

CHECK IT OUT

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

From the Librarian

The most valuable resource of any service organization, especially a library, is its staff. The Wesleyan Library staff is composed of 17 librarians, three other professionals, 23 library assistants and more than 200 student workers. Students comprise a full-time equivalent of more than 24, the largest single group of library employees. The quality of our service to the community is dependent upon the service our students provide. We are most grateful for their excellent service. In this issue of *Check It Out*, some of our students write about their impressions of their library work. We are often seeking additional student workers. If you think you might be interested in working in the library in the future, library departmental supervisors would be happy to hear from you.

Robert Adams,
University Librarian

ReferenceNow—Live Help! A Progress Report

On October 15, 2001, a twinkling little bright

blue icon called **ReferenceNow—Live Help!** first appeared at the top of the Wesleyan University Library homepage. Within a few weeks, this little icon became visible at the top of most every library-related Web page. Not many people during those first few days in October bothered to see what Live Help! was all about, but by the end of the fall term, many students and faculty discovered just how valuable this new and innovative service can be. In case you haven't experimented yet by clicking that twinkling little icon, you will find that it literally makes reference and research help available to you all day long, every day of the week until 2:00 a.m. from anywhere in the world you are able to connect to the Internet.

The Fall 2001 issue of *Check It Out* had a feature article introducing real-time, remote reference service to the University campus. The article described in considerable detail how Wesleyan received a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation* to enable us to fund the service as a two-year pilot program jointly with the Connecticut College

Library, one of our sister libraries in the CTW Library Consortium. We believe the program is off to an excellent beginning, and we have held discussions with other New England college libraries about the possibility of bringing them on board as well. By the end of the two-year grant period, Live Help! will be fully evaluated in order to determine whether we wish to make it a permanent feature of the information services offered by the Wesleyan University Library.

From October 15, the day our interactive reference service went live, through the end of the fall term, a total of 495 questions from Wesleyan University and Connecticut College were received and answered online. Some of the questions came during the day, others during the evening, and many were received either late at night or during weekend hours when reference has not traditionally been available in person at the Reference Desk. Here are just a few sample questions posed to our librarians through Live Help!:

- "I need to locate journals that are not in CTW. How can I search other libraries to find the journal and get it through Interlibrary Loan?"
- "When was the 'Pledge of Allegiance' written? Was it after the Civil War, as the word 'indivisible' would imply, or was that a later addition? Also, was not the phrase "One nation under God" added in the last 50 years?"
- "Where is the Psych Library?"
- "How do I find the online full-text version of the *American Economic Review*?"
- "Can I get into Wesleyan's Indexes and Databases when I am at home during vacation?"
- "I need information about Helena Rubenstein, especially articles. Where should I begin?"

As spring term begins, and more students and faculty become aware of the existence of Live Help!, and how they can benefit from it, we expect the service to become very popular. Here are some of the comments and responses we received from students during the first few weeks that Live Help! was available:

- "Okay, thanks. Live Help! is really great!"
- "Haha, you guys know your stuff!"
- "How cool, really awesome."

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*The grant was received from the David Educational Foundation established by Stanton and Elisabeth Davis after his retirement as chairman of Shaw's Supermarkets, Inc.

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- “OK, I think I’m all set. I appreciate your help!”
- “Thanks! . . . I had a Personal Research Session with a librarian. . . and I should probably do it again sometime soon!”

The last comment is really what we want to achieve with the Live Help services—to remind students to come to the library for further consultation and assistance with their research. Sometimes, Live Help! can be very amusing both for the librarian and the user. Remember, the librarian has no idea where the person on the other side of the chat is physically located. Late one afternoon, the Reference Librarian at the Olin Library reference desk was monitoring the online service when the following conversation began:

Student: I need help getting information on the history of labor in India from 1900–1950.

Automated response: A librarian will help you now.

Librarian: Hi! That question sounds familiar. I e-mailed you last week to set up an appointment with you for a Personal Research Session on that topic, but I never got a response from you. Can you come to the library to meet with me?

Student: Well, I am in the library now, in fact.

Librarian: Your topic is a bit too complex to deal with on this chat

board, especially if you are in the library anyway. Why don’t you come to the reference desk, I am there now.

