

**Hunter Library Annual Report to the Provost
2021-2022
Submitted by Chuck Thomas
Dean of Library Services**

Introduction

During the past year, Hunter Library more fully resumed operations and activities that reduced or temporarily paused during the pandemic 2020-2021. Our personnel were pleased to welcome faculty, students, and other users back into our facilities, and to restart face-to-face services such as reference and instructional classes, research consultations, programs and events, and other forms of engagement and enrichment. As in the past, we remained committed to providing the highest quality of scholarly information and services. The following report is not exhaustive, but instead highlights selected activities and accomplishments that demonstrate our desire to directly support research, teaching, and learning, and our ability to continually try new, experimental, and innovative approaches to library services. Thank you for your interest in Hunter Library!

Personnel Transitions

Departures

- Librarian Dr. Beth McDonough retired in September 2021.
- Librarian Mark Stoffan retired in September 2021.
- Staff member Mary Hill retired in September 2021.
- Staff member Malti Turnbull retired in October 2021.
- Associate Dean Shamella Cromartie left in May 2022 to begin a new position at Clemson University.

New Employees

- Dean of Library Services Chuck Thomas began in July 2021.
- Librarian Liz Harper returned to WCU after a year's absence in September 2021.
- Librarian Rebecca Saunders began in September 2021.
- Staff member Grey Jenkins began in November 2021.
- Staff member Joshua Everhart began in December 2021.
- Staff member Martin Best began in January 2022.
- Librarian Ali Norvell began in May 2022.
- Librarian Jazmyne Baylor began in May 2022.

Statistics and Information At A Glance

In previous annual reports, selected annual statistics were provided to give readers a better understanding of the scope and scale of our resources and activities. Effective this year, Hunter Library now provides a regularly-updated dashboard of key operational statistics about library spaces and visitors, services, collections usage, and size of our collections.

In the coming year, we also will add an archive of historical statistical reports.

Collections News

- Through the UNC System Shared eBooks Program, Hunter library currently provides access to 24,137 ebook titles. These ebook titles are part of the larger ebooks collection available to users, of nearly 930,000 titles.
- The library has developed a three-year plan, that will commence in the 2022-2023 year, to retrospectively digitize all print theses, dissertations, and disquisitions. The project will involve obtaining permissions to digitize their works from approximately 1,200 alumni of the University's graduate school programs, dating back to the 1950s. The digitized papers will be added to the library's freely available collections in the NCDOCKS digital repository.
- The library now provides access to MIT Direct to Open, a collection of 2,602 ebooks from the MIT Open Access Collection. These digital monographs were published by the MIT Press as part of its commitment to openly-accessible scholarship.
- This spring the library discovered a small outbreak of mold in sections of our bound print journals. Further analysis concluded that the mold is not of a variety harmful to people, but could have grown into a more serious problem for our print collections. The University hired an external company that is expert in treating mold outbreaks, and systematically went through the print collections identifying and treating each affected volume. Since many of the affected volumes also are available through the library's subscribed electronic collections, we opted to withdraw a total of 1,678 of the affected items. All other items were thoroughly cleaned and treated, and in 2022-2023 the library will put in place a network of temperature and humidity sensors to help prevent and identify possible future outbreaks.
- In late spring Special Collections installed new compact shelving in a section of the ground floor, to securely store growing collections of rare and unique materials.
- In support of broader library space planning activities, this past year's work continued to identify and remove materials that are duplicative, outdated, or otherwise no longer fit within Hunter Library's collections scope. The library withdrew 7,605 microfilm reels; 2,283 print books; 9 reference books; 5 musical scores; 29 maps; 1,930 serials (including items affected with mold); 163 media items; and 5 kits, games, and puppets.
- The library has begun a new board game collection that began this past year with a gift of 10 board games and continues to grow.

