



## George and Sue Sumner Library Expansion Fund

Dr. June Koelker views her job as dean of the Mary Couets Burnett Library as being a delicate balancing act. With a finite amount of space left in her building, she must constantly find new ways to maximize the area's potential—even as valuable square footage is consumed by more and more people and resources. Koelker is understandably, then, excited by the thought of an expansion project, which has gained appreciable momentum over the last few months.

A feasibility study, led by Cannon Design, led to conceptual drawings for a renovation, along with preliminary cost estimates and a comprehensive timeline. The study was completed early last fall and a presentation was given to the Board of Trustees in November. Koelker explains that this information offers a substantive look at what is required to properly update the library and that the results have since been factored into the Campus Master Plan.

The primary objective of any expansion effort is to increase the total seating capacity of the library so it could accommodate 20 percent of the student body—a commonly accepted benchmark for four-year, private universities with a residential campus and additional graduate students. A variety of new seats would be added for tables, carrels, study rooms and more. The goal would be to have at least 1,600 total seats, which is absolutely unattainable under current conditions.

“Right now, we can seat—counting everything but the toilets—10 percent of our students, which is far from ideal,” Koelker said. “So the driving principle for any plans involving expansion will be to effectively double our seating capacity. I’ve been taking action over the last couple of



years to maximize our existing space, but there is only so much seating that can be added in the current environment.”

This is especially true because Koelker must also allocate space for new books and other library resources. Last summer, in an effort to free up more space for this purpose, the library reduced its amount of reference room material by one-third and moved it into off-campus storage. The need for more books, however, will persist and space in the storage facility is also running low. Expansion would go a long way toward solving this dilemma as well.

In spite of the challenges she faces on a daily basis, Koelker has managed to lead pioneering efforts to advance the library. A new three-year strategic plan was completed last summer and features several key initiatives, including one to “increase the library’s presence on eCollege to support curricular goals.” This has led to an especially exciting development, from Koelker’s view.

She explains that eCollege, a Web-based course management system, helps to enrich typical college classes but also presents the library with an opportunity to make it work even better. A pilot program has just begun in which “embedded librarians” are immediately involved in related courses so they can be more proactive in offering assistance.

“The old model had a librarian passively sitting at a reference desk, waiting to be approached with students who had questions,” Koelker explained. “We still do that, but now the librarian is also in these course shells and can jump in with helpful information from the very beginning. It enables us to offer library support right when the student needs it, rather than waiting for the students to walk in the library.”



Another very important component of the strategic plan is shown through the redesign of the library Web site (<http://library.tcu.edu>), which took more than a year to complete and was unveiled in January. The new site features an updated look, is better organized and makes it easier for people to access library resources. This is just one more example of how the library is trying to offer services that meet the evolving needs of its users.

A growing number of the services being demanded are electronic in nature, and Koelker—performing another kind of balancing act—is fully embracing these emerging trends, while also preserving the more traditional resources. She explains that libraries cannot simply go in one direction, stating that some academic disciplines need a book-based building while others require a source of electronic information.

“We’re not trying to digitize the world here, but we are trying to digitize certain items,” Koelker said. “It’s a fallacy to assume that the whole campus behaves as one in this regard, because it doesn’t. The consequence for us is that we have to do both. It’s not about having either the traditional or the new—it’s about having both of them together.”

Koelker must be on the right track in her approach because the library is having more and more people walk through its doors and utilizing its array of services. From the beginning of the fall of 2008 through the end of the summer of 2009, the library had 543,801 total visits—an 8 percent increase compared to the previous year. Those statistics will likely rise again after this summer, meaning that expansion is becoming even more eminent—and the Sumner Fund is becoming even more necessary.