

## 2 SR Visits

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### 4 The Linda Hall Library of Science, Engineering 5 and Technology

6 *Katy Ginanni*, Column Editor

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Opened in 1946, the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City, Missouri, is world renowned for its collections in science, engineering, and technology. Just as well known is the strong user orientation of its dedicated staff. While the library certainly collects all types of materials, including books, patent specifications, engineering standards, maps, and more, a particularly strong emphasis is placed on the collection of current journals. The library, a privately funded public library, is situated on fourteen acres surrounded by the University of Missouri-Kansas City, although there is no affiliation with that institution. *Serials Review* made a visit on a lovely spring day in June, as the day lilies and other flowers were in full riot. *Serials Review* 2005; xx:xxx-xxx.  
© 2005 Published by Elsevier Inc.



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0098-7913/\$—see front matter © 2005 Published by Elsevier Inc.  
doi:10.1016/j.serrev.2005.08.011

## 21 Introduction

22 The clientele or user population served by the Linda  
 23 Hall Library of Science, Engineering and Technology is  
 24 unusual—the world. The last sentence of the mission  
 25 statement brings that home: “The library supports local,  
 26 national and international inquiry, education, and  
 27 research and development.” And in these days of online  
 28 reference chats, Web-based journals, document delivery  
 29 and the like, the library’s users do, indeed, come from all  
 30 over the world. The users range from primary school  
 31 children to university professors and researchers to  
 32 engineers, contractors, and lawyers. The library tries  
 33 to fulfill the needs for scientific and technical informa-  
 34 tion for both the local and global communities it serves.  
 35 Walk-in traffic currently numbers around sixty people  
 36 per day, but increasingly the users are remote. The  
 37 library accepts queries from people who walk through  
 38 the door, call on the telephone, and send faxes or e-  
 39 mails, but the bulk of the work these days comes in over  
 40 the Web. Statistics indicate that the library has served  
 41 people in more than seventy countries, and collecting is  
 42 done in over forty languages. Because the library has  
 43 always had such strong collections in the sciences and  
 44 technology, it has long been a primary lender institution.  
 45 Throughout its history, it has provided a well-used  
 46 document delivery service. Today, the library is cur-  
 47 rently the only remaining privately funded public library  
 48 devoted to the sciences in the United States. Until it  
 49 merged with the University of Chicago in 1981, the John  
 50 Crerar Library was the other U.S.-based, privately  
 51 endowed public library devoted to the sciences.

## 52 History and Physical Facility

53 The opening of the Linda Hall Library of Science,  
 54 Engineering and Technology was made possible through  
 55 the generous funding of Herbert F. and Linda S. Hall.  
 56 Herbert Hall, who made his fortune in the grain  
 57 business in Kansas City, Missouri, and Linda Hall were  
 58 childless, and they left their estate for the establishment  
 59 of a local public library. Mrs. Hall preceded Mr. Hall in  
 60 death, and the library is named for her. A board of  
 61 trustees was formed, and they, along with a consulting  
 62 council of library experts, surveyed the needs of the  
 63 region. Fine public, art, and medical libraries were  
 64 already serving the public, but the board and consulting  
 65 council determined that there was a crying need for  
 66 resources in the areas of science, engineering, and  
 67 technology. They believed that these types of resources  
 68 might be particularly useful in bringing defense con-  
 69 tracts to the area.

70 The original library was located in the former Hall  
 71 residence. The surrounding seventeen acres were main-  
 72 tained by the Halls as an arboretum, a function it still  
 73 serves today. Presently, the fourteen-acre urban arbor-  
 74 etum (three acres were sold to the University of  
 75 Missouri-Kansas City; UMKC) contains over 165  
 76 species of trees and over 100 varieties of tree peonies,  
 77 for which the library is well known. Some of the trees  
 78 have been lost due to inclement weather and construc-

tion, and not all of the trees are native to the area. 79  
 Groundskeeper Scott Reiter collects widely. 80

