

A New Library for the New Undergraduate

By Carla J. Stoffle

UNDERGRADUATE libraries have the potential for becoming the model of the multicultural, pluralistic environment that will be both the society and the campus in the near future. It could have an impact on the education of all students, particularly today's new undergraduates.

The society they inherit, according to University of Michigan President James Duderstadt, will be characterized by the need to accept and enfranchise diverse cultures and to compete effectively in an increasingly international environment.

Duderstadt also believes that America must capitalize on one of its greatest strengths—the emergence of knowledge and information as the basis of our potential wealth



Carla Stoffle is Deputy Director, University of Michigan Library

and status as a nation. These projections are part of "The Michigan Mandate," Duderstadt's policy statement on undergraduate education published in *The Record*, the Michigan campus newspaper, on September 12, 1988.

The undergraduate library, as part of its mission in the academic community, can and should be a major player in preparing these new undergraduates, and thus society, for these changes.

Easing new students in

Originally, the separate undergraduate library on research campuses was a response by university and university library administrators to the rapid growth in the undergraduate population experienced during the 1950s and predicted to continue in the 1960s. The college-age population was expanding as a result of the continuing enrollment of veterans from the Korean War, the emphasis on education from the Eisenhower administration in response to the Cold War and, later, the baby boom of the late 1940s and 1950s.

At that time there was recognition that special services geared to first-generation college students were needed if universities were going to

deal successfully with this unique and rapidly growing population. Thus, the undergraduate library was created with separate facilities and staff to provide mechanisms for easing the new students into the campus culture and helping the campus adjust to and provide for the new students.

The teaching library

Library user education programs sprouted during this period. Publications and guides to library use and services were developed. Exhibit areas were designed and used to bring broader cultural concerns and campus issues to the attention of the students. Separate current fiction collections were created and highlighted to encourage student reading and help round out the academic experience. Most of all, the hiring of library staff was based on dedication to serving students and a commitment to the idea that libraries could make a difference in the educational experience.

The undergraduate library became the "Teaching Library." That is, a library actively engaged in teaching, research, and service, rather than acting in a passive support role for the campus. It functioned under the premise that it must keep its fin-

ger on the pulse of the campus, anticipate campus needs, and play a leadership role in bringing together the segments of the campus community that were responsible for working with undergraduates.

At the same time, it initiated the research for understanding undergraduate information needs and use patterns—actively advocating for students and pursuing services that helped the campus reach its educational goals. In sum, these libraries were created to be outreach oriented and proactive in approach, focusing

grams and services, and to try to use the tools of the undergraduate library (commitment, philosophy, flexibility in service configuration, experience, etc.) to play a significant role in helping the campus adjust to the challenges of the new undergraduate of this era and the immediate future.

The new undergraduates

The Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life of the American Council on Education and the Education Commission of the States, in the 1988

multicultural, pluralistic society no longer dominated by white, European, male traditions and values. All cultures must be more sensitive to issues of gender, sexual preference, and alternative lifestyles.

A growing number of leaders in higher education, Michigan's President Duderstadt among them, are concerned with issues of diversity and internationalism. "In addition to the changing nature of American society, today's undergraduates are faced with an internationalization of American life," Duderstadt said in his *Michigan Mandate*. "There is no longer a domestic economy. Every industry, every economic activity is a part of a world marketplace. In slightly more than five years, the U.S. trade deficit has taken the country from the largest world creditor nation to the world's largest debtor nation. This growing internationalization of America suggests that understanding cultures other than our own is critical, not only for personal enrichment and good citizenship in the global community but for our survival as a nation . . . Higher education must prepare students by providing programs that reflect an international perspective and must provide students with an understanding of an increasingly interdependent world."

All of tomorrow's citizens, including those in the current white majority, must be prepared to live in a multicultural, pluralistic society. All cultures must be more sensitive to issues of gender, sexual preference, alternative lifestyles

on students and operating under the assumption that the library had its own role in the education of the undergraduate.

The undergraduate libraries have played this role extremely well for the past 30 years. Many of the service innovations that they started were eventually integrated into the services offered by most or all other campus libraries in large universities.

Is the job done?

