From the Director

Nimitz Library supports the USNA mission in three critical ways: collections, services, and spaces. In 2020-21, it was clear that these three areas, while adequately supporting the USNA community, were due for evaluation and upgrades. This knowledge drove the creation of the library’s new, three-year strategic plan, which included collections, services, and spaces among its five components and was finalized and implemented during the academic year. The other two components - staffing and marketing/outreach - are important complements. No improvements happen without the staff to implement them, and the improvements won’t be of much use if no one knows about them.

Of course, we were deep into the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year. The library building, along with the rest of the Yard, was closed to all users. With the exception of a few essential staff, Nimitz faculty and staff were working from home, assisting users and managing collections from afar. The ever-changing arrangements for classes and life at the academy required flexibility and regular adjustments to library services. The all-remote set up during the summer of 2020 gave way to the hybrid fall semester that saw the midshipmen and some faculty and staff return to the Yard, participating in a combination of in-person and online classes. When the spring semester came, everyone was back on the Yard for in-person classes. Masking and social distancing requirements meant operations still required adjustment.

While the pandemic presented many challenges, I’m proud of how the Nimitz Library library faculty and staff exhibited flexibility and agility. We identified opportunities for providing services and support in a constantly shifting environment. Some services, such as online chat, were not new but became more central in providing research consultations. Other services, such as self-checkout and remote book request and pickup, were new and were so well received that we anticipate their continuation into the future.

This annual report will provide more details on how the Nimitz Library faculty and staff adapted to the “new normal,” implemented a new strategic plan, and strengthened the three prongs that support the USNA academic mission. I’m very pleased with what we accomplished in the past year and look forward to future progress.

LAWRENCE E. CELEMENS

Dean for Information Services and Nimitz Library Director
Services

Nimitz Library services required creative reimagining in response to COVID. Library faculty and staff recognized the critical nature of keeping our users connected to the information and teaching resources that are critical to the academic mission. To balance the need to support users and balance safety protocols, Library faculty and staff stayed abreast of local recommendations and national best practices to provide best possible support to our users.

Throughout the year, the Check-Out desk remained open with updated services, in-person research in Special Collections & Archives remained available to those on the Yard by appointment, and research support was offered to midshipmen, faculty, and staff via several virtual options.

**Same Great Research Support in an New Format**

Throughout the pandemic, librarians remain committed to supporting our users and sought ways to offer support in a COVID-safe environment. Online chat became a key medium for delivering research assistance when users and librarians were not in the library building. Research & Instruction Librarians set up online appointment calendars to facilitate consultations with researchers over Google Meet, in the librarian offices, or in a designated research consultation room that allowed for more space and social distancing. Close communication allowed librarians to share the lessons they learned during their virtual consultations leading to the most innovative offering for research help: Nimitz Librarians Live Online (NimLLO) in the spring semester. A kiosk with a computer workstation set up at the Research Help Desk allowed researchers to have walk-up, face-to-face virtual interactions with librarians via an open Google Meet session.

**Keeping Library Resources Available in a Pandemic**

Nimitz Library Circulation staff continuously reinvented their processes to ensure users could access library materials. During periods when Midshipmen were quarantined in Bancroft Hall, circulation staff coordinated with leadership in Bancroft to deliver requested library materials to Midshipmen. Circulation staff also implemented contactless pick-up of library materials in the Nimitz lobby for faculty, staff, or midshipmen who were unable to enter the building for whatever reason. Circulation staff also used existing materials to develop and deploy a homegrown self-checkout station. In order to facilitate the easy return of circulated items and ensure books are returned to the library in a timely manner, the library founded a partnership with the USNA Bookstore to install book collection bins throughout Bancroft hall during exam weeks.
Collaborating with Faculty

Reference & Instruction Librarians devised new ways of assisting faculty with information literacy instruction. In-person sessions continued, but online sessions were also popular. In response to evolving faculty needs, librarians delivered information literacy instruction sessions in-person, online, and recorded sessions that they delivered asynchronously. Because all instruction librarians contribute to the information literacy instruction for Plebe core courses FP130 and HE112, we developed common lesson plans and materials for these courses. In the case of FP130, new content was developed for the hybrid learning environment.

Librarians invested hours creating digital content to support midshipmen during COVID. Some librarians developed innovative strategies for teaching research skills like brief YouTube tutorials offering research support on a variety of subjects.

Celebrating the Academy’s 175th Anniversary

As one of the primary units on the Yard charged with maintaining the academy’s institutional history, Special Collections & Archives made major contributions to the academy’s 175th anniversary celebration. Several blog posts were tied to the anniversary, and much of the material used on the academy’s social media and anniversary book came from archival collections. In addition, an online, multilayered, georeferenced map displayed the academy’s 1876 layout with that of the current day. The map showed where the historical buildings were situated and provided the history of those buildings. The map received a lot of positive feedback and a feature on the academy’s homepage. It also quickly became a useful tool for the academy architect and Public Works Department.
Collections

This year Nimitz Library staff undertook major infrastructure changes to modernize the library. In the case of the new library services platform, the improvement was on the back end and will provide the scaffolding for the library’s quest for continuous improvement. In the case of the library’s new website, the updates change the way most users interact with the library. Meanwhile, the library’s budget remained stagnant but staff focused on making existing resources available to users.

