

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Dear Colleagues,

There is something wonderfully symbolic about writing the first editorial of a brand-new publication, while teetering on the brink of retirement. A beginning and an ending, separate but connected. Anticipated loss offset by certainty that the good work will continue. An invitation to reflect on the journey that brought me to this point, the company kept, and the hopes I entrust to those who continue.

My journey began 11 years ago when I had the amazing good fortune to come to Grand Valley. Here I found a university that was still inventing itself, a community with a dream of greatness and a better-than-average shot at achieving it.

University Libraries wanted to be part of that dream. Together, we began to build a culture of excellence and innovation, one that could support the mission of a rising university that could, depending on all of us, be on its way to greatness.

We soon discovered that we had a high tolerance for change and that we were able to get things done pretty quickly compared to other institutions. We built a flexible organization, an empowered culture, and confidence in our ability to contribute substantially to the work of the university. What we didn't know, we learned.

We accumulated some successes: we saw the general education curriculum adopt information literacy as a core competency; we created ScholarWorks, a repository of scholarly and creative outputs of Grand Valley faculty and staff that has been accessed more than 3 million times by readers around the world; we created digital archives and special collections that are regularly consulted by scholars in person and online; we began offering faculty and students help with managing copyrights and creating data management plans; we established a support system for faculty who want to explore open educational resources, and our liaison librarians all became certified in hybrid-course design.

In 2012 our efforts were recognized by our national professional organization, the Association of College and Research Libraries, when they named us as recipients of the Excellence in Academic Libraries Award in the university category. This annual award recognizes the academic library in the U.S. or Canada that best serves its university's mission. We were the first comprehensive university ever to win the award, putting Grand Valley's library in company with those at schools like Cornell University, Indiana University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and University of Washington.

A year later we opened the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons, completing a five year effort to design a library informed by student needs, evolving pedagogies, and the demand for literacy and communication skills in the workplace. Since it opened in 2013, the library has had 3.2 million visitors. We have hosted hundreds of tour groups from across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, as well as from places as far away as Russia, China, Israel, Brazil, Denmark, and Australia. In August of 2015, we held a conference called

"ReThink It: Libraries for a New Age" that drew almost 300 librarians, architects, and designers to the Allendale campus from the U.S., Canada, and Sweden. In August of 2016, Mary Idema Pew Library was named a New Landmark Library by *Library Journal*, a leading professional publication.

It is always fantastic to be lauded by our peers, but our greatest satisfaction comes from watching students thrive in our spaces. It's immensely satisfying to walk through Mary Idema Pew Library or Steelcase Library and see students engrossed in their work; to see the Knowledge Market humming with conversations as peer consultants talk with students about their writing, research, and speaking assignments; to marvel at the whiteboards packed with formulas, vocabularies, charts, and drawings; or to feel the kind of energy that becomes palpable when everyone in a community is fully engaged in a shared task. In those moments, you see how the library can enable student learning.

As I approach retirement with just a bit of uncertainty, after 45 years of passionate engagement in higher education, I am certain of one thing: University Libraries faculty and staff are going to continue to serve this university with talent, energy, audacity, and commitment. This new publication, *Off the Shelf*, will tell those stories going forward, and I will be not too far away, reading about the latest successes and feeling immense pride.

Warm Regards,

Lee Van Orsdel
Dean of University Libraries