The online session ends, and the student, seated at a computer no more than six feet from the reference desk turned around sheepishly with a big grin on his face. The librarian and the student have a good laugh, and spend time together working to locate the best source materials for the research paper.

With Live Help!, you enter an electronic chat session with a professional Reference Librarian who is there to answer quick reference questions, guide you in real-time through Wesleyan’s vast collection of indexes and databases, electronic journals, or other pages on the Internet that you might need. Once you have asked your question, or described your research problem in the chat area of the computer screen, the Reference Librarian is able to “talk” to you while simultaneously sending you search results or Web pages on the main part of the screen. The process is live, so that after the librarian has guided you to a resource you want, you simply click your screen and retrieve the information for yourself. The librarian can even “walk” the user through a demonstration of the optimum use of our Web resources, just as though the user—who might be either in a

campus dormitory room, or even in an internet café in downtown Paris—was sitting next to the librarian at the Reference Desk in Olin Library.

Shortly after completion of your online session, the user and the librarian will receive a transcript of the conversation as well as the Web addresses of all the sites the librarian recommended. This feature allows you the user to review the session, and to return, at your leisure to the source materials that were recommended. The librarian’s transcript has enough information to follow up with further information in the event that the librarian locates other useful sources after the end of the chat session. The librarians will also use session transcripts to evaluate the service to determine any improvements that might be made to it.

So when you need to find an elusive fact on the fly, locate information of any kind, need assistance with your research, or are just plain lost and don’t know quite what to do—always remember that little twinkling blue ReferenceNow—Live Help! icon located near the top of page at the Wesleyan University Library Web pages. Most times, day or night, weekend, or weekday, a Reference Librarian will be at the other end to help.

Alan J. Nathanson,
Bibliographer/Reference Librarian

Student Library Employees—What Do They Think of Their Jobs?

The Wesleyan University libraries rely heavily on student employees to keep operations running smoothly. Every department in each of our libraries employs at least one student worker. If you have considered the possibility of a part-time library job, here are comments recently made by students who work for us:

Cristin Quealy '04 Special Collections & Archives

“Working in the library is more than filing and photocopying. As a student worker in Special Collections & Archives, I am involved in the history of Wesleyan. Everything I do here, from archival preservation to rare book cleaning, gives me a sense of doing something important and necessary. More important than the work I do here is the sense of

belonging. As a small department, Special Collections can afford to be more personal than other departments in the library or elsewhere on campus. Cheryl Hagner creates a very warm environment; she knows everyone’s face and is always eager to hear about our lives. I think this makes the experience of working in the library more enjoyable. Cheryl has become much more of a mentor than a boss; my job is much more than simply something I come in and ‘work at’ for three and a half hours twice a week. No matter which professional field I choose to pursue, the experience of working in this department of the library will be beneficial to my future.”

Jeff Chandler '02 Special Collections & Archives

“Originally working at Olin Library was strictly a monetary

decision. I was looking for a job that could pass the time with very little effort and help with my small pockets. However, when actually applying for a job at the library, it was much more appealing to work in a department that would interest me and maybe even teach me a thing or two. That’s why I decided to work in the Special Collections & Archives at Olin Library. It looked interesting and definitely foreign.

“I was immediately surrounded by Wesleyan history in many rare and amazing books. These books smell of the past, from their loose bindings to the scattered print. It is our job at SC&A to preserve this history. This epitomizes what it means at work at Olin. The library is a world in itself. Everything has its own character and personality, from the building to the books to—most importantly—the librarians and other staff. It is one of a few places on campus that allows

work-study and other students to get a job that is more similar to a real (non-Weswork) environment. Most importantly, Olin is one of the rare places on campus that a student can interact with people besides professors who are not between age 18 and 22. Working at the library has been a wonderful experience."

Yan Yan Ye '04 Interlibrary Loan Department

"Of all the work-study jobs at Olin Library, Interlibrary Loan is at the top of the list for the amount of work. With all the incoming interlibrary loan requests from faculty and students, there is rarely idle time to read a book or talk to my friends. If you can't find a book or an article that you need through CTW, Interlibrary Loan is your friend. Every day there are about 100 requests, not only from Wesleyan, but from other universities and colleges around the world who want to borrow our books. All of the requests are processed through the computer, and then items requested from Wesleyan are pulled from the shelves. They are not only from Olin Library, but also from the Art, Psych, and Science libraries. After all the items are pulled, they are again processed through the computer. Then comes the fun part—mailing the items out to the requesting libraries. (This is how I get my wrapping lessons!)"

