Libraries on the UW–Madison Campus Continue to be a Resource for Knowledge

The digital age of information is upon us and the norm is to google a research article instead of asking your local library for material on the subject. With New Your Times and Forbes magazine publishing articles questioning "Do We Still Need Libraries?" a look into one library on the UW–Madison campus shows libraries are needed now more than ever.

By Lilly Hanson

Studentes utilizing the study space provided by the Journalism Reading Room
Photo by Bryce Ritcher of Unviersity Communications

Catherina Hannula, the PA librarian at the Journalism Reading Room (JRR), believes the purpose of libraries is to be a resource for knowledge for students, faculty and community members at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"We have so many materials and we're just here to help you find the things you're looking for in order to further your own education," Hannula said.

As a graduate student studying archives in the School of Library and Information Studies, Hannula works at the JRR assisting patrons in finding the things they're looking for. Whether it is helping sift through the countless databases available to students or simply talking about research topics, Hannula says librarians are here for the patrons.

But in the age of Google the Internet has become an online library for information which makes librarians, and the libraries they staff, a thing of the past. Because of this, libraries on the UW-Madison campus are reinventing themselves to stay current with technology demands.

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"We're just hoping we're helping you guys in a way that is relevant to you," Hannula said. "We're still working on how to do that to the best of our abilities in this very changing century right now."

With the JRR being a small library located on the second floor of Vilas Hall, it can be difficult at first to notice any difference in the collection of books. But it isn't the books that have changed, it's the computers next to them. The Adobe Creative Suite has been downloaded on all library computers to help assist journalism students with video editing along with other technologic needs.

Hannula says different groups of patrons need different things, and at the JRR there is a combination of study spaces, technology centers, and reading rooms. She believes it is up to every library to decide for themselves what works for them and their patrons.

While books have been a way to stress the main purpose of libraries helping people with education

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and knowledge gathering, Hannula believes books aren't the only way to do that. She believes a library is still serving its purpose if a patron does not check out a book at the library.

"I don't think our main purpose has always been just books. Our main purpose has been helping people access information," Hannula said.

During this technology shift, the evolution of UW-Madison libraries holds onto the core idea of remaining a place that makes students education worthwhile. According to Hannula her job becomes worth it when she watches someone use the tools libraries provide to further their own education.

"It's really fun to watch their eyes light up once they realize what they can do, literally with just a UW card, " Hannula said.

For Catherine Hannula, it's rewarding to see students utilizing everything libraries have to offer, because it reminds people that librarians, and the libraries they staff, are here and they are here to serve you.

A student's fingers are a blur as they type on a computer at the JRR
Photo by Jeff Miller of University Communications

A Look into UW-Madison Libraries By the Numbers

6, 463, 670
Library
Website
Visits

325,555
Items
Checked
Out

42, 753
Study
Rooms
Reserved

491, 003
Visits to
Library
Inforlabs

266, 073
Research
Guide
Views

15, 183
Laptops
Loaned

* Information from January - December 2015