What were once "innovations" needed for the acculturation and full education of a new kind of undergraduate have become integrated into the services and collections of all campus libraries. The need for separate undergraduate libraries is brought into question. Has the need for which they were created been met? Is this a time for the renewal of the undergraduate library's commitment to campus challenges or should such libraries be phased out and the facilities, personnel, and financial resources be committed to more pressing campus needs?

Some universities have decided that the original need for the undergraduate library is now being met elsewhere and the resources involved should be reallocated to other campus priorities. Others, like the University of Michigan, have chosen to build on the 30-year effectiveness of the undergraduate library and its pro-

study *One Third of the Nation*, reports that, by the year 2000, one third of our citizens will be from cultural, and racial minority groups (blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians). They will also comprise one-third of the new workforce. In fact, what used to be called minorities now constitute the majority of school-age children in the 25 most populous cities in the country.

"America is moving backward, not forward, in its efforts to achieve full participation of minority citizens in the life and prosperity of the nation," according to the commission report. "An unacceptably large number [of minorities] conclude at an early age that education is not for them. Even among those who make it into four-year colleges and universities, attrition rates are unacceptably high."

Diversity and internationalism

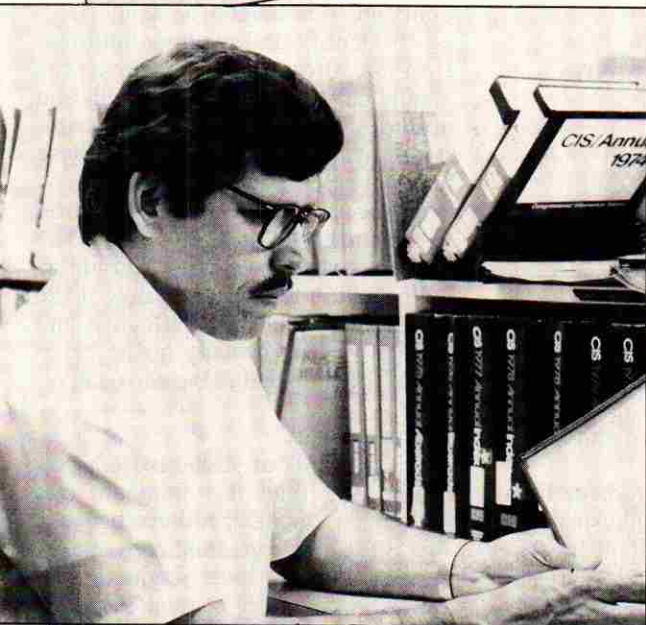
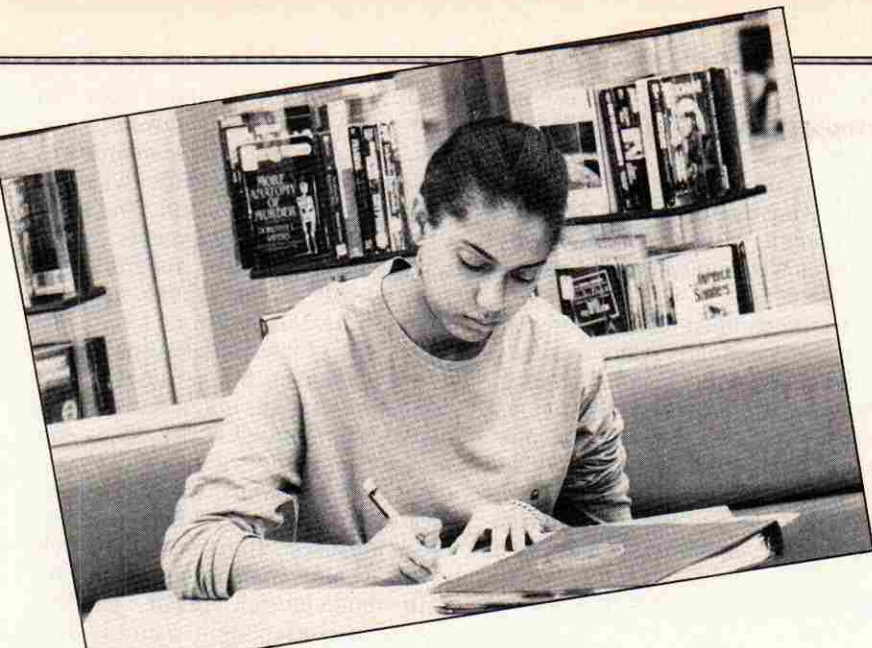
If this trend is not reversed, the consequences for the nation and for higher education will be dramatically negative. The economic as well as the social fabric of the country is dependent on how successful the larger society and institutions of higher education are in encouraging full participation for all citizens, particularly minority citizens.