"When other libraries send items requested by Wesleyan, opening the mail can be a bit messy, but you would be surprised at some of the books I'll see. These items are then computer processed, and I place cover slips on them with the name of the borrower and the due date. Next comes the best part—checking out the books to students who come to pick them up. This is a really good way to meet interesting people."

"Although there's work every minute I am there, I find it to be a positive learning experience. It is through Interlibrary Loan that I learn about the library system, and where students can conveniently get sources they need."

Josh Wing '04 Olin Circulation Department

"My favorite thing about working in the library is being able to help people find what they need in the library. As an added bonus, the morning is a good time to greet people as they come in, and I have time in between to read or study. There really isn't anything I don't like about working in the library. Perhaps the only thing is that it is hard to find a sub when I need one, but that's not often and not really a problem either."

Patti Skillin '04 Shelving Supervisor

"Working at the library has been a great experience for me. The flexible hours make it very easily compatible with my schedule, and Randy Wilson is a really nice guy to work for. It also pays well, and I can even listen to music while I work. What more could a college student ask for? I began working at the library because that is where work study put me, but I happily returned again this year. It's just a fun place to work, and now I know my way around the library, which has been very helpful in my studies."

Christina Moracho '02 Olin Library Searcher

"When I saw the ad for the library searcher position that said, 'must like solving mysteries,' I was totally sold. Usually the only mysteries I get to solve are things like whether or not

the milk in my fridge has gone bad and where I misplaced my syllabus for the fifteenth time. Not very exciting!"

"Then I met Randy Wilson of the Olin Circulation Department, and now I get to go on missions all over Olin Library, searching for lost books and rescuing them from the list of those who have gone MIA. Few things are as satisfying as marching into Randy's office waving over my head a lost book we feared might never be found. Never for one moment after I began working in the library did I envy those who sat at the circulation or reserve desks plugging through problem sets and readings, occasionally looking up, often surprised to see someone standing at the desk, needing their assistance. I have mastered the stacks and the L.C. system; I know them like the back of my hand. The searchers are the unsung heroes of Olin Library. We work alone, hidden in the stacks, finding the books that no one else can, that otherwise would remain tragically MIA forever."

Sarah-Jane Ripa '02 Scores & Recordings

"Working in the library is cool. But working in scores and recordings is even better, especially if you're a nerd like me. Or Aja, Alen, Ari, Samara, Leah, Amy, Schuyler, or John. You see, we love music and we love the library, so working on the third floor of Olin is really our bag. Shelving LPs, checking out CDs, and making sure that the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* is always available are what we do best."

"It comes as no surprise, then, for us to have realized that we have the best job on campus! Alec, Jodi, and Jennifer are great to work for, and never hassle us when we're having a

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Once a Library Student Assistant, Forever a Friend of the Library Written by an anonymous faculty member

For two of my four years as an undergraduate at Wesleyan, I worked in the libraries. Mostly I worked in Circulation at Olin, along with a host of other students. I also worked in the Art Library one summer (inventorying the entire collection, and having the rare pleasure of a shelf of heavy art books collapsing on me), and briefly, for Preservation. In that time I acquired a fair idea of how libraries work—enough to land a job as law library technician at a law firm in San Francisco. A glowing recommendation from Margery May (or was it the student in the Circulation Office that morning who answered the telephone call?) helped.

What's most gratifying is the warmth of the welcome I've received from so many members of the library staff since I've returned to Wesleyan as a professor. It probably helps that I appreciate the hard work the library staff performs in support of our shared educational mission. Knowing many a librarian personally helps, too. And I am still grateful to have learned all the nooks and crannies of the marvelous piece of architecture that is Olin Library; I can still find a quiet place to study when students think all the good spots are taken!

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bad day. In fact, when I am having a bad day, they don't mind letting me silently reflect as I alphabetize things and put the CDs back in their rightful places. And the fact that Ari always lets me be the one to sit at the desk when we double up, and Alen will always come in early so I can study makes me think that there's more going on up here than just work. There's teamwork."

