

Accessing the Clemons Library at the University of Virginia and the Frances Mulhall
Achilles Library at the Whitney Museum of American Art

This paper will compare Clemons Library at the University of Virginia with the Frances Mulhall Achilles Library at the Whitney Museum of American Art in regards to physical and virtual access as well as intellectual control. Fundamental differences are expected due to the natures of the two institutions the libraries serve. As part of a public university serving a substantial local and statewide academic community, the access policies at Clemons Library are more inclusive than those of the Frances Mulhall Achilles Library, which serves a more focused and consequentially more limited community.

Physical access is the first area in which the nature of the institutions generates a clear variance in policy. Clemons Library, during a normal week in the semester, is open 24 hours Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. until midnight Saturday, and then from 10 a.m. on Sundays. The library is continuously open from Sunday at 10 a.m. until the subsequent Saturday (i.e. Friday night/Saturday morning).¹ Use of the library is permitted to members of the university community, which includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, Virginia residents, faculty and staff from other Virginia educational institutions and those who have made special research arrangements.²

¹ University of Virginia, "Hours by Library," <<http://www.library.virginia.edu/hours/#!/clemons>> (4 October 2012).

² Ibid, "Circulation," <<http://www.library.virginia.edu/policies/circulation/>> (4 October 2012).

The library at the Whitney is more restrictive. Its hours are Monday through Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and access is described as follows, “The Frances Mulhall Achilles Library and Archives collections do not circulate, but limited Library access is available to Whitney Museum members, visiting art historians, PhD candidates, graduate students, gallery staff, and other high-level researchers interested in the Museum, its history, exhibitions, permanent collections and artists.”³ The library is open by appointment only. To make an appointment researchers must provide institutional affiliation, submit a brief project description, compile a complete list of the materials they wish to access, including titles, call numbers, and library locations and request an appointment at least one week in advance. This difference in the two libraries’ policies for physical access can be attributed to the nature of research each institution is mandated to foster.

The study facilities for Clemons are ample for its purpose. In addition to its stacks the building contains the Robertson Media Center, which is where the bulk of audiovisual material for the University is held. The building has two floors. The first floor contains stacks, reading areas and computer workstations with printing and photocopying stations. The lower level contains the Robertson Media Center and the Digital Media Lab. The media center includes the circulations desk for its audiovisual materials, individual viewing cubicles and group viewing rooms. The Digital Media Lab houses a limited number of computers (10 or 12) on which advanced projects such as film digitization and digital editing can be carried out. There are also recording booths. Given the extended hours of the library it is generally not difficult to find a viewing area when a DVD or

³ The Whitney Museum of American Art, “Frances Mulhall Achilles Library and Archives Guidelines for Public Patrons,” provided by Ivy Blackman as an attachment in e-mail, see note 4 below (downloaded as PDF 9 October 2012).

video cannot be taken outside of the library. This of course changes during times when there is always heavy traffic, usually surrounding UVa students' midterms and final exams.

In response to an inquiry sent through e-mail Ivy Blackman, the Assistant Librarian and Cataloger for the Frances Mulhall Achilles Library, indicated that the physical study space for the library “consists of a reading room (two five-seat tables, two study carrels with PCs), a reference desk with two staff work spaces, three staff offices, and a closed stacks area with compact shelving, stationary shelving, and some flat files. The stacks house about 400 archives boxes, 50,000 volumes, 400 feet of ephemera files, and other miscellany.”⁴ The research space clearly indicates a much smaller capacity for physical access. However, those granted access likely have more space than they would in more public libraries, as well as less distractions. This is fitting given the library's stated intentions for its use.

Online access for Clemons is part of the overall UVa libraries site, which itself is very useful.⁵ It has a simple and attractive layout that is easily navigable. From the main site a researcher can quickly access many features; search for a specific library for information on its location or hours, search the entire libraries' catalog for holdings, make a room reservation, find a subject librarian, self-educate on researching tips and non-print formats, or browse descriptions and pictures of items in special collections.

The Whitney's website does not include all of the pertinent information regarding methods of access to its library for public patrons as outlined in the document referenced above, including the specific requirements for an appointment (see note 3). It does

⁴ Ivy Blackman, “Library Space,” 9 October 2012, personal e-mail (9 October 2012).

⁵ UVa, “University of Virginia Library,” < <http://www.library.virginia.edu>> (4 October 2012).

however provide access to WhitneyCat, an online catalog of its holdings.⁶ It allows simple, advanced and new acquisitions searches. Simple search allows one keyword and one field for the area in which the keyword will be searched, such as author/artist, subject, call number, journal title, etc... Advanced search allows three keywords and three fields, joined together with Boolean modifiers. New acquisitions search was not functioning at the time of this writing. Results are presented in a table showing the author/artist, long title, date, location, call number and status. Records may be selected and saved or printed. The presentation is simple and manageable.

The catalog for Clemons is part of Virgo, the larger online catalog for all UVa libraries.⁷ The catalog is very user friendly and also attractive in design. Simple search allows you to search a term in either the catalog, the subscription journals to which UVa has access, or both. Advanced search is only possible in either the catalog or the journals separately. The advanced catalog search section is very useful for a number of reasons. Drop-down menus are available on the left-hand side to select specific UVa libraries, formats, digital collections and call number. After the searching pool is narrowed there are terms for author, title, journal, subject, keywords, call number, publisher/place of publication, and year published. The drop-down menus for the specific libraries and formats also list the total number of holdings for each. Clemons contains close to 159,000 holdings.⁸ This is the friendlier catalog between the two, which is understandable as it frequently receives use from users who may be new to searching catalog records and library holdings.

⁶ Whitney, "WhitneyCat," <<http://library.whitney.org/>> (6 October 2012).

⁷ UVa, "Virgo" <<http://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog>> (4 October 2012).

⁸ Ibid, "Catalog Advanced Search," <http://search.lib.virginia.edu/advanced?catalog_select=catalog> (4 October 2012).

As has been stated, the quite substantial differences in the access policies for the Clemons Library at UVa and the Frances Mulhall Achilles Library at the Whitney are the result of substantial differences in the objectives of their parent institutions. As such, though the Clemons Library policies may seem more appealing, both institutions' policies are understandable and apt. Clemons Library's policies are informed by the greater UVa Library network that must regularly service tens of thousands of students, faculty and staff on a great range of topics. The Frances Mulhall library, by contrast, was conceived with a much more specific and focused user in mind, and its policies reflect this target user. The policies of access in both of these cases reflect the habits of those who intend and are intended to access the institutions' holdings.