Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Galter Health Sciences Library & Learning Center

Library History

Introduction

In September 2013, the Galter Health Sciences Library joined the NU Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (NUCATS), allowing both entities to provide more integrated support to students, clinicians and researchers. NUCATS launched in 2007, while the history of Galter Health Sciences Library extends further back, as outlined below. Various planned initiatives are currently underway that include remodeling of the Galter Library physical space, so the history of the library is still evolving.

For more information about the library's renovation, see our Library Renovation Update page.

Background

(Adapted from *The Galter Health Sciences Library of The Feinberg School of Medicine* by James Shedlock, AMLS, AHIP, part of the entry on Northwestern University Libraries in the *Encyclopedia of Library Science, 2nd ed., 2003*.)

As long as there are medical, dental and other health sciences schools, they will have a library to meet their information needs. The history of the Galter Health Sciences Library traces its origin to small collections that were established at the beginning of the medical and dental schools. In the Galter Library's case, there are two lines of descendants, each with an interesting and colorful history.

The origin of Northwestern's medical school is 1859 with the establishment of the medical department of Lind University (later to become the College of Lake Forest). Within the new building in downtown Chicago was "a faculty room also containing a 'library'" (Arey, p. 44). Between this beginning date and the establishment of Northwestern's Chicago Campus as its home for the university's professional schools of medicine, dentistry, law and commerce in 1925, there existed a series of medical libraries at each stage of the school's development. Given the times and the state of medical education, the library was not great. Reference is made to the dissolution of the medical library around 1870 for lack of use, and volumes were donated to a type of unified library established by the Chicago Medical Society, presumably for use by any student, faculty or physician living within the city. The medical School's Alumni Association revived the school's own library in the early 1880s and supported its growth through the sale of textbooks to students. Still, growth in the collection, a standard for measuring a library's greatness well into the end of the 20th century, was poor to modest. Real growth happened in the 1920s as a result of firm leadership in the form of a champion for the medical library, Dean Irving S. Cutter.

The origin of Northwestern's dental school is 1891, the result of affiliation and absorption by the university of some of Chicago's successful proprietary schools for dental education. While authoritative details are missing, presumably, these dental schools supported a library, though one was conveniently located across the street from a predecessor of Northwestern's medical school. While the two schools shared basic instruction, we trust there was also sharing of library resources as well. The first reference to Northwestern's dental library is its purchase by Dr. Theodore Menges, secretary of

the school, from Dr. Jonathan Taft, dean of the dental school at the University of Michigan. This large collection of 2,000 volumes continued to grow until the time of the school's move to the Chicago Campus.

TIMELINE

- 1859: The Medical Library is planned as part of the Medical Department of Lind University
- 1870: Chicago Medical College becomes part of Northwestern University
- 1871: the Medical Library is dissolved
- 1883: the Alumni Association reestablishes the Medical Library
- 1891: the Dental School becomes part of Northwestern University
- 1896: the Dental Library is established by Dean G. V. Black and Theodore Menges
- 1907 the Alumni Association gives up Medical Library responsibility to the university
- 1925: Dean Irving S. Cutter plans the new Medical Library; Dr. Archibald Church establishes funds to support the Medical Library collection
- 1926: the Dental Library occupies new space on the 10th floor of the Ward Building
- 1927: the Archibald Church Medical Library is dedicated
- 1958: the Dental Library is renovated
- 1965: the Archibald Church Medical Library expands its space into the new Searle Building and builds a stack tower
- 1978: the Satellite Dental Library is established in the new Health Sciences Building
- 1990: the Medical Library receives a gift from Jack and Dollie Galter and changes its name to the Galter Health Sciences Library; a merger with the Dental Library is initiated

(source: Library Notes 7(4): July/August 1990)

The Electronic Library

Grand Staircase

1994-96: after significant planning, the library renovation and expansion project takes place and on March 18, 1996, the new Galter Health Sciences Library is opened...

Because of the continuous growth in the collections and the need to update the library's network infrastructure for service in the 21st century, the medical school was prepared once again to expand its medical library. Thanks to a generous donation from neighborhood residents and Chicago philanthropists, Jack and Dollie Galter, the new Galter Health Sciences Library was ready to take the lead in providing innovative technologies for solving information access problems. It is at this time that the medical school and dental school libraries agreed to merge in order to provide excellent information service to both schools. After a significant amount of planning, the renovation and expansion project took place during the 1994-1996 academic years. Holabird & Root Architects were selected to design the new Galter Library, in effect correcting some of the space configuration problems they created in the 1964 expansion since they were the architects of record for the previous project. The Galter Library moved from a series of discrete rooms (reference room, reading room, stack floors as separate rooms, etc.) to a more open space plan configured around a central atrium linking almost all library departments. What drove the design was the inspiration to restore the original 1926 medical library. Consequently, the library's front door was moved from Searle to its original location in the Ward lobby. The library's new entrance hall houses circulation, reference and staff offices and the document delivery operation under an arched ceiling that leads users to the Eckenhoff Reference Room. Built below grade, the reference room's height gives it grandeur and establishes a historically-referenced ambience via the original, decorated ceiling (now uncovered after the 1964 expansion), the arched entry, busts of the schools' founders along the library shelves, the Alumni clock and the use of restored, leaded-glass windows, backlit in the original window frames, and

