

## **Rhodes University Library**

### **Opening of the Research Commons & launch of the PRIMO Research portal – 6 September 2010**

The Vice-Chancellor, Dr Badat, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans, Heads of Departments & Institutes, colleagues & friends of the research community at Rhodes University.

Welcome to the Rhodes University Library and, in particular, today's occasion which is celebrating the completion of the Research Commons & launch of the PRIMO research portal ahead of the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> term on Monday morning – 6<sup>th</sup> September.

Last Saturday the Vice-Chancellor, in an address to the University's Convocation, reflected on the significant achievements of this fine institution over the past year and, at the same time, talked to the strategic vision and the next stage of planned action to ensure that Rhodes University maintains its reputation of excellence across teaching & learning, research & community engagement.

One comment, in particular, struck a chord that whilst Rhodes University enjoys an institutional reputation that is recognized nationally & internationally for its excellence, the Vice-Chancellor cautioned against complacency in his remark, "Don't stagnate – constantly advance support for knowledge production". Today is the evidence that the Library Services Division takes its mandate very seriously to provide excellent library & information services in support of research, teaching and learning & community engagement and, ultimately knowledge production. The opening of the Research Commons, the launch of the web-based library research portal, within the structures of our new University Library, is evidence that we are serious about advancing and strengthening our support for the research enterprise at this institution.

The Library Services vision of an enhanced and revitalized model of library and information services at Rhodes University was articulated in the 2009 Divisional Review. A significant portion of the report contained the commitment to enhance and extend existing strengths of the Library Services in support of the planned trajectory to increase post-graduate study and research at Rhodes University. Key factors in being able to meet this commitment included the provision of a new and refurbished Library Building, the implementation of Faculty Liaison Teams, training opportunities to strengthen the capacity in research librarianship and expertise to continue building excellent research collections. With the support and contributions of the University, Government and donors, Rhodes University has a state-of-art building, that not only distinguishes it among the top academic libraries in a very competitive HE arena, but resulted in

it coming onto the radar screen of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and being invited to be one of six academic library partners in Phase 2 of the prestigious Research Libraries' Consortium Project.

Vice-Chancellor and colleagues – this grant has given the Library a “turbo gear” in our quest to advance support for research – it says to our researchers, post-graduate students and academics (existing and potential) that the University Library is serious about providing this constituency with top-class facilities, services and staff that will, we believe, inspire, enhance and support scholarship. Today – the Rhodes University Library is the first of the Phase 2 Libraries to complete the Research Commons component of the RLC Project.

This facility is managed by the Head of User Services & the Research Commons, Mrs Vivien Botha, and the four Faculty Liaison Teams:

Science & Pharmacy

Commerce & Law

Humanities & Education –level 3

Humanities – level 4

I would like to acknowledge Mrs Botha, in her absence, for the detailed and careful preparation as well as implementation of the RC services in time for the 4<sup>th</sup> term. Viv is taking a well-deserved break by walking the 400km trail from Eden to Addo which started on 2 September. The Principal Faculty Liaison Librarians, together with the Faculty Liaison Librarians and senior library colleagues, will work on a roster basis to provide professional information support. We are also providing extended opening hours for the Research Commons and have appointed a team of 15 senior post-graduate students who have exposure to research methodologies, who have probably agonized over articulating the research question, who know the regret of not having managed those pesky bibliographic references and, importantly, are able to engage with the research discourse that will reverberate around these walls!

I would also like to acknowledge other colleagues who have turned a grant- on- paper into these facilities that you see here today:

- The Library Building Planning Team led by Jeanne Berger together with Vivien Botha, Gareth Dampies and Errol Kleinhans – physical planning, construction and dialogue with the QS & consultants
- The RU IT Division, in particular Jacot Guillmod & John Stevens, whose expertise in making provision for this IT intensive environment at short notice is recognized with appreciation

- The Library Technical Services Head, Wynand van der Walt, and the team including Irene Vermaak, Roelien Clarke, Brenda Stoltz, Eileen Shepherd, Sue van der Riet & Gareth Dampies are responsible for the web-based PRIMO research portal – a seamless facility, that is about to make the discovery of information so much more powerful and easier, is the result 10 months of highly technical, challenging and grinding teamwork
- Dr Badat and Dr Clayton - thank you for the keen support and encouragement that you have given to Research Libraries' Consortium Project – its progress, challenges and achievements.
- The Development & Alumni Relations Division – Mr Guy White and his team for their tireless work, together with the VC, to ensure that RU remains centre and front with key grant-makers such as Carnegie Corporation of NY
- The Marketing and Communications Division under the leadership of Mr Lebogang Hatshatse and his team for the ongoing media coverage and support that the University Library receives
- The Carnegie Corporation of New York whose funding has supported the Research Commons (in part) infrastructure & furnishings, the hi-end computer workstations & laptops as well as equipment, discovery tool software, up-skilling of staff with the goal to build capacity in research librarianship. I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement that Dr Bawa has given to RU and, in particular the Library, in its endeavor to support the research project within the University.

There are brochures available that provide details of the Library's facilities and services in support of research as well as interesting articles and reading materials for the research community to enjoy, including the current 3 part series written by the former RU doctoral student, Layla Cassim, on the "Secrets of post-grad success".

On a final note, I'll let you in on a hunch that we, in the Library have. If you are not able to find the Vice-Chancellor in his office or on the campus, we think that if you were to stop by the Research Commons, you might find him here, engaging in robust debate with a group of post-graduate students, supported by a strong cup of coffee!

I would now like to invite the Vice-Chancellor to open the Research Commons and then for our guest and colleagues to step into the Research Commons.

