlantic* published an article about books in college libraries entitled "The Books of College Libraries Are Turning into Wallpaper." Although I didn't like the title of this article, I agreed with most of what Dan Cohen wrote. He explained that people read scholarly materials differently from leisure reading materials. In today's research environment, researchers use journal articles more heavily than monographs and increasingly use big data sets. Despite the decreasing circulation of books in academic libraries, students want the books to surround them when they use the library. Cohen pointed out that students "have read fewer books before they arrive on campus than in prior decades" and that this change correlates with the recession and the release of the first smartphones and tablets. He concluded with a gentle warning: "The value of books, after all, is what lies beneath their covers, as lovely as those covers may be."

The Park Library master plan calls for the long-term presence of library collections on the book stacks nearest the atrium on floors two, three, and four. The electronic components in these sections of shelving are currently being upgraded to keep the equipment working for another thirty years. The book stacks perform two functions beyond housing our collections: they identify the building as a library and prevent the sounds in the atrium from reaching the quieter study areas in the middle of the stacks and along the perimeter of the building.

The third-floor stacks house our bound journals collection. During the past two years, we withdrew the volumes for which we have online access and have purchased digital journal backfiles strategically to clear half of the space. The bound volumes we retained are not available in digital format, or we do not have online access to those volumes. Journal articles are easier to access online; thus, the removal of this content from Park Library's public space doesn't adversely affect library users.

The same cannot be said about the books shelved on the building's first, second, and fourth floors. Most of these items are not available in e-book format, and many readers prefer to read academic books in print rather than online. Humanities scholars consider the library to be their laboratory and value the serendipitous experience of browsing the shelves. Research studies show that deep reading correlates with complex reasoning, critical thinking, and perspective-taking. Deep reading is essential for all students, whether majoring in STEM disciplines or liberal arts and social sciences. Randy Glasbergen's iconic cartoon says it best: "It's called 'reading.' It's how people install new software into their brains."

## 2018-2019: The Year in Numbers

Use of library online resources and specific spaces within the Park Library continues to increase.



### E-journal article downloads

**↑ 3.6%** compared to the previous year and 4.1% compared to two years ago.



### Use of the Clarke Historical Library's (CHL) Digital Collections

**↑ 14.7%** compared to the previous year and 20.9% compared to two years ago.



### Research Guide Usage

**↑ 13.9%** compared to the previous year and 6.3% compared to two years ago.



### Group Study Room Usage

**↑ 6.9%** compared to last year and 6.3% compared to two years ago.



### Use of the Extended Hours Study Room (EHS)

**↑ 29.3%** compared to last year and 32.7% compared to two years ago.

## Reading and Thinking Deeply in a Screen-Obsessed World (Continued)

Sven Birkerts' thought-provoking article, "Reading in a Digital Age," is as fresh today as it was when he published it in 2010. Birkerts noticed that his students preferred to read on their screens, and he wondered what effect this would have on their attention span and ability to think deeply. Birkerts contrasted contemplative thought, imagination, reflection, and insight with the goal-oriented analytical thinking that pervades the internet. When overwhelmed by too much information online, the reader skims the text and focuses on small bits with "fractured attention."

When reading a novel, the reader engages deeply in a world created jointly by the author and the reader's imagination. In this fictional world, the reader is liberated from the real world to experiment, to be different, to remember, and to sense and live the story. Birkerts called this place "a third state" that is "a privileged kind of profundity."

In the library building, students studying individually or working on group projects may experience this sense of being in two places at once. They may contemplate concepts in their mind while surrounded by more than 100 years of scholarly content on the library's shelves. They may be alone with their thoughts while in the company of other students doing the same thing. They may be solving problems for a group project while synthesizing content downloaded from the libraries' online resources.

The library building and its collections will continue to evolve in tandem with changing technologies and social and economic forces. At the library, I hope that our students can get away from the distractions of the physical and virtual worlds to focus on their studies and get work done. I hope they take time to connect the content among the courses they take while enrolled at CMU. I hope that future generations of students will read books and will take the time to think for the sake of thinking.

