



Valparaiso University's Christopher Center Library Services' Innovative Use of Space Featured in *The Wall Street Journal*

Readers of *The Wall Street Journal's* Weekend Edition for Saturday/Sunday October 21-22, 2006 were treated to a front page (below the fold) piece by Christopher Conkey, "Stacks of Books Aren't Part of New Libraries" where Valparaiso University's Christopher Center Library Services was front and center. The article also featured a picture of Richard AmRhein, Dean of Library Services.

The focus of the piece is the library as place – the reinvention of the library where books are de-emphasized in favor of open space, moveable furniture, and maximum flexibility for providing students and faculty a comfortable environment for research and learning. Conkey writes, "The goal: Entice today's technology-savvy students back into the library with buildings that blur the lines between library, computer lab, shopping mall and living room. Imposing rows of stacks, uncomfortable wooden furniture and rigid rules are giving way to open spaces, cafes and chatter. Librarians are looking the other way on food and drink, encouraging conversation and even responding the students' text-message queries for research help or technology tips."

The article points out that libraries are freeing space by storing materials in auxiliary facilities, using compact shelving, or replacing print materials with electronic which has been facilitated by wireless connectivity and aggregator databases that allow access to academic resources from anywhere on or off campus.

The Ball State University Libraries' experience with "The Library as Place" emphasizes help for students and faculty from librarians for research projects, the availability of print and digital resources for scholarship, easy access to technology for completing assignments, and a variety of types of individual and collaborative spaces for study and learning. The result over the past 5 fiscal years has been an increase in turnstile traffic of 151%. At the center of the "Library as Place" model is the role of the library as a social center, where students can see and be seen to make friends and establish relationships as part of their academic experience. In this model, the library is a destination for research, learning, and friends.

[Submitted by Arthur W. Häfner, Dean of University Libraries - Ball State University, 10-24-2006]