All of tomorrow's citizens, including those in the current white majority, must be prepared to live in a

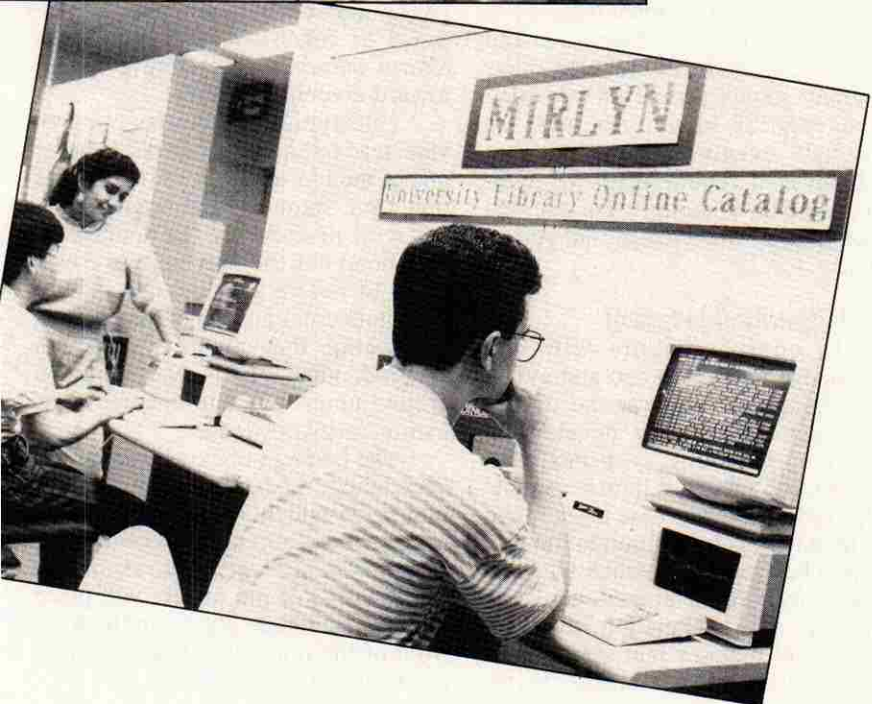
Intellectual capital

The ability to function in a knowledge-based society is now getting attention from the academic community. "Intellectual capital"—ideas and education as opposed to products requiring large amounts of labor and materials—is growing in its importance to America's continued well-being. Duderstadt addressed this question, too. "For undergraduates this means that a college education will only serve as the stepping stone to a process of lifelong learning," he said, "and that the ability to adapt, to manage change, will be the most valuable aspect of the undergraduate education."

The undergraduate library is uniquely poised to play a role in helping the campus and the individual student initiate education for that kind of adaptability. The undergraduate library's focus on students and its operating philosophy that it has an active role in the education of the undergraduate form a perfect fit with this new mandate. In addition, it is the one academic unit that has the potential for interacting with every student. The library staff are proac-



Programs, services, and facilities of undergraduate libraries must reflect a sensitivity to the needs of a heterogeneous student body



tive and can focus flexible, changing service configurations to meet new needs.

Undergraduate libraries have already been actively engaged in programs designed to teach students life-long learning skills and have invaluable experience and knowledge gained from such activities. That is why the opening assertion in this essay is that the undergraduate library has the potential for quickly creating a multicultural, pluralistic environment that will be a highly visible model for the campus and that will have an impact on the education of all students.

Staffing the new library

The activities and programs that might exist in undergraduate libraries to meet these new challenges successfully follow from the nature of the changes in society and in the new undergraduate population.

Diverse staff are essential and must be hired. From student workers to librarians, the needs of a multicultural, pluralistic community cannot be met by a homogeneous staff. This diverse staff must be trained to ensure that they are sensitive to different styles of interaction and learning patterns in the diverse population they serve. This will benefit all students, not just minorities.