- Kathy Irwin, *Dean of University Libraries*

### How did a typical student use the library during 2018-2019?



**54.5** Articles Downloaded

**3** Physical books checked out and renewed

**30.9** E-books used

**4.1** Times they used the Extended Hours Study Room

**1** Time they used a group study room

**27.9** Times they entered Park Library

**1** Item requested from Documents on Demand

## Hello! Greetings from Central Michigan University!

With pleasure, I'd like to share news about the tremendous growth experienced within the university and the libraries over the past year due to your outstanding support.

Several years ago, our university embarked on the biggest capital campaign in CMU's history. The original goal of the *Fire Up For Excellence* campaign was to raise \$100 million. As of July 2019, I am excited to announce that we have raised over \$115 million to support student success at this outstanding institution. Our Alumni and Friends have given above and beyond what we imagined.

CMU Libraries benefited from the capital campaign as well. I am pleased to announce several new endowments. The Robbins DeJonge Library Endowment, given by Dr. Donijo Robbins DeJonge '94 and Mr. Keith DeJonge, supports library collections and services. The Gus and Lucille Grozdon Family Scholarship and the R&M Schmidt Endowment will each support an award for full-time undergraduate students employed by the libraries. Awards like these are paramount in enhancing library offerings and retaining highly qualified student employees. On behalf of everyone here at CMU, I thank you for your leadership in ensuring our university thrives today and into the future.

As the Senior Associate Director of Regional Development, I'd love to connect with you. Whether you're interested in touring the library or discussing ways in which you can have a direct financial impact, I welcome your ideas. Until then, I'll look forward to seeing you at the upcoming Friends of the Libraries luncheon on Saturday, September 21.

### Fire up Chips!

- Jacob Uithoven, *Senior Associate Director of Regional Development*

## Your Support Makes a Difference!

We are truly grateful for your generous support! Gifts to the Friends of the Libraries enabled us to transform spaces in the Park Library, secure significant collections, and sponsor engaging events during the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

### **Park Library building enhancements**

- Replaced worn furniture in the Baber Room and reupholstered bench cushions on either side of the information desk.
- Created a new 3,000 square foot collaborative study space on the east side of the third floor.
- Installed an after-hours door connecting Java City to the library's first-floor quiet study area. Opening in January 2020, this new access-point will enable us to increase the amount of study space available after the main library closes.
- Upgraded the movable shelving on the second, third, and fourth floors.
- Painted mechanical rooms located in the center of the books stacks on the second, third, and fourth floors CMU maroon.
- Installed Steelcase Room Wizards (digital signage) outside four heavily used rooms on the second and third floors to aid users in wayfinding.

### **Collections**

- Subscribed to the *New York Times* online. This e-resource was previously available through the Michigan eLibrary, but was eliminated from their offerings during fall 2018.
- Through a combined purchase and donation agreement, we received a collection of 667 pop-up books. The collection is of national significance and ties in well with the Clarke Historical Library's existing collections.

### **Exhibits and events hosted or co-sponsored**

- The library student employee annual fall meeting.
- The screening of the 1931 *Frankenstein* movie as part of the College of Arts and Social Sciences' Critical Engagements project and ENG 337: *The Novel*.
- The Hemingway exhibit.
- CMU's International Film Festival.
- The annual Book Recognition event.

### **We also received several significant donations of books:**

- The collection of pop-up books noted above was gathered and curated by Dr. Francis Molson, an expert in children's literature and the former chair of CMU's English Department.
- A collection of approximately 250 mathematical textbooks spanning three centuries gathered and curated by Professor Emeritus Robert G. Clason.

### **Thanks to several endowments, we provided scholarships to eight library student employees:**

- **Helen Holz Rooney Endowed Award**
  - Mariah Barren, *Library Research and Instruction Services*
  - Natalie Batten, *Documents on Demand*
  - Kiersten Fox, *Access Services*
- **Gus and Lucille Grozdon Family Scholarship**
  - Leah Ryal, *Business Services*
- **Library Student Employee Scholarship Fund**
  - Graham Govitz, *Access Services*
  - Amanda Meinke, *Access Services*
  - Reagan Osborn, *Documents on Demand*
  - Haley Schneider, *Clarke Historical Library*

### **Special acknowledgment**

We would like to thank Emeritus Provost Dr. Michael Gealt for investing \$250,000 in library acquisitions and infrastructure during the past year. In December 2018, we used \$50,000 in one-time funding to purchase two digital archives and two journal backfile packages. In July 2019, we used \$50,000 in base funding to shore up journal subscriptions in key areas. During the summer of 2019, we used \$150,000 in matching funds to upgrade electronic components in three sections of library shelving visible from the library's atrium which are intended to remain in perpetuity per the 2015 Park Library Master Plan. These upgrades will protect access to the university's long-term investment in the scholarly record.



