A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
VICTOR VALLEY COLLEGE LIBRARY
1961 - 1991

Rosemary A. McGill
Library 120, Robin Calote
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Victor Valley College was established in 1960 and started operation (classes and administration) on the Victor Valley High School campus in 1961. In September 1965, VVC moved to its current location. The VVC District covers approximately 2200 square miles of the High Desert including George Air Force Base, Adelanto, Apple Valley, Hesperia, Baldy Mesa, Lucerne Valley, Oro Grande, Phelan, Pinon Hills, Victorville, and Wrightwood. Satellite programs are held at George Air Force Base, Lucerne Valley Middle School, Serrano High School and cooperates in programs at all local high schools.

The need for a library was recognized early. In the same May 9, 1960 board meeting that recommended selection of a college director by February of 1961, a motion was passed to provide secretarial help and to hire a librarian to organize the college library.

At the June 13, 1961 board meeting Geraldine Bergan was selected the college librarian. Ms Bergan (MLS) had been librarian at California High School in Whittier and received her higher education at Rosary College (Illinois) and the University of Illinois. Two additional workers, Shan Lasby and Jaclyn Williams, 1961 high school graduates, were hired to work through the summer and into the library's first year of operation.

The College Center was built in 1961 to be used by VVC until the new campus was purchased and buildings in place and then turned over to the High School. The Center was a 13,160 square foot building, costing $225,000, at the edge of campus buildings. It shared space with the student center, bookstore, administrative offices, counseling, Registrar's office and office space for instructors. Shelving, book check-out counters, and library staff working space had still to be added by the end of August, 1961 with classes starting September 11, 1961.

The initial 3000 volumes and 87 periodicals were purchased for $15,000. The Victor Valley High School librarian and the George Air base librarian made their resources available to assist in ordering. Priority went to reference works, then periodicals, and lastly curriculum support. Recreational reading was emphatically not ordered.

Ms. Bergan sent letters to all faculty in that first summer requesting lists of recommended books. Ms. Robinsen believes that her list numbered between 300 and 400 titles. She also recalls that a basic list was used. All categories were filled from lists submitted by staff, the English department having the most, followed by "a math instructor...(who) submitted a seven page typewritten sheet of titles" and the Physical Education department which asked for one book.

The conservative nature of the Victor Valley led to the first
and only case of book censorship. Warehouse workers unloading books for the new library came across the Dictionary of American Slang. These World War II veterans researched some terms and were outraged that college students would have access to this language. Ms Bergen, with the full cooperation of the administration, wrote a letter to the Board quoting the ALA position on censorship which was approved by the board. Some High School students heard of this book and came looking for it. To avoid a community stir she quietly kept the Dictionary under the desk until the library was housed in its own building on the VVC campus. If a book was obviously going to cause a stir, and was not vital to the library or curriculum, she would not order it.

By July, 1965 the library held 15,000 volumes and the library was preparing to move. In August the Administration and Business Education buildings were occupied and in September the library had moved to its present building.

Although Ms Bergen worked extensively with the architectural firm designing the new library, budgetary constraints resulted in many changes, cuts, and ultimately a less than ideal design. The English department had classrooms along one side of the building taking away valuable space, workrooms were (and remain) extremely cramped and traffic patterns were considered poor. A free standing fireplace with hood in the periodical reading pit was another fatality.

The new library is located at the end of the campus lake. The wind whips around the building and until new hinges were installed the doors often noisily blew open and sometimes off, possibly aided by student engineering. Taking advantage of this open door policy, the local ducks and geese were occassional visitors to the stacks.

Since the library was isolated at the far end of the campus, only the few English classes located in the library were close, and the night held some concerns of vandalism and theft to faculty, staff and students. The campus switchboard closed at 7:00p.m. and no phone calls could be made from the library building. The faculty insisted on the installation of a payphone which was installed outside the library. In the late 1960's VVC declared the area in front of the library as the free speech area but it has never been used for this purpose.

Library orientation was not given by the library but individual teachers used the library extensively to teach research methods to their classes. Ms Bergen checked into computers and microform additions for the library and was determined to have a current library.

The library was originally cataloged with the Dewey Decimal
system but Ms Bergan began the conversion to Library of Congress in the late 1960s. Clerks remember the arduous, long term effort needed to change all classification numbers. The LC number was changed on the shelf and catalog cards, new spine labels were added to the top of the spine with the old Dewey number remaining on the lower spine until the day the library changed officially to LC. All new books had been immediately cataloged with LC numbers, held seperately from the main collection and integrated on conversion day. The task was finally completed in 1975.

These clerks also remember the library being very understaffed and, along with Geraldine Bergan, being very overworked. Reference questions became part of their work and even the audio-visual clerk was called on for this duty.