decorated with figures and symbols of medicine, dentistry and the university monogram. Though the ambience speaks to traditional library values, the room is completely wired to house the electronic reference center in front of the reference desk. The desk takes its cue from the original desk in shape and location; however, it too serves a more current function as an education post where staff can meet users for one-on-one consultation with special desk inserts for user seating, computers linked to the university backbone and storage space for the ever reliable ready reference collection of dictionaries, directories and subject heading lists.

The library's Barnes Learning Resources Center (LRC), started in 1978 but located on the Ward Building's third floor since space was lacking in the old library, was integrated into the newly renovated library. The LRC houses the library's non-print collection of slides, models, videos, computer-assisted instructional software and general productivity software (such as word processing, database management, spreadsheets). There are 50 carrels each containing a computer and some other hardware for viewing the collection. Each carrel is linked to the university backbone network. The most popular location in the library, the LRC assists users in accessing electronic course reserve materials, supports independent and small group learning via the instructional software, and meets users need for access to the Internet. The LRC is also location for 4 group study rooms each seating 8 to 10 users. These rooms, plus 6 more on the library's new second floor space, contain two network ports each, blackboards, light boxes for viewing X-rays, and media screens. The rooms are scheduled on a priority basis, the top priority being support for the medical school's problem-based learning curriculum where students and faculty meet together to learn medicine via a modified case study method; after that purpose, next priority goes to reservations made by any group of users, and finally, the rooms are accessible to all other users on a first-come-first-served basis.

Dollie's CornerAnother feature of the new library includes Dollie's Corner, a centrally located room midway on the library's second floor honoring the library's benefactor. Mrs. Galter was motivated to donate money for the library project based on her support for the education of physicians to be good doctors. Consequently, Dollie's Corner houses the library's leisure reading collection so students have a place to go to relax from their serious studies and read the newspaper, a magazine or the latest work of fiction to support a broader perspective into the cultural, political and economic issues of the day.

Other library features include over 200 network ports for users and staff scattered throughout the library; an array of conduit for expanding the network into the future; special displays for collection exhibits; a new special collections department to support research and preservation of rare materials, instruments and other artifacts; compact shelving in the lower level stacks to house historic materials; and plenty of staff space for work with users or to expand the features of the electronic library.

Glory Years

Archibald Church

The construction of the Montgomery Ward Memorial Building to house Northwestern's medical and dental schools provided real spaces purposefully designed for their respective libraries. Both libraries consisted of single reading rooms with adjoining staff and stack space. The medical school library was located on the building's first floor off the ornately decorated lobby. The medical library matched the lobby style with a decorated beamed ceiling, arched entries and spacious study tables. The dental library was located on the building's 10th floor at the end of a hallway that developed as a dental museum over the years until most holdings were donated to the Smithsonian Institutions in the 1960s. Some of these museum holdings have resurfaced at the National Museum of Dentistry (NMD) on the campus of the University of Maryland at Baltimore, home of the nation's first dental school. In the NMD, reference is made to the Jacksonville, Illinois office of Dr. Greene Vardiman Black, Northwestern's Dental School dean from 1897-1915 and the acknowledged father of modern American dentistry for his leadership in dental education and dentistry as a discipline. Both libraries began their acceleration in growth with the medical library becoming the country's third largest medical library in the 1930s and the dental library claiming to be the largest dental library in the world.

While the dental space managed to contain this substantial growth in the same space until its merger with the medical library in 1996, the medical library had to expand in 1964 and again in 1994. Both expansions happened after substantial growth in medical school buildings. In 1964, the medical library expanded as a result of the school's new G.D. Searle research building by extending out of its one-room configuration into an adjoining new reference room on the first level of Searle, leaving the original library space to serve as a new reading room. In addition, the library expanded into a new stack tower of basement, first and mezzanine floors that were formed by the enclosure of the entire medical school buildings of the time (the original 1925 Ward Building, the Morton Research Building (1955) and the new Searle Building). The 1964 addition allowed the medical library to continue to grow its print collections. In the mid 1970s a re-decoration took place that added more accommodating and attractive furniture, provided better staff space for handling the growing print collections and made preparations for the coming online age with staff access to computer terminals for the original MEDLARS search services.