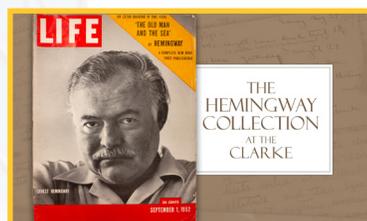
3 East collaborative study space



After-hours access door to Quiet Area



*The Jungle Book* pop-up book  
by Matthew Reinhart



*The Hemingway Collection at the Clarke*

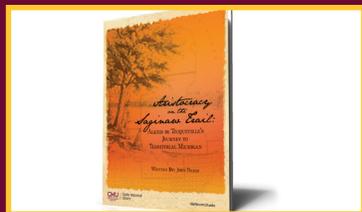
## Library Employee Notes



**Sandy Folsom** retired from CMU Libraries with 35 years of service as a faculty librarian and cataloger. Sandy devoted her career to increasing students' information literacy skills, providing access to scholarly works authored by CMU faculty and students, enriching the library profession through her scholarly endeavors, and offering expert advice and guidance to all library faculty and staff. We will miss her sense of humor and wish her much happiness in retirement!



**Margaret Danowski** joined CMU Libraries in April as our new Health Professions Librarian. Margaret earned her bachelor's degree in classical archaeology and cultural anthropology and her master's degree in library science from the University of Michigan. She most recently worked at Madonna University, where she served as the library liaison for the nursing and hospice programs.



**The Libraries won** a 2019 PR XChange award from the American Library Association in the Special Events and Exhibits category for the exhibit catalog, *Aristocracy on the Saginaw Trail: Alexis de Tocqueville in Michigan*, produced to accompany the fall 2018 exhibit. Exhibit catalog author: John Fierst. Graphic designer: Kari Chrenka. This award is the libraries' 7th PR XChange award.

## 2018-2019 Accomplishments and New Initiatives

The Libraries' faculty and staff accomplished a lot this year! Their collective 100,000+ hours last year propelled us toward our vision of being central to learning and research and demonstrated our values of creating a welcoming environment and being accessible. We have:

- **Implemented an online scheduling tool** for research consultation that integrates with librarians' Outlook calendars enabling students and faculty to schedule research consultations more quickly and seamlessly.
- **Increased the MeLCat borrowing period** to 90 days with the option of a 30-day renewal. The longer check-out period will benefit all faculty and students.
- **Eliminated fines and fees from most circulating items** to save students money and foster a more positive experience with the library.
- **Launched a scholarly communication services web page** to promote library research services aimed at faculty and graduate students.
- **Integrated new books and oversized books** into the regular circulating collection. These changes make it simpler for users to locate materials and save staff time.
- **Converted Park 351** from a periodical's workroom into a Quality of Life Room. Individuals may check out the room key for up to one hour for meditation, prayer, nursing, quiet reflection, sensory regulation, or stress management.
- **Launched a new blog, News & Views from CMU Libraries** to share news and stories with members of our community.

## Selected Goals for 2019-2020

- **Revisit the 2015 Park Library Master Plan** to recognize accomplishments and identify next projects. One future area of focus will be to enhance individual, quiet study spaces.
- **Raise awareness of open initiatives** such as open access, open data, and open education.
- **Collaborate with Admissions and Orientation** to engage transfer students, first-year students, and parents of first-year students early in their experience with CMU.
- **Develop an interactive website** allowing users to trace seven rail lines across Michigan and view historic images of the depots and stations along the line utilizing tens of thousands of images donated by a prominent Michigan railroad enthusiast and supported with materials from the Clarke Historical Library.
- **Develop and implement a focus group protocol** to understand the library experiences of patrons who identify with underrepresented groups or other special populations within the university.