Geraldine Bergan has been described as a realistic person, making the best of what she had. She was viewed as being highly professional, knowledgeable, dedicated and caring. She was a strong part of the small closely knit faculty.

Geraldine Bergan retired in 1976 and was followed by Terry Jacobsen in her first professional job. Although she was only on the job for about one year, clerks remember her vividly as a friendly, compassionate motivator. Besides completing the Dewey/LC conversion, Ms Jacobsen started library orientation.

When Ms Jacobsen left for a job with College of the Canyons the library was without a librarian for about six months. Janet (Bird) Ashton-Beazie, the present Director of Learning Resources, took over in January, 1978. Two additional librarians have expanded the professional staff: Fran Elgin, 1980 and John Akins, 1990.

The library and Audio-Visual departments were joined by the Learning Center in 1977-78 to create the Learning Resources Department. Emphasis was on instructional materials and tutorial service/support for the college community. Jan Ashton-Beazie was named Director in July, 1990 to provide management status to Learning Resources and reports directly to the Vice-President of Instructional Services. Fran Elgin Head Librarian is in charge of Audio-Visual, John Akins of technical services and both work on acquisitions, collection development and reference.

Six classified workers are currently employed: a media co-ordinator and clerk and four library clerks(3 3/4FTE). Additionally, eight to ten student workers on work study with federal or district funding work five, ten, or fifteen hour weeks. All divisions of the library get student aide support. Two volunteers work on special projects.

The library has several special collections. Local History
was started in 1986 when audio tapes containing interviews with local residents, collected by history professor Paul Smith, were donated (they were going to be thrown out). This material has been partially transcribed by Dr. Smith, Fran Elgin, and various other temporary or volunteer workers. The collection of local historian Jean Goldbrandsen was donated by her family in 1990 and is currently being cataloged with a priority on photographs.

A High Desert pamphlet file; law collection (soon to be replaced by a new San Bernardino County Law Library to be built in Victorville) and an extensive nursing section (Nursing was added to the curriculum in 1975) are other unique collections of this library.

Jan Ashton-Beazie believes that the strength of the library is its ability to meet community and student needs. Students from the local public school systems, CAL State, George Air Force Base and VVC all are users that the library works to accommodate. Conversely, the greatest weakness is the currency of the collection. The most recent student survey (April, 1991) showed a 7% dissatisfaction with the currency of materials. compared to 27% in 1983 (April, 1983 student survey).

An extensive weeding began in 1978. Periodicals were surveyed for usefulness and relevance which along with utilization figures eliminated holdings irrelevant to the curriculum. The full weeding project, including volumes, was completed in 1980-81. In 1979-80, despite the addition of 1469 volumes, the library had a net loss of 572 due to this process.

Dispite efforts to improve hours, only 81% were satisfied most of the time, but an improvement over the 75% satisfied in 1983. Evening hours were extended from 9 to 10p.m. in 1979. In the summer the campus is closed on Friday and Saturday. During the Fall and Spring the library is open Saturdays 10-3 (initiated 1987). Since the library director requires a credentialed librarian be available whenever the library is open, the three librarians are fully occupied covering day, evening and Saturday hours. Ms Ashton-Beazie says that the library was almost broken trying to accommodate hours with insufficient staff.

An Apple IIE, a castoff from the learning center, started the computerized circulation and overdue notices programs Circ Plus in 1984 or 1985. In 1990, this program was transfered to an IBM computer, but the system is too small and the library is looking for a totally automated system to accomplish all functions, including a public access catalog.

Starting with original Dewey cataloging by Geraldine Bergan, the library progressed through ordering card sets from jobbers,
Library of Congress, and original cataloging (Fran and John).
In August, 1991 processing was greatly increased when the library
started to use OCLC. Cost had held up implementation, but over
the years equipment had been purchased so that the final outlay
was minimalized.

A surprising effect of OCLC has been a dramatic increase in
interlibrary loans. With no publicity, requests in September
equalled the total for the past three years. The decrease in
waiting time (from 3-4 weeks to 7-10 days) and access to
collections of all OCLC subscribers is a great improvement.
Previously, the library researched through SIRCULS (San
Bernardino, Inyo, Riverside Counties United Library Services)
and IEALC (Iland Empire Academic Library Cooperative) sending
requests by mail or phone in an emergency.

In 1991 a Collection development Policy was created by the
library director. Emphasizing the need for co-operation and
input from the entire college community, the Policy contained
statements concerning the mission of the library, guidelines
for acquisitions and maintenance (weeding, lost and worn), and
academic freedom (ALA Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read
Statement). A librarian serving as a permanent voting member
of the curriculum committee had been instituted in 1986 at the
urging of Fran Elgin.

