Gordon Library Annual Report, 2016-2017

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Welcome!

Our annual report is a snapshot of how the Gordon Library contributed to the WPI community last year. But 2017 is also a special year, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the library's dedication in October 1967. The George C. Gordon Library was the first WPI library to bring the insights, practices, and knowledge of every discipline together under one roof, supporting the exciting new vision of the WPI Plan. Just as the WPI Plan has evolved and been renewed in the last half century, so too has the Gordon Library.

We hope you enjoy the story of how the Gordon Library has evolved over the years, and invite you to visit and see for yourself the “Definition of Possible” in action!

Warm regards,

Anna Gold, University Librarian
Building our Community

Gordon Library: A Building that Learns*

From the outside, Gordon Library looks much the same as it did when it opened in 1967. But it’s seen many transformations in 50 years!

1965: Groundbreaking, as described at the time as “[p]erhaps the most significant event in the history of Tech…when ground was broken on Boynton Hill for the $1.8 million central library named for the late George Crompton Gordon, ’95.”

1967: Dedication of Gordon Library. Campus Computing Center located on ground floor.

1991: Gordon Library online catalog replaces card catalog.

2001: Anderson Labs and Multimedia Lab created, 1st floor.

2003: First two Tech Suites created, 3rd floor. Two more created in 2004 on 1st floor.


2009-10: Class of 1970 Café opens, 2nd floor; computing services move from Fuller to Gordon – Library staff move from 2nd to 3rd floor; FLIP Space created on 3rd floor. Archives & Special Collections moves to ground floor (former home of Mass Academy); one more Tech Suite created.

2012: Three more Tech Suites created on 1st and 3rd floors.

2014: “The Definition of Possible” installed.

2015: Dedicated HVAC system installed for Special Collections wing. Archives and Special Collections have environmental controls for first time.

2016: HVAC systems replaced throughout building; additional ADA restrooms built; restrooms renovated.

2017: Studio @ Gordon created, ground floor; Multimedia Lab renovated.

Building our Community

A major HVAC renewal project for Gordon Library began in March 2016, and was completed in time for A Term in the fall. The project replaced most of the building’s nearly 50-year-old heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment and controls, and added upgrades and expansion of the main restrooms. Four floors of the core mechanicals were gutted, demolished, and replaced with modern pumps, valves, main ducts, and air heating and cooling units. Radiator units providing controlled heating were added to the perimeter sections of the five-floor, 69,000-square-foot building.

While “noise and dust [were] the expected signs of progress.” Don Richardson, interim Director of Library Services, noted a major goal of the project was that the building would operate as normally as possible while the construction goes on. With advances in climate control technology, thermal efficiency, air handling, and automatic temperature monitoring, the result would be that “the staff and students will be much better off. This is long overdue.” [Excerpted from the March 2016 WPI News story]

Summer 2017 brought more improvements, including an update of the Multimedia Lab on the first floor. The library and the Academic Technology Center collaborated to redesign seating for 24 high-end software workstations. Outside seating was enhanced too, with outdoor benches, thanks to a suggestion by Computer Science Department Head, Professor Craig Wills.

A Community That Cares and Shares

FOOD FOR FINES: This year we will continue to offer Food for Fines. Library users can donate a non-perishable food item and the library waive $5 in fines. In 2017 we filled bags with donations and received another 111 items, donated to help those in need.

ART [WPI]: The library continued to support the arts at WPI through our annual Art|WPI exhibit – exceptional photographs, paintings and more, displayed in the library’s 3rd floor galleries.

PARENT-FRIENDLY: In summer 2017 we found a way to turn an old music listening room into a cozy, private room for nursing mothers – students, staff, or faculty.
**Project-centered Learning**

**What is a “Tech Suite”?** Simply, a private work space that a group of 2-6 students can reserve so they can work together on projects, equipped with basic technology (a monitor for sharing work), whiteboards, comfortable chairs, and easy access to all other library amenities and hours.