- Using \$26,000 in non-recurring funds awarded by the Office of the Provost, the library purchased access to the historical newspaper digital archive for the Atlanta Constitution.
- 11 major collections were donated to Special Collections this year, including the following materials:
 - Alan & Stephen Sellars
 - Kelly Bennett
 - Arnold J. Hyde
 - Mary Cecil Bryson Patterson
 - Charles Leander Rand
 - Lillian Franklin Thomasson
 - McFee - Misener Civil War Letters
 - Reed – Parris
 - Kelly Bennett, Add. #1
 - Jean Casada Brooks
 - James Smythe Collection
- Barbara Kephart Crane (Horace Kephart’s granddaughter) recently donated two very nice pieces of late 1800’s antique furniture that are now in the Special Collections reading room.
- Barbara Kephart Crane also generously donated \$25,000 to the Special Collections, and established an endowment in her name.
- To continue our work of preserving local and regional newspapers through microfilming, we completed a new workflow including setting up the process with a new vendor, updated ongoing record keeping, packaging, shipping and storage of the microfilm masters for these local newspaper titles:
 - Cashiers Crossroads Chronicle
 - Cherokee One Feather
 - Franklin Press
 - Smoky Mountain News
 - Smoky Mountain Times
 - Sylva Herald
 - Transylvania Times
 - Western Carolinian

Activities Promoting Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

The following activities this past year directly supported the University’s commitment to DEI:

- Every year, Hunter Library tracks and purchases the annual winning books of 30 different awards related to DEI. More titles were acquired for the library this year, bringing the cumulative size of this collection to 956 books. To view a list of all titles in this collection, see <https://researchguides.wcu.edu/diversebooks>.

- 14 new oral histories were conducted for LGBTQ+ Archive.
- Librarian Heidi Buchanan coordinated the reissue of *Just Over the Hill: Black Appalachians in Jackson County, Western North Carolina* by Victoria A. Casey McDonald. This effort was funded via an external grant.
- Two librarians were awarded a Carnegie Whitney Grant sponsored by the American Library Association. The award of \$4,900 will support a project entitled *Affrilachia: A Guide to Exploring African American Life in Appalachia.*"
- Liaison librarians continued to work with the Faculty Fellows for Inclusive Excellence selected last year in conjunction with the "Diversity your Syllabi" initiative. Several librarians provided ongoing research support to help these faculty members create more diverse course experiences.
- Planning continued for a "Human Library" initiative to be hosted on campus in the 2022-2023 year. The Human Library, which permits patrons to "check out" individuals with diverse identities and backgrounds, is intended to promote conversation and broaden perspectives.
- The library hosted a wide variety of exhibits and book displays that promoted possible research topics, including LGBTQ Pride month, Women's History Month, Asian American heritage month, and Black History month.
- The library hosted or co-sponsored several speakers including:
 - Dr. Tasha Alston presented "Challenging the Narrative: Black Father's Involvement in education";
 - Hannah Brenner Johnson discussed her book *Shortlisted* about the women considered but not selected for the Supreme Court;
 - Dr. Tara T. Green discussed her book *Alice Dunbar-Nelson: Love, Activism and the Archive*;
 - Dr. Antron Mahoney presented "Through Fraternal Eyes: Black Social Movements, the University and Institutionalilty."
- Hunter Library provided gift bags and copies of the book *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry for a "Crown Experience" event hosted by the Black Faculty and Staff Association, The Intercultural Affairs Department, and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diverse Programs.

Other Noteworthy Events, Programs, and Activities

- This year the library's Special Collections hosted or co-sponsored events for various groups and events such as a Mountain Heritage Center event for the WCU chapter of the American Association of University Women; various English 200 classes; Kephart Days attendees; and students from the Cherokee Studies program.

- The library hosted a week-long series of events for students in Fall 2021, “De-stress not Distress.” Events included “Reading with a Drag Queen,” guided meditation, chair yoga, a coloring contest using coloring sheets created from materials in our Special Collections, a therapy dog visit, and movie, video games, and snacks. Roughly 130 people attended these events, and feedback from students was overwhelmingly positive.
- Coordinated logistics and resource presentations to a variety of campus and external groups, including the Catamount School, Project CARE, MAPS, Resident Advisors, and Mini-Mountain Heritage Day visitors.
- In ongoing support for student non-traditional and multimedia research projects, two librarians piloted an infographic-based instruction plan with the L.E.A.R.N. cohort across four sessions.