Collections continued to be the hallmark of what libraries were about during the 1960s, 1970s and to some extent into the 1980s. Bigger collections meant bigger libraries, and in the typical American fashion, bigger always meant better. With the serials crisis starting in the 1980s, the ability of librarians to grow collections began to be hampered by the institution's inability to provide the requisite funds to cover journal inflation as well as additional funds for true growth. Northwestern's medical library in particular began to suffer and in the 1990s was truly behind its peers in counts for currently received serials, monograph additions and total acquisitions expenditures.

At the same time as collections were beginning to wane, libraries began to spend dollars to improve services via the use of new information technologies. MEDLINE services were introduced to the Northwestern medical school in 1975, and automation efforts expanded in the late 1970s and 1980s when the University Library in Evanston lead its peers in the development of NOTIS, the Northwestern Totally Integrated System. This 'father' of all library systems integrated acquisitions, authority control, serials management, cataloging and circulation systems into one complete whole. The

Medical Library latched onto these services as much as possible by participating in the system established by its North Campus colleagues and was fully automated in 1986 when the last module -- the circulation system -- was introduced. Efforts to automate other library services continued with the microcomputer revolution of the late 1980s. The Medical Library was able to claim leadership among its peers in health sciences and academic librarianship by introducing local MEDLINE services in 1993 when it purchased Ovid Technologies' online system. Using new standards for wide area network access, Ovid Technologies adapted its CD-ROM MEDLINE subscription to these standards and offered customers local management of their databases of choice. By choosing this innovative product, the Galter Library was able to offer MEDLINE access throughout the entire university. The library now had its own systems staff and was providing innovative services through technology. If the library could not succeed in building a successful collection, it could succeed in using technology to provide more and more access to remote resources.

A Library for the 21st Century

Putting emphasis on electronic access, the Galter staff are committed to providing the best service possible to assure users the library will be located wherever they want it to be. The Galter librarians see their professional role in a new light based on the resources made available by the renovation project and the continued support of medical school administration. Starting with the basic value inherent in the traditional librarian role to identify, acquire, collect, organize and disseminate scholarly resources relevant to the Medical School's three missions of research, education and patient care, Galter librarians seek to build the tools that users need to manage health sciences information effectively and efficiently. Two recent projects demonstrate this role. One project is HealthWeb, which is a collaborative effort of the staff from the academic medical center libraries of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (the Big Ten schools plus the University of Chicago) and the Greater Midwest Region of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine. With support from the National Library of Medicine, HealthWeb seeks to find the best web sites in the health sciences and organize those sites via a database of records using OCLC's Dublin Core descriptive elements. The effort is accomplished by each library assuming collection development responsibility for one or many subjects based on local collection strengths or the personal and professional interests of various staff. Each subject editor agrees to follow common guidelines for selection and collecting. Records are processed for the central database either by the editor or the editor soliciting local help from catalogers or other volunteer staff including available library science students. Rather than each library duplicating the same goal of creating a usable list of web resources, the HealthWeb librarians pool their skills to build a common resource for any and all to use. Currently, the Galter Library supports the HealthWeb project by housing its server and providing the web master. Subject editors at Northwestern provide leadership for the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation/Physical Therapy, Nutrition, Pediatrics, Endocrinology-Diabetes, and Radiology pages.

The other project demonstrating the librarian's role in information management is the development of the Health SmartLibrary (HSL). Again, with support from the National Library of Medicine via an information systems grant, the HSL seeks to build tools that assist the busy clinician with access to health information. The HSL hopes to save users' time by pushing information to them electronically before they need it. Central to the HSL goal are five tools for information management: a current awareness tool that can be specific to the individual user's own topic or a discipline-based, generic literature search highlighting the 'hot' topics of the day based on their self-identified discipline, recorded via a simple registration form; a meta search engine to assist users in locating specific topics in an array of locally available resources like MEDLINE, the local catalog, the locally-subscribed collection of textbooks, etc.; a personal database tool or filing cabinet to store selected pieces of literature - article, book chapters, web sites, etc. - on the library's server; the user's own HSL which is a personalization tool to make the electronic Galter Library more responsive to their individual information needs; and a generic HSL that is discipline-based like the current awareness tool. The key to the current awareness tool is to link citations to the available full-text resources located in the Galter Library's collection. The tool is activated each time the user logs into their HSL or whenever the user opens their email and receives the update message that new literature has been identified for them and is available for online reading. Similarly, the key

in the personalization tool is the user's registration that records their specific discipline. This automatically triggers a filtering of resources available from the whole Galter collection that are specific to a discipline. In this way users get only the information they need when they want it.

Overall, the Galter Health Sciences Library is posed to meet the challenges offered by a growing medical school environment. Using information technologies as a basic tool, the Galter Library staff will be providing the best information access and service it can to meet the needs of the Feinberg School of Medicine and the McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University.

References and Additional Information

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