The history of the Tech Suite at WPI dates to 2003, when the first two Tech Suites were created on the third floor. They weren’t always called that: the first suites were called “Collaboration Rooms” – later revised to “IT Labs.” By this time there were a total of seven. The library held a naming contest and the winner was “Tech Suite” – the name stuck. Another four were added by 2016, including two available for on-demand use as “Express Tech Suites. WPI has built additional Tech Suites for what seems an insatiable demand: Tech Suites can be found in East Hall, Faraday, and soon in the new Foisie Innovation Studio, opening fall 2018.

The demand for reserving Tech Suites for project teams in the library is so intense that a separate station is staffed to handle changeover in Tech Suites on the hour every day. To make reserving Tech Suites easier for students, the library implemented a new online Tech Suite reservation system in A term 2017: a resounding success.

In 2016 the library asked students about their favorite study spaces. 65% of students said Tech Suites (private meeting spaces with built-in technology) were “extremely useful” – and 22% said they were “very useful” – many students agreed they could use even more:

“Would love more tech suites, or small/mid sized meeting spaces (for IQP/MQP sized teams). It’s difficult to have a meeting in any other public setting in the library.”

*2017 = partially closed during renovation*
Project-centered Learning

The library reached 5199 students and researchers this year, through 515 in-class instruction sessions, research consultations, and workshops: an increase of nearly 25% over the previous year (4152). For every hour spent instructing or consulting, librarians spend almost equal time prepping: that time ensures that student and faculty time spent in research is both efficient and effective – and that’s essential for success in WPI’s fast-paced terms.

Studio@Gordon: A prototype for active learning, informal collaboration, and building the entrepreneurial mindset

As the Foisie Innovation Studio takes shape at the heart of the campus, Studio @ Gordon has emerged as a place for WPI to prototype and experiment with active learning, informal collaboration, and nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset. Located on the ground floor, Studio@Gordon offers something new in the library: an open work space with flexible furniture and supplies to help with team-building and idea-sharing - ideal for classes, project teams, and student organizations seeking to explore, debate, and pitch ideas. Leading our work with students and faculty to develop Studio@Gordon is Laura Robinson, Librarian for Project-Based Learning and Research Impact. In her new role Laura is also an integral member of the WPI team that brings project based learning to other institutions, through WPI’s summer Institute on Project-Based Learning.

Enhancing the Impact of the Great Problems Seminar: Each year WPI first year students create solutions for the world’s great problems – from feeding the world, to providing clean water for all people, to powering the world sustainably. WPI librarians work with each team to research their chosen problem and solutions. The culmination of Great Problems Seminar team projects comes in the form of colorful conference posters, presented to the community. Now all student posters can be browsed by theme and by year in the library’s Digital Commons @ WPI digital repository, thanks to a collaboration with the GPS office. Visit: http://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/gps

“…the entrepreneurial engineer of the twenty-first century is someone who knows everything: can find information about anything quickly and knows how to evaluate and use the information. The entrepreneurial engineer has the ability to transform information into knowledge.” – Tryggvason and Apelian, 2012, Shaping our World
**Data-driven for Impact & Innovation**

**Information resources:** Three dramatic trends continue to characterize information resources: (1) digital access to information of all genres; (2) growing preference for digital access by many library users; and (3) the continuing trend of escalating costs for scholarly and research materials.

**Library investments, 2017:** To support the problem-driven research all WPI is engaged in - from undergraduates to graduate students to faculty - WPI has invested in providing access to significant and heavily used digital research collections. That investment has been maintained over the last decade, despite ongoing price inflation averaging 5%/year. The result: we’re serving growing undergraduate and graduate enrollments and emerging and growing areas of research and instruction.

**New resources:** The library added a new ejournal, Science Robotics, and made several other significant acquisitions:

- **Nature Complete:** Offering access to more than 80 ejournals published by Nature, with full access back to issue 1 for Nature (1869 -) and Scientific American (1845 - ) as well as Nature journals and Nature Reviews. Together they cover fields from cell biology to climate change, and adding access to numerous clinical medical journals that help support WPI’s growing work in bioengineering.

- **Ebooks:** We added the JSTOR Sustainability ebook collection, a collection of over 300 ebooks, published from 1947 to 2014, mainly by American university presses, related to sustainability issues. By the close of the 2017 year, WPI students and faculty have access to nearly 300,000 ebooks through WPI library platforms.