To identify and help marginal learner students, Project
AIM (Alternative Instructional Method) was funded under the
CCC Fund for the Improvement of Instruction 1980-81.
Audio-visual personnel worked with the Math, Respiratory Therapy
and Broadcasting instructors in using video in their classrooms
and the English department and library worked to provide library
instruction to students. A 1981 library report spent
considerable space on the various methods being implemented,
including video, library instruction, and faculty-library
information interaction.

In 1978, Jan Ashton-Beazie, Francis J. Ferrance (English
Department) created a library introduction and self-study
program. This was updated in 1990 by Fran Elgin. All English
1A (the largest English class, with 27 sections) students are
required to complete a Library Workbook, although degree of
participation varies as to the importance a professor gives
to this ongoing assignment. A ten minute audio tape and player
may be checked out to a patron for a self guided tour of the
library.

The library budget (excluding A-V and Learning Center) over
the past 5 years has remained fairly constant with an average
2.9% of the entire school budget. In the late 1970's the average
was 3.3% (all three sections). The recommended percentage for
a Learning Resource Program in 1980, was 7-12% of the operational
budget. Cutbacks in 1980 were even more damaging because of the 13% inflation rate. Needed audiovisual program expansions were on hold due to lack of funding (cable, closed circuit TV, upgrading equipment for video program production). The Director was requesting more funding to allow for collection growth since in 1980 the library was below recommended standards.

Book loss was reduced by the installation of a book detection system in January, 1980. Students not returning items was the main source of loss and the Director recommended in 1980 that registration be withheld until all items returned. This was implemented in 1985 and helped but the loss rate is still a concern and the College does not use a collection agency.

The 1983 and 1991 student surveys show some use trends. VVC students remain in the high 80% range as most common users of the library although cited frequent use has dropped from 63 to 51%. Response to a major complaint in the 1983 survey (29%, too much noise or distraction) resulted in a dramatic drop to only 7% in the 1991 survey. Concurrently, there was a 10% drop in using the library for study, 12% drop in using the library for relaxation with a book or magazine, 3% to listen to music, 7% visit friends, and 6% wait for ride or kill time.

Space has been a concern since the founding of the College. The three English classrooms and offices were converted back to library book space in 1984, the Learning Center in the 1980's. No changes have been made to the small offices and workspaces other than creating an office from portable partitions in the entryway for John Akins. The 1980-81 report held that all three departments were at maximum capacity and new space was necessary.

The current 11,000-13,000 sq. ft building is to be replaced by a 35,000 sq. ft., two level library (including audio-visual). The timetable is not set since funding is by the state and VVC is fourth on the list. The staff has been working on library plans for the past two years but a final version has not yet been approved and scaling back occurs constantly. The new library is still as vulnerable to Sacramento and the dollar as was the current building.

The new, 60,000 volume library is to be next to the present building with the two connected by a landscaped courtyard with overhead trellis. The main entrance will be on the upper level and hold all offices, and reference, periodical, and circulation areas. The lower level, built into the hillside, will house the stacks. and Audio-visual which will move out later. The Learning center will take over the present library building.

With a student body of over 10,000 full and part-time students, Victor Valley College has seen dramatic growth since its inception in 1961. The library has grown with it, from one
room with 3,000 volumes and Dewey cataloging to over 52,000 volumes and more than 42,000 microform units and OCLC Library of Congress cataloging, from manual to computer, with a budget increase of approximately 2300% and of volumes held 1700%.

This growth has stressed the staff and facilities, and most longtime employees believe that this is the most stressful time they have experienced. Since the new library is at best four years away and enrollment is expected to continue its increase (economy and dramatic growth in the High Desert), the library has challenging times ahead.
PLANS FOR NEW LIBRARY (PROPOSED)
INTERVIEWS

Janet Ashton-Beazie - October 8 & November 13, 1991
Richard Doornbos - November 13, 1991
Fran Elgin - October 25 & November 7, 1991
Polly Fitch - November 4, 1991
Nancy Grajeda - November 12, 1991
Angie Prieto - November 12, 1991
Marjory Robinson - November 5, 1991


VVC Library: Student Survey. April, 1983
VVC Library: Student Survey. April, 1991

Reports

VVC Library: Library Report, 1977
VVC Library: Library Report, 1979-80
VVC Library: Library Report, 1988-89
VVC Library: Collection Development Policy

Footnotes

1. Marjory Robinson believes that $8,000 was actually spent.
2. Daily Press "Lots of money..." August 30, 1961
3. Marjory Robinson
Site of new library
Entrance, Circulation Desk
and librarian's office (far left)

Reading Pit and stacks