Staff behavior that is considered hostile by minorities must be identified and eliminated from libraries. Stereotypic expectations for individuals, regardless of race or ethnic backgrounds, must be recognized and discontinued. An atmosphere of trust and openness among all library staff must be developed that allows them to explore their feelings on race and diversity in a sensitive, productive, and open manner.

Library staff must be knowledgeable about other campus services for a variety of student needs, as well as those for specific segments of the student population. They must have information on where and how to get help and actively work to bring together those on campus who are dealing with similar problems. They should offer help and leadership for the campus rather than waiting to be asked.

The new collection

Collections in the new undergraduate library will have to be broadly representative. That means materials dealing with different cultures around the world and different

cultural experiences within the United States must be represented. Collection development staff will have to search outside mainstream publications and indexes to find these materials.

Works by people of diverse cultures and from a broad variety of ethnic backgrounds must be readily available. It will be critical for the librarians to have an unwavering commitment to identifying a broad range of works and the sources through which they are distributed and can be acquired.

Resources that expand the student's perspective beyond the limits

men differentially adopt and use new technologies according to studies like *Gender Gap in the Use of Library Technologies* by Barton M. Clark and others. These same groups have fewer economic resources. They suffer the most when information must be purchased.

Libraries must take responsibility for overcoming barriers to access for these students. This becomes increasingly important as libraries expand the use of technology in information delivery and must mitigate any consideration of the increased use of fees to pay for that information. Access, however, is more than

sources is growing easier as networks and gateway systems develop, the user will often face a large quantity of material and the more difficult task of filtering out what is useful. The ability to make critical judgments on the quality of information, regardless of source, will be one of the essential skills of the 21st century.

Library instructional programs can be vehicles for sensitizing and educating students about multicultural and international issues. They can use women authors and authors from other cultures as instructional examples as frequently as white male authors are used. Illustrative research topics should include those dealing with multicultural, racial, gender, and sexual orientation themes. Students must be taught the skills needed to identify and evaluate information on such topics. Librarians should be prepared with the skills and attitudes necessary to encourage students who wish to engage in these areas of research.

Access to knowledge is central to the purposes of a university. The amount and kind of education libraries provide their clientele may make the difference between effective and ineffective use of many of the benefits of the knowledge-based society.

The crossroads

The needs of students from cultures other than the dominant one have been emphasized here because that is the single greatest area of concern confronting undergraduate education in the next several decades. Every unit on campus must be engaged in consistent and continuous efforts before real, lasting progress toward diversity is made.

Undergraduate libraries can provide leadership in this endeavor as one of the few institutions on campus that have frequent and regular contact with all students. The undergraduate library is the university's crossroads of people and ideas. It is both the intellectual and physical point of intersection that connects data with the individual. It is the common ground upon which to change information into knowledge.

The heritage of excellence in undergraduate libraries is the foundation upon which we can build. This solid foundation, combined with a renewed commitment to be responsive to the needs of the future, will place the undergraduate library in the forefront of the university's responsibility to society.

The undergraduate library is both the intellectual and physical point of intersection that connects data with the individual. It is the common ground upon which to change information into knowledge

of traditional studies of Western civilization will enable that student to work and live more effectively in the very different world community of the future. Programs, services, and facilities of undergraduate libraries must be made to reflect a sensitivity to the needs of a heterogeneous student body.

Champions of undergraduate access

Access is the top priority issue for undergraduates in large universities, and it will be the job of the undergraduate librarians to continuously monitor student access to ensure the equity of all undergraduates with the rest of the people on campus. Even in traditional undergraduate library service, inequities in the undergraduate's access to library resources and services, as compared to the rest of the campus community, were never adequately addressed.

The new librarian working with undergraduates will have to be the champion of student access to electronic resources. Without access, the educational experience of undergraduates as it relates to the use of many types of information would be limited. The inability to pay is an obvious barrier to undergraduate access to new information technologies. Added to that potential is the recognition that women of all races and minority

dealing with fees and educating students in the use of information resources. Access includes providing environments that are not only not hostile but that are open and inviting to a diverse audience.

Successful undergraduate libraries must review their physical environment and make changes. They should use exhibits, special reading areas, posters, bulletin boards, etc., to highlight nontraditional collections and achievements. Programs and speakers on multicultural and other diversity issues should be provided on a regular basis, not just as "special" events. The use patterns and physical requirements of a diverse student body must be assessed to determine what changes are appropriate.