**New discovery platform:** In collaboration with other departments and our colleagues in IT, we will be implementing a new cloud-hosted resource discovery system: Alma + Summon. This project began in 2012 and has been championed by several Gordon library directors, most recently Don Richardson. Alma will replace the two-decades old Voyager system in July 2018.

**Updating our website:** Working through the summer 2017, we redesigned our library website in time for A Term 2017. We simplified content and added mobile-friendly features, including convenient online Tech Suite reservations.

**Virtual journal browsing:** We added a new resource, Browzine. Now integrated into the library’s search portal, it allows users to visually browse the library’s ejournal collection. There is also a downloadable app that lets users browse and read their personalized virtual “reading room” of favorite academic journals, whether on a laptop or mobile device.
**Data-driven for Impact & Innovation**

**Library use:** Visits by WPI’s 4800 students average 500K a year—that’s almost 15K visitors a week, a number that’s almost doubled in ten years. Visits per student have also increased, dipping only slightly in 2016-17, due to a several-months closure during major renovations in summer 2016.

**Digital access and library use:** Digital access to journals is a norm in today’s research world, along with the increasing availability and acceptance of digital monographs, even while print books remain an essential part of library offerings. These trends mean that libraries have moved away from item-by-item cataloging, towards providing custom academic “discovery” engines offering a Google-like search experience, but with access to published research information that Google doesn’t find behind publisher paywalls.

**Impact & Innovation Department:** In 2017 we reorganized our staff to form a new department that brings together experts in discovery, resource selection, assessment, user experience, curricular needs and user practices, to help us excel at meeting today’s user’s needs.

**RAPID, FREE DELIVERY OF JUST ABOUT ANYTHING:**

In 2017, our skilled staff and great relationships with other libraries helped Gordon Library deliver 3250 items to the WPI community through Interlibrary Loan: books, conference reports, journal articles and more. Most items are delivered to requesters’ desktops within a day or two, and all at no charge: just another way we encourage WPI to use the best information in the world to understand and solve problems. Resource Sharing Team Lead Judy Fallon was recognized in 2017 with a Massachusetts Library Association Paraprofessional II Certificate.
Connecting Past, Present, & Future

Archives & Special Collections: WPI’s history is a living history. WPI students, past and present, WPI faculty, alumni, and members of the WPI community all work closely with our archivists and curators to arrange, preserve, and share the records, photographs, artifacts, and documents that tell the WPI story. Archives staff provided research support for numerous alumni and leadership initiatives, most notably the selection and fall 2017 inauguration of WPI’s first inductees to the Hall of Luminaries.

This year, students explored the imagined futures of the WPI campus, researching buildings planned but never constructed, with their IQP on “Unbuilt WPI,” shared via a display in the Gladwin Gallery.

Meanwhile archivist Lora Brueck continued to inventory historical scientific equipment at WPI, much of it tucked into the “attics and eaves” across campus, updating an earlier inventory that retraces our long history of science, technology, and technological learning.

Notable acquisitions this year included:

- Documentation of the contributions of Duane Pearsall, who made extraordinary breakthroughs in fire protection engineering. These are being shared online through special funding made available by the Pearsall Family.
- Papers and memorabilia, documenting the long association and many relationships of a beloved WPI administrator, “Tuna” Trask.
- Team photos from the Athletics Department, now available through DigitalCommons@WPI. We also purchased a photo of the 1939 winning Basketball Team.
- A tenor banjo, with inscriptions from fraternities, given as a gift by a WPI alumnus.
- A pencil sketch of Gompei Kuwada given by an alumnus.
- Registrar records including a bound volume listing WPI’s earliest students, was transferred to the Archives.
- A watercolor by George Gladwin, WPI’s first drawing instructor.
- Donations associated with the New England Jazz Alliance Hall of Fame, on the occasion of its transfer to WPI under the direction of Professor Rich Falco.

Renewing Project Boz: Through the summer and into the fall, we reorganized the unique digital assets that are part of WPI’s Project Boz – a treasure of imprints of Charles Dickens’ works in their original serial form. Previously located in a separate legacy repository, by January 2018 they will have a home in DigitalCommons@WPI.

