Bob, we would like to thank you for your amazing and effective leadership, wisdom, dedication, and guidance these past 19 years as our director. Working with you has been an honor and a privilege. Moreover, you have left an indelible mark on our lives. You will be missed. Enjoy your retirement!

From the Library Faculty & Staff

Robert Danford to Retire

By Dr. Stephen C. Wilhite, D.Phil.

I have known Bob Danford since he came to the university in 1996. I like to think we established a positive rapport early on (although he may have a different perspective), and I am inclined to believe that the rapport may stem, in part, from our shared Tennessee heritage, although Bob perhaps retains more evidence of that Tennessee heritage in his accent than I do.

Since I have been in the role of Provost, I have come to respect Bob even more, in part he has seldom troubled me with routine updates from the library, choosing instead to contact me only when there is a significant issue that really requires my attention. In short, Bob trained me in my first year as Provost to give his infrequent but important emails high priority. There is a lesson here — email me less often and you may get a more timely response. (Excerpts from Dr. Wilhite, May 5, 2015, at Lathe Hall).

Mr. Robert Danford, director of Wolfgram Library, will be retiring effective June 30, 2015. Prior to coming to Widener, Mr. Danford served for eight years as Director of the Stevens-German Library at Hartwick College. During his 19 years of leadership of the Wolfgram Library, Bob has been a consistent and ardent advocate for reconfiguring public spaces within the library to better meet the needs of students. Particularly noteworthy is his efforts to create small group study spaces consistent with shifts in pedagogical practices that increasingly emphasize small group collaborative projects. His success in this regard is reflected in a large increase in the number of student visits to the library in recent years. Mr. Danford will leave for his successor plans that he and his staff have developed, in collaboration with ITS, for the creation of a Research Commons in the library. I am committed to continuing to work with University Advancement and with Mr. Danford’s successor in identifying sources of funding that will enable the realization of this major enhancement of the library as a center for collaborative learning on campus.

Throughout his tenure as director, Mr. Danford has demonstrated his commitment to working collaboratively with faculty and administrators in insuring that library resources and services are continually evaluated and adapted to meet the needs of students and faculty in the context of resource constraints common at tuition-driven institutions. Mr. Danford has worked with the faculty governance structure and with academic administrators to collect on a regular basis feedback from library patrons on how well the library is meeting their needs, and he has then used those data to guide planning priorities. While there was almost never an easy way to address the students’ requests for increased resources within the budgetary limitations of the library and my school, Mr. Danford led his staff in exploring with me and my associate deans, on a regular basis, ways in which we could demonstrate to students that they were being heard and that efforts were being made to address their needs.

To say that the field of Information Science and Technology has experienced dramatic change during Mr. Danford’s time in the directorship of the Wolfgram Library is a significant understatement. Yet, even in the face of annually escalating costs for digital resources and related technologies that could not be matched with increases in the library’s budget, Mr. Danford has led his staff in insuring that the Wolfgram Library is in the mainstream of the digital revolution. To accomplish this technological make-over of the library, Mr. Danford has had to be aggressive in the shifting of resources to capitalize on the benefits that electronic resources bring to the university community. His ability to lead this constant evolution of library services has been based in large part on his continued professional development through his leadership roles in professional organizations, such as the Library Administration and Management Association.

Please join me in wishing Bob Danford all the best in his retirement.
I am pleased to announce that Dr. Mark Winston has accepted the position of Director of the Wolfgram Memorial Library with the rank of Librarian. Dr. Winston previously served as Assistant Chancellor and Director of the John Cotton Dana Library at Rutgers University in Newark. Prior to that leadership role, Dr. Winston held faculty positions in information and library science at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and at Rutgers New Brunswick, following service as Assistant University Librarian at Valdosta State University. Dr. Winston received his Ph.D. in Library and Information Science from the University of Pittsburgh and has served as a consultant to a range of institutions on issues related to diversity and leadership development. At Widener, Dr. Winston will also have a faculty appointment as Assistant Professor of Management.

