



## A University Library

In a university library, it is rare to find fiction books. What is stocked is mostly geared towards classics, literature, poetry and other material designed to support a curriculum. The non-fiction material tries to cover the widest range of knowledge, sometimes more than the university teaches. Because of this, university libraries are often split by subject. For example, you will often find a separate medical library and law library and commerce library at the same university.

It is unusual to find videos or music in a university library, unless purchased for the curriculum, e.g. videos for a fine arts department. University libraries are much bigger than public libraries, often stocking millions of books in a single building. There is not much emphasis placed on having multiple copies of a book, rather having many different titles by different authors covering the same subject area.

University libraries have a very large number of databases, sometimes hundreds. Often these are full text, but they sometimes only give information about what an article is about and where it was written and the patron has to find the article him/herself. They are not directed towards general interest, but rather specific subjects, such as biology. University libraries have very long hours, so patrons can access them easily. University libraries also stock hundreds of academic magazines (called "journals"), which patrons can use when the information is not available on a full text database. It is very common for a patron to use only electronic databases and journals to do assignments. The Internet is very rarely used to find information, because it is not a reliable source and also cannot access electronic databases directly. All university libraries use an integrated library system. Inter Library Loan from another university library is common.

Many of the staff of a university library are qualified Librarians and available to help patrons, who often have very complex needs. It is common that a Librarian will make an appointment to see a patron and spend several hours discussing his/her needs and recommending courses of action. The Librarians are almost all subject specialists and will refer the patron to another Librarian if they are not expert on the subject.

University libraries shelve their books differently to public and school libraries. Everything – including fiction – is stored using a system called "LC Subject Headings". This is a system that includes numbers and letters and is much more complicated than the Dewey system used in school and public libraries. The University of Calgary shelf number for a book called "A Short History of Canada" is FC164.M672006. The Dewey number for the same book is 971MOR. Like the Dewey system, the LC system is designed so that all books and journals on a subject are in the same area.

Qualified Librarians in university libraries are considered "Faculty" – the same as senior teaching staff. There are many more librarians per patron than there are in public libraries. The library is specifically stocked to support the needs of the university. It is rare for non-university staff and students to be allowed into the library. University libraries all have "liaison Librarians", who meet with teaching staff from a department to decide on the needs of that department and how the library can help.

A university library is often regarded as the "heart" of a university, because the information is so important and is so heavily used.