New Library Services Platform

This year Nimitz Library made a significant leap into the future by replacing Millennium, the locally hosted library management system that’s been in place for the last 26 years. The library identified a fitting replacement, Ex Libris’s Alma and Primo systems. The new systems were already in use by the Navy Postgraduate School, Naval War College, and Marine Corps University, making the selection and contracting process easier. In October 2020, an implementation team of the library and IT staff began intensive work with Ex Libris to ensure the switchover was accomplished by March 2020, before our contract with Millennium expired. The team successfully completed the transition with minimal disruption to users and staff. Library staff continue to clean up the transferred data and refine the systems’ configuration, a process that will last into 2022.

New Library Website

While Nimitz prepared to transition to this new library management system, our Web Team took the opportunity to redesign and reorganize the library’s website. The result is a more dynamic, attractive site that makes it easier to find resources and access services. Now, users can log in to their library account using their regular USNA credentials, and can request items for pick-up or scanning, and renew items online.

Need for Collection Support

In 2020-21, the library holdings and subscription databases were sufficient, with plenty of room for improvement. It is not possible to offer a world-class collection when facing budget challenges: Nimitz received less than 50 percent of its requested budget allocation, and the implementation of a new financial system prevented purchasing for roughly half of the academic year.
Collections cont.

Improving Access and Preservation

In Special Collections & Archives, staff continued to process and describe its backlog of manuscript and archival collections to make them more accessible to users. As a result, there are now ten additional searchable manuscript collections, including the personal papers of former USNA superintendents Vice Admiral Charles Melson and Vice Admiral Edward Waller, the papers of the Roney and Warden families, and the memoirs of Thomas G. Shaw, who served as an oiler in the U.S. Navy from 1871 to 1894, and fourteen archival collections made up mostly of superintendent orders and directives. Notable items in these collections include several letters of Eliza Parke Custis Law, George Washington’s step-granddaughter, in the Roney and Warden family papers. Additionally, approximately 2,500 official academy photographs from 2003 were added to Trireme, the academy’s platform for digital preservation and access.

Spaces

Library spaces changed drastically this year. In any other year, adjustments to the library spaces necessitated by the pandemic would have been the most noticeable changes when the building reopened in August 2020. But this year, the gray construction wall that blocked off half of the library’s first deck was the most obvious change in Nimitz.

Main Floor Renovation Underway

In This year began a $2.2 million partial renovation of the main floor of Nimitz library. This renovation focused on the side of the first deck facing College Creek. This space was previously occupied by staff workspace, inadequate restrooms, storage space, the microfilm room, and the library instruction room, and was opened up to create natural light-filled study space for our users. In addition, the first deck now includes large restrooms, a lactation room, and a new, state-of-the-art teaching space named the “Nautilus Room.” Other improvements included the replacement of unsafe light fixtures and electrical connections, an upgraded loading dock, a new home for the MSC graphics department, and a new accessible ramp and entrance to the library.
COVID Building Modifications

To keep our users safe during COVID, the library implemented a number of physical changes when the building reopened in August 2020. COVID-related adaptations included plexiglass barriers at service points, fewer tables and chairs rearranged for social distancing, one-way stairwells, and stations with sanitizing supplies on every floor.

Achievements

Despite fewer opportunities for conference travel due to the pandemic and the budget for such travel being diverted to make up for the collections funding shortfall, the staff and faculty and Nimitz Library remained committed to professional development. In addition to attending conferences and workshops in-person and online, librarians continued to present at conferences and publish in academic journals:


Durkin Ruth, K. (2020, October 9) How I ditched the database demo. STELLA Unconference, online.


Achievements cont.

Several members of the Nimitz staff reached milestone service anniversaries during the past year.

- Lawrence Clemens, 40 years service.
- Michael Kardos, 25 years service.
- Bill Murray, 20 years service.
- Linda McLeod, 15 years service.
- Janis Jackson, 10 years service.

The academic year also had its fair share of personnel changes.

- Rodney Rose joined the staff of the circulation department as a student assistant in August 2020.
- Kayla Houck joined the staff on December 7, 2020 in the administration offices as an Educational Technician.
- Kaitlyn Vesterby left the staff of the circulation department as a student assistant in April 2021.
- Laura Nauta, Senior Cataloger retired as of April 30, 2021.
- Catherine Richards left the staff of the circulation department as a library technician in June 2021.