Teaching critical judgment

To equip students with the knowledge needed to use and evaluate information sources, the librarians must aggressively develop instruction programs, especially in electronic formats. Librarians must help students learn to use a wide variety of materials in addition to those in print. They must also teach students how to focus their search, critically appraise the information they retrieve, and manage that information effectively. Although access to re-

The Good, the Undergrad, and the UGLi

By Patricia A. Tarin

THE university of Michigan Undergraduate Library, affectionately called UGLi by the students, plays an active role in the education of undergraduates. With a staff of seven librarians, headed by Barbara MacAdam, the UGLi responds to a diversity of needs through a wide range of programs and services.

Peer Information Counseling (PIC)

The Peer Information Counseling Program (PIC) recruits and trains ten minority students a year to help undergraduates of all backgrounds use the resources of the library. PIC counselors provide one-on-one assistance in using Michigan's numerous electronic resources, doing basic research and simple reference, developing term paper topics, and acting as guides to the various libraries on campus. PIC counselors also create a number of handouts and bibliographies on diversity-affirming topics and produce a newsletter for students. Aside from providing an innovative way to support undergraduates in their use of the library, PIC creates positive minority role models for all students by exposing them to these highly competent peers in positions of responsibility.

Undergrad/H.S. BI

Last year, the Undergraduate Library staff offered 97 classes in bibliographic instruction (BI) to 4480 undergraduates. Held in the UGLi or in outside classrooms, the stated goal of this instruction is to teach students how to choose and evaluate resources they need, think through information problems, and organize their research. As part of the process of critical thinking, students are taught to identify ideological and cultural bias within the materials they use.

Patricia A. Tarin is Assistant to the Deputy Directory, University of Michigan Libraries

Recognizing the serious need for improving the library skills of incoming freshmen, especially those who are from underrepresented minority groups, the UGLi worked with in-state high school librarians and the campus Minority Engineering Program Office to create special BI resources for selected Michigan high school students. A package is used that provides a number of instructional options geared to the amount of time available for these activities. All examples are of topical interest to high school students, with many of them drawn from a multicultural perspective. Typically, staff supports about 20 high school instructional requests during



PIC creates positive minority role models, "highly competent peers in positions of responsibility"

the course of the academic year.

The Undergraduate Library is involved in outreach and cooperative efforts to promote awareness of library services and support common goals with other units on campus, for example:

- planning and holding Info*Fest with staff of the small libraries within the residence halls. This is an information fair held to reach reluctant or non-library users in their own setting. Over 1000 students were contacted directly at the 1989 Info*Fest;
- contacting faculty and counselors to make them aware of ways the UGLi can be a resource for the undergraduate student support network of services on campus;
- organizing a series of open houses for international students to acquaint them with the library;
- working with the recruiter from the University of Michigan School of In-

formation and Library Studies to inform minority students about opportunities in librarianship;

- conducting orientation sessions for junior high school-age minority students on the importance of information literacy; and
- volunteering to mentor minority students as part of the Comprehensive Studies Mentoring Program that links faculty with incoming minority students for one year.

Exhibits and programs

Issues of social responsibility and diversity are explored year-round at the Undergraduate Library with a series of exhibits. Materials, displays, bibliographies, and informational handouts are coordinated to assist in the exploration of topics such as the environment, black history, women's issues, homophobia, and protection against sexual assault. Such exhibits expose students to new or different ideas in a self-paced and nonthreatening way.

Library staff participate with other units and libraries across campus to present relevant programming. Recent efforts include the annual Martin Luther King Day program, which brings notable speakers to campus to speak on issues of importance to blacks, and the Voices of Women of Color, an art exhibit of works by Third World women artists complemented by a series of lectures.

Publications

To help students adjust to the myriad information sources the UGLi and other campus libraries have to offer, staff have created introductory materials on the use of various features of the online catalog, bibliographies, single-page topical information briefs, research methods guides, special materials for international students, and an undergraduates' newsletter. For new students, there is a Survival Kit that pulls together all of the basic information on library programs and services, and that is customized for targeted groups (e.g., Hispanics, athletes, women, engineering students, etc.). All of these materials are constantly being reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure their timeliness and appropriateness.

Copyright of Library Journal is the property of Library Journals, LLC and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.