

**Subject:** [Fwd: [ACADEMICPR:941] Linda Wallace sent you an article from startribune.com]

**From:** Jane Williams <MJwillia@deans.umd.edu>

**Date:** Mon, 28 Nov 2005 12:57:04 -0500

**To:** mdalto@umd.edu, jhanna@umd.edu

FYI

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:** [ACADEMICPR:941] Linda Wallace sent you an article from startribune.com

**Date:** Thu, 17 Nov 2005 09:38:37 -0500

**From:** Linda Wallace <lkwallace@mindspring.com>

**Reply-To:** ACADEMICPR@ala.org

**To:** ACRL Campaign for Libraries <ACADEMICPR@ala.org>

This article from startribune.com <<http://startribune.com>> has been sent to you by Linda Wallace.

\*Please note, the sender's identity has not been verified.

The full article, with any associated images and links can be viewed here <<http://www.startribune.com/stories/462/5711623.html>>.

Linda Wallace wrote these comments: Article of interest for you ... "Libraries lure students with lattes"

Libraries lure students with lattes  
Mary Jane Smetanka, Star Tribune

First thing Friday morning, University of Minnesota sophomore Kristy Larson hit the new coffee bar in the basement of Walter Library. Before it opened this fall, she rarely came by the building. Now, she's a regular.

"I love it," Larson said as she hauled her backpack and a hot vanilla latté into the quiet recesses of the library to study. "It's so hard to stay awake in the morning. Now I always come here. It's so nice and quiet to read. And I don't have to walk all the way to Starbucks."

Serving coffee is just one of the extraordinary new steps the university is taking to court students reluctant to give up the ease of Google searches for the intimidating stacks of a research library. Making academic libraries relevant to the digital generation is a national obsession on campuses.

On the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus, where 29 libraries hold more than 6 million books, librarians finally asked students: What would it take to get you to step inside?

Coffee, they said. And comfy chairs and space to study to work in groups. And an easy-to-use library website, too. Most of all, a place to research and write papers, with help nearby. Most students surveyed even said they should be required -- yes, forced -- to learn how to use the library.

Librarians listened. And now they are giving students practically everything they want.

That includes one cutting-edge creation that puts the university at the forefront of library reform for undergraduates.

They have added coffee stations where they could and an "information commons" crammed with computers and aides. They also worked 18 months to build what they believe is the first Google-like search engine to help undergraduates search a large research library.

The "Undergraduate Virtual Library," which is debuting this fall, is accessible 24 hours a day, whether a student is at a computer in south Minneapolis or in China.

Librarians even visiting dorms

Is this pandering to a generation too lazy to learn how to use a traditional research library? Jerilyn Veldof, a U librarian who works on undergraduate initiatives, doesn't think so.

"The cost of being too hard [to use] is too great," she said.

It's not just happening in Minnesota. In an attempt to increase student usage, the University of Texas' Austin campus has emptied its undergraduate library of almost all of its 90,000 books and replaced them with computers, a coffee shop and technical help.

Veldof said campuses have to conquer the "big-time anxiety" many students have about university libraries, which not only are repositories of research but expensive to run. That's why the Undergraduate Virtual Library has been created. It's a website that gives students access to most of what the university has online.

"Our goal is to help students be successful researchers even if they don't have all the skills to do that in the traditional library," Veldof said. "We're reaching out to the undergraduate population where they are."

As part of that campaign, students are getting automatic web links to key library resources for their classes. Librarians are visiting computer labs in dorms at night to offer help and fielding questions on chat lines all day.

Students are receiving an "assignment calculator" linked to the new website that walks them through the process of doing a research paper -- and even sends them e-mail reminders as deadlines approach.

The university also is offering "unravel the library" sessions to teach students how to search 250 databases and catalogs.

Temitayo Akinsanmi, a freshman from Brooklyn Park, took the 75-minute class at Wilson Library, the biggest library on the Twin Cities campus. But she and her friend Xi Zhang, a freshman from Wisconsin, said their favorite library is Walter. Not coincidentally, that lushly renovated historic building has relatively few books but lots of computers and study space.

And the new coffee bar.

"It's fun to go to," Akinsanmi said.

There's life beyond Google

Wilson has no coffee shop yet. But the computer-crammed commons area appears to be a hit with students. The rest of Wilson features ceiling-high stacks of books catalogued in codes few students understand, and many indexes and e-journals to search online.

In one of her first visits to Wilson, Akinsanmi said she sat for almost three hours at a computer, struggling with databases to print out the right version of a single article. When she finally asked for help, she got what she needed in 10 minutes.

"It was sad," she said with an embarrassed smile.

Several freshmen confessed that Google is still a common starting point for research, despite warnings from professors about that habit. But

they expressed new confidence in their ability to use the library after taking the training class. Said Akinsanmi, "It's so convenient. You can type in a subject and you always get something back. That's good enough for me."

That's the result librarians are hoping for with the Undergraduate Virtual Library. Its simple visual design, much like Google, features a prominent main search bar, links to "quick starts" by subject and a changing "top five" library trivia list.

Marc Korobkin, a senior from Milwaukee, said he is "really, really impressed" by the innovation.

Before, he said, he had to click through database after database in search of what he wanted. Studies show that many students will go only so far into a website before quitting in frustration.

"You expect it to be fast. Students are busy today," he said. "I hope they make more stuff like this. Even how it looks, it makes you want to use it."

Mary Jane Smetanka • 612-673-7380