

University Communications

News and Events

Illinois Wesleyan University

Year 2009

Resource Gems at The Ames Library

Monica Piotrowski
Illinois Wesleyan University

October 6, 2009

Contact: Monica Piotrowski, (309) 556-3181

Resource Gems at The Ames Library

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The school year is in full swing and students are aiming to make the best of their campus resources. At Illinois Wesleyan University one of these assets is The Ames Library, which offers a prime selection of well-known resources as well as some “hidden gems.”

The intellectual hub of the campus, The Ames Library is a five-story, 103,000 square feet building which houses approximately 335,000 items with access to 75 on-line databases, 1,100 journals in print and 33,000 journals online. The library also has seating for 500 readers and houses over 100 computer workstations as well as 16 study rooms. Yet some of the best gems are the people behind the desks.

According to University Librarian and Professor Karen Schmidt, one of the library’s best services is that it offers personal research assistance to all students.

“Library faculty provide in-depth research assistance for students and can be the untapped resource that moves a student to excellence and earning an ‘A’ on that challenging research assignment” said Schmidt. She encourages, “look for the AskAmes logo on the Web site or stop by the Information Desk to find out how to access this free and valuable resource.”

The library also offers informational sessions for classes, such as Gateways, to introduce students to the many services provided. Academic Outreach Librarian and Associate Professor Lynda Duke leads many of these sessions. They include introductions to library resources and services, as well as an introduction to the research process.

“We try to link the session with an assignment and talk about how to locate sources pertinent to the course,” said Duke.

The students of Professor Seeborg’s Gateway class received such pertinent information recently during their second out of three information sessions in September. The session was highly personalized; Duke helped brainstorm key ideas for search fields for the assignment.

“I understand you’re researching ‘working poor families in the United States.’ What key words are you using?” Duke asked before listing 15 key terms she had researched.

Duke also provided instruction in how to conduct the most relevant searches using The Ames’ resources of Web sites and online databases and catalogs, such as LexisNexis, I-share,

and WorldCat. In addition, she discussed how to evaluate sources to determine their scholarly content and appropriate use for assignments. Finally, she taught the students how to request books and articles not owned by the library.

“Many of the most relevant articles are owned by publishers and you can’t find them through Google or other search engines,” explains Duke, “However, we do own access to them and they are a part of Illinois Wesleyan’s digital or print collection. We want students to go beyond Google.”

In addition to the helpful library faculty and staff, The Ames Library also provides a variety of collections: streamed music in many genres and from many artists, movies and the university archives in addition to a vast collection of scholarly works. In addition, an interlibrary loan system is also available for materials not found inside the library. Through consortia agreements, students and faculty have access to over 32 million items for their research needs.

The Thorpe Center (formerly Thorpe Music & Media Center) on the third floor contains a computer with assistive technology capabilities for individuals with special needs and seven iMacs and three PCs for scanning and digital or video editing. The center also loans laptops and digital audio-visual equipment, contains a listening room, and provides for media reproduction and poster printing for academic use.

The Ames Library opened in January 2002 and is named in honor of B. Charles Ames ’50 and Joyce Eichhorn Ames ’49. For more information visit the library’s Web site: <http://www.iwu.edu/library/>.