Public Art: The Gordon Library has played a decades-long role, curating and advising the campus on public art, and artifacts. This year the library provided expert support in preserving selected gargoyles from the Alumni Gym, as it came down, making way for the Foisie Innovation Studio. Later in the year, Special Collections Curator Kathleen Markees took steps to reframe and reinstall an iconic and unique painting in the library, “Altar of Steel,” by Buell Mullen. An oil painting on stainless steel, it was a gift to WPI by the estate of John W. Higgins, WPI 1896, by way of the Higgins Armory Museum. Mullen devised her technique for painting on stainless steel and other metals in an effort to find a means to express the spirit of our age of technology in her art.
Connecting Past, Present & Future

WPI Authors: The library continued to host and feature WPI authors at informal and engaging book talks. Book talks in 2016-2017 included:

- Michelle Ephraim and James Monaco, Shakespeare, Not Stirred: Cocktails for Your Everyday Dramas (March 21, 2017)
- Steven C. Bullock, Tea Sets and Tyranny: The Politics of Politeness in Early America (April 6, 2017)
- Joel Brattin, Dickens and Massachusetts: The Lasting Legacy of the Commonwealth Visits (April 11, 2017)
- Wesley T. Mott, Henry David Thoreau in Context (November 2, 2017)

The Future of Scholarly Communication: Gordon Library partnered with libraries of the University of Massachusetts to host New England’s first ACRL “Scholarly Communication Roadshow” in June 2017 at the Rubin Center. Drawing nearly 80 librarians from over 35 institutions, this national program made connections across many academic libraries where professionals are helping to shape a more open future for scholarly communication. Attendees were welcomed by Provost Bruce E. Bursten. Topics included copyright, research impact, and library outreach.

Librarian scholarship and service: WPI librarians and other professional staff are contributors and leaders in New England and national library and archives organizations. A few highlights this year: Paige Neumann presented at the Rhode Island Library Association on her outreach to the Mass Academy; Rebecca Ziino Plotke contributed a chapter to the forthcoming book, Project-Based Learning in the First Year: Beyond All Expectations; Laura Robinson completed a year of service as President of ACRL New England Chapter, and co-authored several articles on project-based learning including “The Theatre of Humanitarian Engineering,” selected as Best Paper for 2017 by the Liberal Education/Engineering and Society Division of ASEE; Amy Lawton presented work on outreach and access services; and Anna Gold was elected and began serving on the Executive Committee of the Eastern Academic Scholars’ Trust (EAST).

Student scholarly connections: Nearly every year, the library is not only a place of study for WPI students, but a subject of research. Student scholarship relevant to the Gordon Library can now be found in a Digital Commons collection - including archival research on Worcester, proposals to provide archival access to video games, and research to improve library energy efficiency. http://digitalcommons.wpi.edu/gordonlibrary-studentreports/
Among our goals in the coming year are to:

1. Retain and selectively expand access to collections essential to support the WPI curriculum and research.
2. Support existing and growing needs of project-based learning.
3. Provide more innovative and productive student study spaces.
5. Provide powerful integrated systems that promote discovery, and showcase, archive, and share WPI student and faculty work.

Thanks to our partners and collaborators: The University of Massachusetts Libraries; the WPI community, including the Academic Technology Center; School of Arts and Sciences; Events Office; Facilities Organization; Engineering School; Foisie Business School; Graduate Studies; Office of Human Resources; Information Technology; Institute for Project-Based Learning; Interdisciplinary and Global Studies; Promotion of Animal Welfare Society (PAWS); Marketing and Communications; Office of the Provost; Office of Sponsored Programs; Division of Student Affairs; Office of Sustainability; University Advancement; and all the other faculty, staff, and students we have partnered with this year.

*Departures 2016-2017

“This library holds the keys to the future. Everyone gathered here today, and everyone who will pass through these doors in the days and years to come can expand the boundaries of what is possible. All of us are called to be agents of transformation. This world is very much in need of what is possible, and even of what might seem improbable.”

- Rev. Dr. Barbara Merritt, Remarks on the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Gordon Library, October 25, 2017