Library Director Returns from Iraq

Andy Stewart, the director of Wilson Library, is also an Army Reserve soldier from Rolla’s 424th Maintenance Company. He was called to active duty in Iraq in August, 2004, and returned to UMR in October, 2005. This is his story.

No matter how much one is prepared for a call to active duty, it never comes at a convenient time. My memory from August, 2004, is very clear as my first sergeant told me, “We got a phone call today wanting to know if you are deployable.” That call started a chain of events that found me spending ten months nearly 7,000 miles away from Rolla.

After spending two months for training (on convoys, marksmanship, and cordon and search operations) at our mobilization station in Fort Riley, Kansas, and then another month in Kuwait, my unit found itself headed to Al Asad in western Iraq. Six days on convoy from Kuwait to Al Asad was certainly a memorable experience. This trip was by far the most dangerous part of my deployed tour, although we had no trouble at all. Over the past year, I’ve found myself describing the brown sands of the Iraqi desert as quite different from the subtle shades and hues of the American Southwest. The landscape in that part of western Iraq is just plain BROWN.

Al Asad had been Saddam Hussein’s premier Iraqi Air Force training site. The buildings are well-constructed and have been adapted by US forces into living areas and office spaces. For example, the large theater is now used for large-group briefings, occasional USO entertainers, and chapel services. The former swimming pool serves as a water storage area. The extensive irrigation system has fallen into disrepair, however, and the vegetation that must have been green and lush is now dusty and otherwise stressed. The most interesting distinguishing feature of Al Asad is its location in a natural wadi, or canyon. It gives a natural protective “wall” close to 100 feet tall that provides some protection against insurgent activity by itself. Perimeter fences are also guarded at all times by Marine or Army security forces.

When our unit’s advance party arrived at Al Asad in October, 2004, however, nothing was in place. Our office building had been used as living quarters and had to have lots of rubbish hauled out, the floors and walls cleaned, and the walls painted. At least the tents didn’t have to be cleaned out—all that had to be done for them was to build plywood floors and set them up! They are lightweight canvas civilian tents, 50’ x 30’ in size. Each one is designed to sleep sixty people. Seven tents this size were our temporary home, the area we came to know as “Tent City One” or “Desert Hooch.” At first, I shared a tent with more than fifty soldiers on Army cots. Within two months we had shifted to around 30 soldiers in the tent, with bunk beds for sleeping and for some personal storage space. Even a little extra space made life a lot more comfortable. In typical Army fashion, one of the few times we had drizzle was when we were shifting our gear from one tent to the other.

Our mission at Al Asad was to establish a General Support (GS) hub in Al Anbar Province. In layman’s terms, it is comparable to a huge wholesale storage area for just about every kind of item soldiers and Marines will need. The office I worked in was responsible for providing almost every type of supplies (except medical supplies) for the western quarter of Iraq. Food, water, ice, fuel, ammunition, vehicle repair parts, and other necessities were ordered, coordinated, received, inspected, followed up on, unloaded—and reported!—almost continuously.

Our job was more complicated than that of some units in Iraq because we started from the ground up. Hardy

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any existing Army organizational structure for this kind of mission was in place before my unit arrived. Getting assignments accomplished and making sense of the activities of Marine units, offices of Army higher headquarters and sister units, and Kellogg, Brown, and Root and other contractors made getting anything done challenging.

Unsurprisingly, Al Asad was a continual buzz of activity. Fighter planes took off, landed, and were repaired day and night. Truck convoys (of both military and civilian vehicles) were always coming or going. It seemed like there was always at least one helicopter in sight, including the occasional medevac choppers on their way to the post hospital. Four- and six-wheel ATVs, Army and Navy HUMVEEs, 5-ton Army trucks, 7-ton Marine trucks, SUVs, mini-trucks, vans, huge heavy equipment transporters and tractor trailer units, dump trucks, scrapers, forklifts, bicycles, and even a few motorcycles and scooters were all common on the streets of Al Asad. The civilian trailers often had French, Turkish, Jordanian, and Kuwaiti logos and addresses.

The regular ground convoys are the lifeblood of the base and the forward operating bases (FOBs) in the surrounding province. A constant flow of supplies is needed, and despite plenty of interruptions, most of the time the convoys make their deliveries or their return trips. A convoy is always on the road going somewhere. The convoys are the places where Marines or soldiers are most likely injured or killed. They are doing a difficult and dangerous job in a professional way and deserve far more appreciation than they get.

Both the library staff and the UMR Staff Council kept me well supplied with care packages while I was gone. I received a 2005 St. Pat’s sweatshirt, KUMR programs on CD, and plenty of snacks and candy, including “Rockin’ R” beef jerky strips courtesy of Ken Ragsdell. Those small touches of Missouri and home were deeply appreciated by me and my fellow soldiers.

Thanks to everyone who included me in their thoughts and prayers while I was gone. I must say a huge thank you to Maggie Trish, who served as interim director during my absence. She had very little advance warning, but made great progress on general library operations in my absence.
Ask Albert

My old ID number doesn’t work anymore when I try to request books or look at my library record. How do I access my library account information?