81 Ten years after the opening, the library had outgrown  
 82 the Hall home, and a larger facility (the present-day  
 83 main building) was added in 1956. The Hall home was  
 84 torn down in the early 1960s, and in its place an annex  
 85 to the main building was added in the mid-1960s. Some  
 86 elements from the Hall home were saved and have been  
 87 used throughout the two buildings. These include the  
 88 interior stair railings, now used in the outdoor courtyard  
 89 that houses a relatively new dwarf conifer garden; a  
 90 grandfather clock that is housed in the reading room;  
 91 Mrs. Hall’s china and crystal, which are on display in a  
 92 drawing room outside of the auditorium; and a curved  
 93 brick wall, formerly the gateway between the back and  
 94 front yards, that was incorporated into the connector  
 95 between the main library and the annex.

96 Today visitors enter through the 1956 building.  
 97 Walking through the entryway and into the main  
 98 reading room, one cannot help but be drawn to the  
 99 statuesque and impressive malachite *tazza* in the center  
 100 of the room. It was a gift of Russian Czar Nicholas II to  
 101 a friend in 1910. In 1972 Mrs. Kenneth A. Spencer gave  
 102 it to the library. The room itself invites quiet study and  
 103 reflection. The parquet floors, wooden bookshelves,  
 104 windows, and ample lighting all provide an environment  
 105 suited for study. Scattered throughout the building,  
 106 busts of noted scientists provide inspiration.

107 The library is currently involved in the construction of  
 108 an addition that will extend to the south from the annex.  
 109 The addition will contain sixteen and one-half miles of  
 110 shelving space, which is slightly more than the current  
 111 capacity. One of the interesting alterations being made to  
 112 the present facility will be the addition of a geothermal  
 113 field to provide energy for the library. This calls for the  
 114 drilling of 100 holes in the south lawn of the library. Each  
 115 hole will be 625 feet deep. The use of geothermal energy is  
 116 an economic and environmentally friendly way to  
 117 provide electrical power for both heating and cooling.<sup>1</sup>

## Historical Highlights

118 Because of its unique nature, the library has received  
 119 many interesting and important visitors. Richard Rhod-  
 120 es, author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (for  
 121 which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize), did much of his  
 122 research for that book at the library.<sup>2</sup> He has also  
 123 recently published a comprehensive biography of John  
 124 James Audubon but interestingly enough did not do any  
 125 research for that volume at the library.

126 Quentin Keynes, adventurer and grandson of Charles  
 127 Darwin, has visited the library as a lecturer on at least  
 128 half a dozen occasions. A world traveler who visited  
 129 places that are not regular tourist destinations, Keynes  
 130 enjoyed discovering new things and then sharing them  
 131 with audiences. As Gayle Van Auken, serials services  
 132 librarian, noted, great adventures make for great stories.  
 133

134 In April 2003, the library was one of the hosts for the  
 135 Sally Ride-UMKC Science Festival. Sally Ride, the first  
 136 American woman to travel in space, founded Sally Ride  
 137 Science, which is “dedicated to encouraging and

138 empowering girls in their exploration of the worlds of  
139 science, technology, engineering and math..."<sup>3</sup> The  
140 event was promoted to girls in the fifth through eighth  
141 grades throughout the Kansas City area.<sup>4</sup> Several staff  
142 members of the library participated in the festival, and  
143 Sally Ride herself participated in the opening reception  
144 and festival.

145 The Paul D. Bartlett, Sr. Lecture Series was named  
146 after the library's first Chairman of the Board of  
147 Trustees, who served from 1941 until his death in  
148 1964. Herbert Hall was a cousin to the Bartletts, and  
149 there have always been Bartletts on the board. The series  
150 "was conceived as an annual event to bring distin-  
151 guished individuals in science, engineering and technol-  
152 ogy to Kansas City."<sup>5</sup> The inaugural lecture was held in  
153 January 2003 as one of several lecture series sponsored  
154 by the library with many distinguished and renowned  
155 scientists, scholars, and researchers serving as lecturers.