As library director at Rutgers, Dr. Winston oversaw the implementation of new programs related to data management and digital humanities, launched new formal collaborative projects between the professional library staff and faculty and administrators in other units of the university, and worked to position the library as a central player in the advancement of the university’s community engagement mission. Dr. Winston played a major role in promoting the diversity agenda at Rutgers through faculty development programming focused on infusing diversity content into courses and adapting instructional approaches so as to promote the success of students from a variety of backgrounds. He also led training related to the recruitment of faculty from under-represented groups, and he played a leadership role in the development of service learning as a prominent feature of the university’s academic offerings.

Dr. Winston has a record of peer-reviewed scholarship in the areas of management, diversity, and leadership. He received from the American Library Association in 2005 the National Award for Achievement in Library Diversity Research, and he has served on the editorial boards of several journals, including the Journal of Library and Information Science, College and Research Libraries, and Library Administration and Management. Dr. Winston served on the Emerging Leaders Subcommittee of the American Library Association, and he was a member of the President’s Program Committee of the Library Administration and Management Association. He also served as a co-convener of the Information Ethics Special Interest Group of the Association for Library and Information Science Education.

I am confident that Dr. Winston brings the experience, passion, and expertise to lead the library faculty and staff in shaping new strategic objectives that will contribute importantly to the accomplishment of the university’s Vision 2021 goals. I look forward to Dr. Winston’s establishing himself as a highly collaborative leader who will initiate and pursue partnerships between the library and other units of the university in ways that will position the library as an institutional leader in the university’s advancement of its civic engagement mission.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Winston to his leadership role at Widener.
Debbie Holl will retire this semester after twenty-seven years of dedicated, exceptionally effective and unflinchingly professional service to the Wolfgram Library and to Widener University. She leaves an outstanding legacy.

During her time here as Head of Technical and Automated Library Services, Debbie has been instrumental in managing the myriad technicalities involved in moving the library from a print-based card catalog to a modern electronic resource discovery system, in bringing in one, then dozens, of resource databases and electronic services, in moving from a print-based library to a largely digital library and in helping the library move from the confines of the Wolfgram building to being available to the campus and to the world via network development. She took on these projects and this evolution with a calmness and a focus that is notable, even legendary.

Her professionalism and her dedication to doing the very best and doing things in the right way are recognized by her peers in the library and in the regional library environment. She is a model that many have recognized and measure themselves by. But her contributions are not limited to Wolfgram. Her peers in the Widener community recognize her exceptional capabilities, electing her to important positions in the shared governance system of Widener. That she was chosen to chair the university’s Middle States Reaccreditation process would be unusual on most campuses, but here it was just one more recognition of her capabilities.

Debbie maintains an exquisite and admirable system of records relating to our many subscriptions and services, but truly, those records are redundant because she keeps that information in her head. In her twenty-seven years of service, she has been involved in so many initiatives, processes, developments and services that it is common for us just to ‘go ask Debbie’ when we need information about why and how and when something happened, or how we can resolve a problem or issue, or where we should go next when confronted with choices. And we are never disappointed.

We applaud Debbie’s years of service to the University and its students and faculty, to Wolfgram, and to each of us. We wish her the very best in her retirement, but we also recognize that Wolfgram will be a bit more difficult place to work in when we can’t just ‘go ask Debbie.’

The Long-time Welcoming Face of the Wolfgram Library is Retiring!

By Bob Danford, Director

Regina, (AKA Jean), Gwynn, who has been the consistently welcoming face of the Wolfgram Library for eighteen years, will retire this July. Jean has spent most of her time here being the first person to come in to the building and get it ready for the rest of the staff and for our user community of faculty and students. Most people, however, are not aware of that most important duty.

Most are just aware that she is the first person that they encounter when they come into the library and sense from their interaction with her that Wolfgram is a good place to be. Although her work duties relate to helping people check in and check out books, her real service has been to welcome people to the facility, assist them when they are upset or confused, refer them to others when needed, and to make people glad that they are here.

Because she sets such a pleasant and welcoming tone to library visitors, subsequent interactions between staff and visitors are considerably easier. In surveys of students regarding their satisfaction with library services, interaction with personnel always receives the highest praise, much of which is due to that most important first impression and usually that first impression is of Jean—good for the students and good for the library. A win-win.

Eighteen years of the most dependable and pleasant service deserves the highest praise and the highest thanks as well. Both of which we gladly offer!