The library has a new ID format that patrons must use when checking their library account or requesting a book. The new format requires users at UMR to identify their campus by adding the letter “r” at the end of the ID number. When making a request, the complete entry will consist of “zero + 8 digit ID number + r.” So, for example, if your ID number was “12345678,” you would enter “012345678r.”

I’ve noticed signs asking me not to reshelve my books. Why not?

The library keeps statistics on how often its materials are used. Some of this information comes from circulation records that show how often a particular title is checked out. However, some materials don’t circulate at all (such as the books in the reference collection) and others tend to be used in the library as often as they are checked out (bound copies of journals, for example). In order to keep track of usage within the library, we need to shelve the items ourselves so that we can get a count of how often they’ve been taken off the shelf.

Do you charge fines for overdue books?

In certain situations you may have to pay fines for overdue materials. Reserve materials, for example, typically check out for limited periods of time. If you do not return a reserve item when it is due, you may be subject to fines of up to $3.20 per day. So it’s important to note when the item is due if you check out materials from Reserves.

Items that have been recalled for use by another patron are also subject to fines if they are not returned when due. If an item is recalled, the due date will be changed, and the borrower will be sent a notice about the changed date. If the material is not returned by the new due date, the patron will receive a fine of $.50 a day.

Patrons are billed when overdue items are not returned by 30 days after their due date. Even if the items are then returned, the library charges a $10 billing fee that will not be waived. MOBIUS charges a $20 billing fee, while billing fees for the other MERLIN libraries vary. UMR cannot waive fees charged by other libraries in the MOBIUS and MERLIN systems.

Where Are the Journals?: An Update

Last summer, Wilson Library began a major project: changing the call numbers on the bound journals on the third floor, integrating them with the larger collection of books throughout the library, and shifting the book collection to make space for the journals. That project will continue this semester, with an estimated completion date of some time this summer.

The changes to the lower level of the library are finished. It now houses books and bound journals with call numbers that range from A to PQ. The theses and dissertations are also found on this floor, at the very beginning of the collection. Many of the print reference indices with call numbers in this range (formerly found on the main floor) have also been integrated into the collection on the lower level.

The second floor is complete as well. Books and bound journals with call numbers ranging from PR to QD 70 are now located on the second floor. Also included on this floor is the library’s long run of Chemical Abstracts, an index that has been largely superseded by the SciFinder Scholar database.

Work on the third floor is proceeding. Ultimately, this floor will contain books and bound journals with call numbers ranging from QD 71 to Z, as well as many print indexes in this range that have been moved from the library’s main level. The unbound journals will remain in their former location on the third floor.

The staff of Wilson Library appreciates the patience of the faculty, staff, and students at UMR as we complete this lengthy and sometimes confusing shift in the location of our materials. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact the library’s director.

Tell Us What You Think!

Wilson Library is currently in the planning stages of a major redesign of our website, and we’re interested in YOUR ideas for the new site. If you have any suggestions, please email them to John Seguin (seguin@umr.edu). Please include “Website Redesign” in the subject line of your message.

“The important thing is not to stop questioning.”
— Albert Einstein
Scopus Trial Available

Wilson Library has trial access to the Scopus database through September 1, 2006. According to its homepage (at http://www.scopus.com/scopus/home.url), Scopus is the world’s largest abstracting and indexing database, offering access to 14,200 peer-reviewed titles from more than 4,000 publishers.

Scopus is a multidisciplinary database covering scientific, technical, medical, and social science literature. It contains records going back to the mid-1960s, with links to abstracts for all articles back to 1966. Links to article references are available for all articles back to 1996. Because of the addition of information about cited references, researchers can use the database to trace article citations since 1996. Links to full text content are also available, although the full text will not be accessible unless the library subscribes to the online versions of the journals.

The Scopus database is accessible via a link under “Electronic Resource Trials” on the library homepage. The library is interested in gathering user feedback about this database. Please let us know what you think by emailing John Seguin (seguin@umr.edu).

Search for Maps Online

UMR’s Wilson Library recently initiated a project with OCLC TechPro to provide catalog records for 150 maps of the state of Missouri. Some of these maps are frequently in demand, and some of them are old and rare, with great historical significance. Beginning in February, researchers and students will be able to view the records for these items remotely in our online catalog, making it easier for them to search for and find the maps they need.

This project is a result of the library’s commitment to provide increased access to the cartographic collection in the Alfred C. Spreng Map Room. The library would like to continue with this project on at least an annual basis, as funds permit.

Multimedia Center Update

Wilson Library is pleased to announce significant updates to the Emerson Multimedia Center’s computers for student, faculty, and staff use. Two new multimedia machines have been added, complete with video editing suites, dual LCD monitors, and DVD burners.

Our new Dual-Core Dell Pentium machine has the complete Adobe video editing suite, while the new Quad-Core Macintosh G5 has the complete Final Cut Studio HD suite. Both machines are available for immediate use. Future plans include the purchase of digital video cameras, which will be available for checkout.

If you are interested in using these resources and have questions about them, please contact John Seguin (seguin@umr.edu) for more information.