ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the various ways that Learning Resources Division at the University of the District of Columbia (LRD) provides various services to the community it operates (i.e., Washington, DC). UDC is the only public university in the District of Columbia. Serving the greater community, therefore, has been a major part of the university mission and a central part of LRD’s service mission. Specifically, the chapter considers the service LRD provides to community users through reference, RAIL, information literacy, collection development, the jazz archives, the foundation center, and the university archives.

LEARNING RESOURCES DIVISION AND THE COMMUNITY USER

The Learning Resources Division (LRD) has a long history of providing committed service to the community beyond the campus of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). This commitment evolves and proactively changes over time to meet the changing needs of our community users. This deep commitment also is a key consideration in our service model. UDC’s public service orientation shapes LRD’s mission and focus. The fact that UDC is the only public university within

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the District of Columbia, as well as a land grant university play a central role in LRD’s mission. Fulfilling this mission is crucial for LRD considering the importance of information in contemporary society and to the everyday lives of community members who seek to be informed, to act on this information, and therefore, grow because they acted on this information (Lightman & Zeisel, 2011; Casciero, 1991).

Academic libraries throughout the United States, like LRD, reach out to the greater communities that host them because of a fundamental obligation of service to these communities. This chapter focuses on LRD’s history, as an academic library, in outreach efforts to extend its service beyond the campus and traditional clientele. As with academic libraries throughout the United States, two key factors influence the outreach that academic libraries offer to their communities: 1) Whether the greater community expresses or recognizes a need, and 2) Whether LRD has the capacity and the resources to meet the needs of external users in response to a specific issue or issues (Courtney, 2009; Shapiro, 2015).

While many traditional library services, such as borrowing privileges, are often limited to those affiliated with the institutions (or consortia of institutions), a core value of librarianship is providing access to information, and academic libraries (such as LRD) recognize that serving the external (or community) member user is a crucial part of their mission, an obligation to their community, and a key responsibility of librarianship (Dennis 2012; Bales, 2012; Morrone & Friedman, 2009; Carter & Seaman, 2011; Sidorko & Young, 2011; Stevens, 2007). Carla Hayden, for example, the current Librarian of Congress, has dramatically changed the perception of the Library of Congress, by articulating its focus not only as the government’s central library, but as the “people’s library” (Librarian of the People, 2016). In this way, LRD goes beyond being UDC’s library, but also is a library of the District of Columbia, a library that must serve all the people of the District of Columbia.

This chapter explains the many different ways that LRD serves the external community through a myriad of programs and services as the resource and technology center for UDC. In so doing, the chapter will also discuss the rationale for these programs and services. The relevant questions for all of these programs are: 1) Are the programs initiated in response to different wants or needs, and whether these are for an internal or external audience? 2) How does LRD determine its level of interaction with the community and community users? 3) Do these interactions result from LRD seeking to execute its mission?, and, 4) What is the extent of LRD involvement in efforts to reach out and serve community users?

While access, circulation policies and collaboration with other academic libraries are all beneficial means of community outreach, this article focuses on the more advanced ways LRD extends its reach beyond the campus or its traditional clientele to serve its external community members.
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