## 156 Collections

157 In 1947 the first important acquisition of the library was  
158 the collections of the American Academy of Arts and  
159 Sciences (founded in 1780 by John Adams). These  
160 collections laid the groundwork for what has become  
161 one of the premier collections of science, engineering,  
162 and technology resources in the world. In 1985, a  
163 portion of the Franklin Institute's library was transferred  
164 to the library from Philadelphia. That addition increased  
165 or completed the holdings for nearly 600 hundred serial  
166 titles.<sup>6</sup> Another enormously important addition to the  
167 library was the transfer of the Engineering Societies  
168 Library (ESL) in 1995. The ESL was founded in New  
169 York City in 1908, and that acquisition increased the  
170 holdings and added depth to the research collections.<sup>7</sup>  
171 The library has arrangements with various societies to  
172 serve as a depository for their collections, and those  
173 resources are made available to the public as well as to  
174 the members of the societies.

175 When adding materials to the collection, the library  
176 staff is in a uncommon position. Mary Moeller, library  
177 operations officer, comments that having "no captive  
178 audience is a double-edged sword." They are not subject  
179 to direct user demands, but they also do not get many  
180 opportunities to receive expert guidance from users in  
181 fields where they may not have expertise. In general, the  
182 library tries to hire librarians with "meaningful" science  
183 or engineering backgrounds, but it is not always possible  
184 to attract people with those kinds of backgrounds or  
185 degrees. When expertise in a particular field is lacking, the  
186 library tends to seek direction from faculty at area  
187 colleges and universities. Recommendations are also  
188 taken from other library patrons, which are then passed  
189 along to the collection development librarian. Library  
190 staff read book reviews and publisher advertisements and  
191 take into account data, such as publisher, price, subject  
192 fit, local holdings, and indexing information, before  
193 making purchasing decisions. The library does maintain  
194 an approval plan for monographs with a major book  
195 jobber. The collection development librarian and the  
196 head of monographic services review and update the

profile regularly. The library staff relies heavily on the  
collection development policy, which was written over a  
number of years by a senior librarian, who was assisted  
by an advisory group. The policy was finalized in 1994  
and is currently being examined, reviewed, and revised.  
Generally, the library seeks to add books and journals in  
newly emerging fields of research, as well as "reference  
works that support understanding of other materials in  
the collections."<sup>8</sup> There is an emphasis placed on  
journals and other serial publications.

The library's budget and collection is under constant  
review, but there have not been any large serials  
cancellation projects in recent years. By focusing the  
collections a number of years ago, the staff were able to  
reduce collections in various areas. In general, the  
library tends to collect research materials, but not  
applications materials. For example, they might buy a  
book on how to build a plow, but not on how to use  
one. Another example is the subject of medicine. The  
library has very strong collections in the disciplines that  
underlie the study of medicine, but not in the applica-  
tions of those disciplines in the various medical fields.

Except for current issues of more than 500 journals,  
and monographs published after 1969, many of the  
resources of the library are in closed stacks, so the  
library has virtually no problem with theft or damage to  
the volumes. In fact, most of the collection is in  
meticulous condition. To address preservation needs,  
the library established a preservation unit.

A simple but efficient system is used for retrieving re-  
quested books, journals, or other materials from the  
closed stacks. On-site patrons fill out a request form and  
submit it to the reference desk. The request is then sent,  
via pneumatic tubes much like those used at drive-in  
banks, to staff in the closed stacks. The requested item is  
located and sent upstairs in a lift to the reference desk.  
Journals, conference proceedings, technical reports, and  
microforms are not loaned to patrons. Monographs may  
be borrowed by approved local patrons for a limited  
time.<sup>9</sup>

## Electronic Resources

The library subscribes to a small number of databases,  
especially subject-specific ones such as INSPEC, Ei  
Village, and others. These are available on an internal  
network but not accessible outside of the physical  
facility. Currently, the library subscribes to a little over  
100 electronic journals. Access to e-journals is being  
added as quickly as possible. Because of its excep-  
tional user population, some publishers have a  
difficult time determining how to charge the library  
and how to give them access to e-journals. Publishers just  
cannot seem to come up for a good model for a unique  
institution.

