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BENE LEGERE
 NEWSLETTER OF THE
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The Library Associates

Join more than 6,000 other friends, book lovers, alumni, and faculty who recognize that the influence of a great research library reaches beyond the university it serves to the many communities of which it is a part.

Library Associates receive complimentary copies of the quarterly newsletter *Bene Legere*, as well as invitations to special occasions at the Library. For more information on the Library Associates program, please write or telephone: The Library Development Office, Room 188 Doe Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-6000; telephone (510) 642-9377. Or, [check our website](#).

FIRST PERSON

THE LEARNING NETWORK--OUR LIBRARY AS A METAPHOR

Monica L. Morrill '02

All universities are by definition totalities: they house learning, research and service that never cease. Extending this concept, all *public* universities encompass the individuals that benefit from the whole university: faculty, students and the public at large. No other institution on campus illustrates these connective elements better than the University Library.

Over the past year, I have kept a major concern in the mode of observation--it is that of the representation of books in our library throughout the transition to information technology. How has the learning process changed in the library for patrons? Do we feel connected to books or because they lack an electronic button have they become burdensome? My overall assumption is not that research has changed in quality since the introduction of the Internet so much as it has changed its focus. These foci are a distinct signal that the learning process in libraries is now shifting, especially over the past several years.

In 1984, a man from Cleveland by the name of Grundner envisaged a free library for computer networking. He asserted that "in the last century, as more and more Americans became literate and the cost of book publishing dropped, public libraries came along to give citizens free access to books." What he did not accurately speculate was the demand and market for books, magazines and newspapers. The system has become more fluid, but more expensive. The access to a magazine is lost in cyberspace, but the subscription to maintain this right of entry can cost double or triple the paper copy. The demand for more information has been paralleled with an increase in access, available hours and faculty in the library. The dominance of some traditions are gone: no more DOS screen, no more postcards in the mail that our books are overdue, and no scrambling to find a century-old magazine before 5:00 p.m. (except on Fridays and Saturdays). Technology and the aligned desire for more information have certainly revolutionized the way we think about gathering more details, but it also changes the method in which we identify with them. Will all books become completely impersonal vis-à-vis microfilm or books on the Web? I doubt this will occur, and if there is an attempt, here are some reasons why it should not take place.

In the library exists a culture. It is a surviving community of contact, a collection of stories, and encapsulated learning experiences. The library is a vigorous metaphor that evokes images of organization, thoroughness, freedom of access, skill at unearthing answers, and learning. The *process* of finding the information is equally as helpful as discovering the book, magazine or newspaper itself.

Unity in diversity. This is the statement that best describes the *Uni-versity* Library. It represents the people, the books, and the unprejudiced cultural activity. Every resonating bleep of the computer represents the exchange of

information. Whether it is being returned, checked out, or put on hold, *someone* in the library shares a part of the university and a slice of themselves to make a tapestry of communion. It is the intersection of data.

The cycle of my own book reading and collecting began when I was five and sixteen, respectively. Yet the process of learning will never end. I would like to thank the Library faculty and members of the Library Advisory Board for their earnest efforts in preserving this cherished monument and for the inspiration they have given to the younger generation--the students. It is by their example that we can continue to defend the true integrity of the University Library, thereby making it available to the whole of society. Throughout these technology transformations and extensive road map construction of information, we must continue to uphold the sense of community in our library. There are some things that cannot and must not change. As I know it, there is still nothing that replaces having George Orwell's short stories at your bedside before you go to sleep.

Monica is the first student member of the Library Advisory Board. She has finished her first year on the Board and will continue through the fall semester, when she will graduate with a simultaneous degree in Environmental Economics and Policy and Geography.

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