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LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Recommendation

SR-91-92-17(LA)

That the administration place as a top priority library expansion to include collection development, access to information through new technology, and library facilities to support the teaching, research, and public services commitments of the University, and by constructing a state of the art library facility.

DISCUSSION: No other element at Marshall University serves as many diverse constituencies as the library with students, faculty, administration, community, state-wide and out-of-state patrons. However, the library has been expected to provide needed services and materials for an ever-growing student population with an understaffed and inadequately-sized building, ever-increasing monographic and serial costs, and a budget that either decreased or remained stagnant from 1984 until 1990 when the university president responded to a critical automation crisis with additional funds.

The present Marshall library was constructed in 1929 as a library/classroom building. In 1968 an expanded "wrap-around" was added to the structure with the expectation of serving 7,500 students and with a capacity for 362,000 volumes. The library now serves over 12,000 students and contains over 400,000 volumes, as well as a government documents collection of over 793,000 items, and a rapidly growing special collections and media departments.

The building was also originally intended as a closed-stack facility. When the addition was added, the stacks were opened to patrons to facilitate browsing. As these were not designed as open-stack areas, these sections of the stacks are secluded and poorly-lighted. This has become a definite safety concern for library staff, students and administrators. These areas also contain very narrow aisles and are not wheelchair accessible, thereby denying browsing capabilities to those in wheelchairs.

The number of study areas required by library standards for student use has eroded over the years in an effort to house the expanding collection and to provide space for the growing automation needs of our students and faculty. Some of these needs have included personal computers available for student use, additional user terminals to access the library's on-line catalog, and the addition of CD-ROM work stations to access the vast amount of information now disseminated in this format.

The number of monographs and serials purchased annually continues to decline due to the rapidly rising costs and a library budget that grows smaller and remains stagnant from year to year. The damage has been done over the years and the problem is critical. It is no longer a matter of "keeping up" but correcting the lack in the basic collection that previous underfunding has caused. This decline in resources must hurt programs that are struggling to gain or retain accreditation.

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