## Automation

The library uses the Horizon system by Dynix-Sirsi,  
which is available on computers within the library and  
on the library's Web site. The online catalog for the

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254 library, called Leonardo, is a cooperative project with the  
 255 Spencer Art Reference Library of the nearby Nelson-  
 256 Atkins Museum of Art. The serials module is used for  
 257 checking in current issues of journals, but payments are  
 258 still recorded on kardex records. The system was chosen  
 259 in part because it could accommodate a large collection  
 260 of serials. One frustration the serials staff experience is  
 261 that the displays between public and staff views are very  
 262 different. Serials at the Linda Hall are not classified; they  
 263 are shelved by main entry.

264 Dynix was the first system used by the library,  
 265 beginning in 1995. Moeller believes that it is prudent  
 266 for libraries continually to monitor the effectiveness of a  
 267 library system. Because of the cooperation with the  
 268 Spencer Art Reference Library, the needs of two very  
 269 different libraries must be considered. Horizon has  
 270 grown and improved, and so far the active review  
 271 process indicates that both libraries are satisfied.

## 272 History of Science Collection

273 A particularly important and impressive part of the  
 274 library is the History of Science Collection of rare  
 275 books, which is currently housed in the Trustees' and  
 276 Spencer rooms in the main building. Entrance to these  
 277 rooms is through an almost hidden door in the main  
 278 reading room. The rooms are attractively and appro-  
 279 priately furnished with antique writing tables, chairs,  
 280 rugs, and an unusual round bookcase. The collection,  
 281 which in part is based on the foundation of books  
 282 received from the American Academy, will move to the  
 283 new addition. The collection includes printed materials  
 284 that go back to the fifteenth century and contains more  
 285 than 6,000 volumes. There are over 3,000 journals that  
 286 date prior to the twentieth century, and important issues  
 287 of some journals have been pulled from the regular  
 288 stacks to be placed in the collection. Some examples are  
 289 the Watson and Crick article about DNA in a 1953  
 290 issue of *Nature*; German journals that contain Gregor  
 291 Mendel articles on genetics; and a run of *Transactions*  
 292 of the *Philosophical Society* that date back to the  
 293 seventeenth century. There are particularly strong  
 294 collections in astronomy, geology, herbals, botanicals,  
 295 and bestiaries.

296 Bruce Bradley, History of Science librarian, and Dr.  
 297 William B. Ashworth, History of Science consultant,  
 298 select and add about 250 volumes annually to the col-  
 299 lection. A recent prized acquisition is the *Narratio Prima*,  
 300 published in 1540 by Georg Joachim Rheticus. The book,  
 301 one of only five known copies in the United States, was a  
 302 preliminary announcement and "the very first appear-  
 303 ance in print of the new Copernican astronomy."<sup>10</sup>

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## Conclusion

As long as the Linda Hall Library continues to acquire  
 and maintain print, there will be a need for a physical  
 facility. There are still some precarious elements to the  
 electronic world, such as orphaned publications and  
 technology failures, so the library prefers to continue to  
 collect and hold onto its print collections and those of its  
 partners for the time being. There will always be esoteric  
 publications for which the library will serve as a  
 repository. In fact, library president C. Lee Jones states  
 in the library's 2002 annual report that one of the key  
 elements of the strategic plan is to "expand the Library's  
 role as a depository for societies and publishers and  
 intensify support for fulfilling preservation obliga-  
 tions."<sup>11</sup> An example of one of those relationships is the  
 library's role with BioOne, a database of biological and  
 environmental science journals. Not only was the library  
 a founding member of this collaborative project which  
 brings together scholars, society publishers, libraries, and  
 a commercial publisher, but also it has agreed to serve as  
 the print archive for all BioOne journals. While the  
 library will continue to pursue access to electronic  
 publications, the current administration sees no reason  
 to duplicate efforts being made by other local libraries.  
 Print collections will continue to be a primary focus for  
 the Linda Hall Library. And with a collection of over  
 47,000 serial titles, who would want to see them stop?

## Notes

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