

The Library and Distinctive Education at Georgetown

During the last two years Georgetown University has undertaken a series of initiatives on the undergraduate curriculum. In contribution to the discussion, the Georgetown Jesuit Community provided its own considerations: *A Distinctive Education: Reflections by Georgetown Jesuits on Education at Georgetown*. The Provost of the University has called on each academic unit to comment on how we would use the “Distinctive Education” document to “facilitate renewed attention to our Jesuit mission.”

In answering the Provost’s call, we offer brief reflections on the Library’s support for changing curricula and research circumstances of our times. We reference some of the comments made by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Adolfo Nicolás, S.J in his remarks for “Networking Jesuit Higher Education: Shaping the Future for a Humane, Just, Sustainable Globe” [Mexico City – April 23, 2010], as well as of the three educational themes in the Community’s document:

- A World Richly Understood and Religiously Explored
- Formation and *Cura Personalis*
- Vocation and Call to Service

For all three “Distinctive” themes, we believe that the Library is one of the most significant educational and intellectual resources available to the community at Georgetown. Through our remarkable collections, expert and caring services, and modest but approachable spaces for collaboration and contemplation, scholars and students alike may explore the world richly and religiously, as they choose. It is through the Library that educational experiences may be heightened, broadened, and deepened. The examples below show what we offer at present and why our offerings are significant. Beyond the present, we appreciate the opportunity to build for the future, in collaboration with the Community that calls us to reflection, and the communities that will benefit from our engagement.

Distinctive Collections

As a research university library, Lauinger contains a wealth of materials in all formats that takes students beyond the bounds of their questions. The dazzling resources of the Special Collections Research Center and Woodstock Theological Center Library, in addition to circulating and research collections, are continuously built to support the research and teaching needs of the campus community, and to expose students to unique research opportunities that provide a deeper level of engagement with primary sources.

Beyond our own impressive collections, the Library offers multiple avenues for additional resources. Two very significant collaborations are with the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), and the Catholic Research Resources Alliance (CRRA), of which Georgetown is a founding member. The AJCU Libraries offer reciprocal services in order to further the mission of the Jesuit communities with which we are affiliated. The CRRA is actively promoting the significance of Catholic research

resources through a portal, meant to highlight rare, uniquely held, or special collections for the use of scholars worldwide. Georgetown's participation in both these organizations moves us beyond ourselves and enhances our own work within the context of others'.

Distinctive Services

The Library is committed to working toward a "learned librarianship," continuously deepening our skills and developing greater flexibility in our approach to users' needs. We do this by searching out new paths to serve, understanding that frequent changes in education and technology demand both agility and resistance to the "globalization of superficiality" (Father Adolpho Nicolás's phrase).

Librarians are similarly committed to providing multiple paths to knowledge for our users through our services, ranging from the primary source research-intensive Carroll Fellows and GUROP Programs to instruction in multimedia innovation, digital productivity, and creative expression in the New Media Center. Engaging constituents wherever they are in their research and learning process is an example of librarians' attention to *cura personalis*. Individual research consultations assure that students and faculty may have their questions answered and research queries satisfied. With the use of innovative technologies, we may reach out to users proactively, rather than expect them always to approach us. We are committed to expanding our networks to partner more effectively with each other, with other units on campus, and with the larger arena of librarians and universities worldwide who are similarly engaged in seeking greater engagement with their users. We believe that close attention to our community, along with careful development of in-depth services and global resources, guards against Fr. Nicolás's concerns about the "globalization of superficiality."

In concert with our objective to offer lifelong learning opportunities for our constituencies, the Library staff prepare exhibitions from our rich special resources and develop programs for Library Associates and the scholarly community. Many of these events highlight our Jesuit and Catholic heritage:

- The celebration of Joseph A. Haller, S.J.'s life and work ("Collecting to Teach," February, 2010) The Library hosted a symposium highlighting how the fine print collection, amassed over many years by Fr. Haller, impacted their teaching and learning. This unique teaching resource has informed art history classes and allowed students the opportunity to curate exhibitions in partnership with Library staff.
- *Portraits in Piety* (October, 2010), to highlight the Thatcher Collection, over 1,000 volumes published between the 16th and mid-20th centuries, on the lives of women saints, women religious and women of piety. The speakers--four Georgetown women faculty from history, French, Spanish and Italian--understood the depth of research opportunity this collection provides, and further understand this collection as another unique teaching resource with which to engage students.

Distinctive Spaces

Despite the well-established needs of the Lauinger Library building, we do provide spaces for our users to confer, collaborate, compose, create and merely congregate. Though not adequate in numbers, there is a zone in the library for every user's working style. Even the Midnight Mug/Pete and Ann's Place contributes to the opportunity for scholarly conversation between faculty and student, thanks to the office hours program. One floor below is the quiet and contemplative Woodstock Theological Center Library, with the holdings and ambiance of a special place in which students may explore the resources of one of the finest theological collections in the mid-Atlantic region, if not the country. The New Media Center on the first floor is unique not merely as an open computer laboratory with state-of-the art equipment, but also with a caring and knowledgeable staff to provide instruction for the high-tech applications under experimentation in the Picchi digital laboratory. And, the art, manuscript, archival and rare book resources of the Special Collections Research Center on the fifth floor offers researchers a glimpse into the worlds of theologians, Jesuits, scholars, artists, musicians diplomats, historians, and ordinary citizens.

In conclusion:

We believe the mission of the Library is rooted in discovery. By providing quality materials and diverse pathways to education and knowledge, we follow Ignatius of Loyola's direction for the Jesuits to "[labor] in all things under the sun,' and in that he included ourselves" (Timothy Healy, S.J., quoted in *A Distinctive Education*). In our emerging environment this means *not* merely taking the paths already worn by library tradition, *nor* even those newly beaten paths of the superficial user. Rather, it means thinking, sorting, and *evaluating* all sources and all paths, and reminding our constituencies they too must be ever mindful of their paths toward what the Jesuits refer to as "discernment." We are here to help our users, but we are also here to be changed by them; changed by our participation in the whole research, teaching, and learning environment unique to Georgetown University's commitment to the whole person, the whole university, and the whole world.

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