Special Initiatives and Announcements

- The Library Leadership Team conducted a series of strategic planning exercises from approximately October to May. This process involved working both internally with all library employees, and externally to receive feedback and suggestions from the broader campus community. As a result of these efforts, we published *The Adaptive Library: Hunter Library Strategic Priorities 2022+* which is available online at https://www.wcu.edu/files/hunter-library/HLStrategicPlan_2022.pdf. These priorities will guide organizational decision-making and resource allocations over the next several years. As part of ongoing strategic planning work, in FY2023 we will continue to develop benchmarks and metrics to measure our successes in pursuing these priorities.
- The *Southern Appalachian Digital Collections*, a joint digital initiative with UNC-Asheville, is now available online at <http://southernappalachiandigitalcollections.org>. This multi-year digitization project provides access through a single platform to thousands of images, documents, and other archival materials on the history of Western North Carolina and the Southern Appalachian region. Future plans for this initiative include continuing digitization of more materials from special collections at WCU and UNC-Asheville, and to expand the partnership to include materials from other public and private libraries in the region.
- The library has worked this year with college deans, university administrators, individual faculty, and others to refine the idea of a library advisory board consisting of external campus stakeholders (faculty, students, staff) and other community members. The intended purpose of this group will be to provide the Dean of Library Services with external perspectives and feedback on how to maintain and increase the library’s excellent collections and services. This new group, the Hunter Library Advisory Council, will be announced early in the Fall 2022 semester and nominations and volunteers will be sought from faculty, student groups, and other constituents.
- As part of the University’s March 2022 annual Faculty Scholarship Celebration, the library announced this year’s Hunter Scholar Award recipient. The new Hunter Scholar for 2022-2023 is

Professor Ben Steere, Director of the Cherokee Studies Center. His research project, “An Archaeological Study of Ancestral Cherokee Architecture” will compile and analyze information from a variety of archaeological excavations of former Cherokee sites in North Carolina, looking for changes over time in the structure and building techniques of dwellings on those sites.

- In order to help library users more quickly locate books in the library’s print collections, this year we purchased and have been configuring StackMap, a mobile application that helps users find the exact row and shelf of any title in the library. The app will be made available to library users beginning in the Fall 2022 semester.
- The library’s cataloging team began a special project this past year to update and replace problematic subject headings and search terms in our online catalog system. Subject terms are considered problematic if they are outdated, inaccurate, unethical, or harmful. Prominent examples include “illegal aliens,” “sexual minorities,” and “Indians,” which will be replaced with “undocumented immigrants,” “LGBTQIA+ people” and “Indigenous Americans.” This year, the catalogers replaced terms across the entire catalog for 38 problematic terms, and this work will continue.
- The library purchased a Cricut multi-purpose cutting machine as the latest addition to the Library’s Scholar Studio. In addition to other hardware such as scanners, a large-format printer, multi-media recording booths, a button maker, and a die-cut machine, the new Cricut device expands the possibilities of what students can design and make in the library.

Special Awards & Recognition

Librarian / Assistant Professor Liz Harper was awarded a WCU 1889 Impact Grant of \$1,956 to support “Special Collections Community Crowdsourcing for Special and Digital Collections.” Funds from this award were used to purchase mobile technology-enabled kiosks and equipment to be deployed in regional locations such as historical societies, town halls, and other locations where citizens can provide missing information such as names, locations, and dates for images from the library’s special and digital collections.

Associate Dean Shamella Cromartie received one of only ten “I Love My Librarian” 2022 national awards from the American Library Association. More than 1,300 librarians across the country were nominated for recognition. As part of her award, Ms. Cromartie received a \$5,000 cash prize and a \$750 donation to Hunter Library.

Associate Dean Shamella Cromartie and Librarian/Professor Heidi Buchanan were awarded a Carnegie-Whitney Grant of \$4,900 administered by the American Library Association to create a multi-media publication entitled *Affrilachia: A guide to Exploring African-American Life in Appalachia*.

Librarian/Assistant Professor Adam Olsen was awarded a grant of \$9,310 from the State Library of North Carolina to purchase equipment and conduct a Library Space Usability Study. Data gathered from this study will help the library create more usable physical spaces.

Dean Chuck Thomas was awarded a “Bright Ideas” grant of \$11,301 by the State Library of North Carolina, to explore expanding Hunter Library’s Virtual Reality (VR) Lab into a library-based hub for student gaming, esports, and VR. Grant funds will be used in FY2023 to purchase equipment and furnishings for the lab, gaming software, and to convene focus groups with students on how best to configure the space and market it to WCU students. This project will be conducted in partnership with Intramural Sports and the “Whee Game” student gaming club.