**Taniza C. Holmes '02
Psychology Library**

"For the last four years, I have LIVED in Judd Hall! As one of the few first-years who knew what their major would be, I immediately made Judd Hall my home. After briefly working for a now retired professor, I applied to work with Roberta Raczka of the Psychology Library, who can attest to my never EVER leaving this building! Working here, though, is the perfect fit for me; not just because it allows me to get to know my peers better, but also to know some of the other professors. The Psychology Library is certainly one of the more intimate libraries since it's smaller and the people who come in tend to know each other well. So unlike others who may find libraries stressful, I have found people who make studying a family affair! I've

had quite a memorable experience here, and a million thanks to the Judd family!"

**Maria Ionkova Nankova '05
Science Library**

"Working in the Science Library from the start of my freshman fall was a valuable experience both professionally and socially. Working at 8:30 in the morning helped me break the habit of going to bed at 4 a.m. in WesCo, known also as the funniest freshman dorm. When I was late in the beginning and saw people standing in front of the door, waiting for the library to open, I felt that people depended on me so I eventually learned the lesson of punctuality. But working for Linda one doesn't become just a better business-like worker who follows a bunch of rules. Personally, I felt like I could always go to my boss and share a problem of my own with her, seek advice, or simply discuss a global issue with her even if it was for five or seven minutes. Whether checking out materials for different people, shelving books and journals, or simply sitting behind the desk, I got to know so many people (and even become good friends with some of them) that my freshman friends in the

dorm would ask me how did I know so many people beyond our circle.

"Interacting with the janitors at opening time, and with the public safety people at closing time was fun, too, because it made me step out of the Wesleyan bubble for a few moments. When I talked to Tina, who's been waking up at 3 a.m. for the past 30 years to clean the Science Library, she taught me a few Italian words. And the lady from the Dominican Republic, I think, still thinks I'm Spanish because my name is Maria, so she talks to me in Spanish every time she sees me. I don't know any Spanish, but by now I'm so used to the way it sounds that I feel inspired to start studying it."

**Lydia Lawrance Menendez '02
Science Library**

"Working at SciLi is a constant fluctuation of relaxation and exertion. I have time to read, but as soon as there is any reason to help a patron, tidy the library, or improve the library's accessibility, I find the task is only done when I have done everything involved with it. Shelving books includes rearranging many preshelfed books, and helping a patron find a book can take a lot of time, after every possibility is tried and finished. I enjoy the relaxed atmosphere and the constant contact with the people and the books!"

Wireless Network Cards Available in Olin and Science Libraries

You may now bring your laptop to Olin or Science libraries and connect it to the Wesleyan network, allowing you to connect to the Internet even while roaming the stacks. You will, however, need a wireless LAN card that faculty, staff, and students can borrow either at the Reserve Desk in Olin Library or at the Circulation Desk in the Science Library. ITS has installed wireless access points in both libraries, and they utilize the 802.11 b standard to transmit network data via the airwaves to laptops equipped with LAN cards. This new wireless system transmits data at 11 Mbps, similar in speed to the familiar 10Mbps Ethernet. The LAN card also utilizes 128-bit encryption to prevent the interception of network data by unauthorized users. Installation software and instructions for both Mac and PC laptops are also available when you borrow a LAN card. Bring your laptop to the library, and leave your Ethernet cable at home—now you can roam the library completely wired—without the wires! For further information on this new innovation, visit the wireless networking page at <http://www.wesleyan.edu/its/wireless/index.html>.

Steve Bischof, Science Librarian

WESLEYAN
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Olin Memorial Library: (860) 685-2660
Reference and Research: (860) 685-3873
Circulation Office: (860) 685-3877
Reserve Office: (860) 685-3852
Interlibrary Loan Office: (860) 685-3876
Library Office: (860) 685-3844
Acquisition Office: (860) 685-3834
Cataloging Office: (860) 685-3476
Serials Office: (860) 685-3888
Art Library: (860) 685-3327
Psychology Library: (860) 685-2770
Science Library: (860) 685-2860
Scores and Recordings: (860) 685-3898
Special Collections and Archives: (860) 685-3864
World Music Archives: (860) 685-3826

Visit the Wesleyan University Library at <http://www.wesleyan.edu/library>.