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Florida Library History Project

Florida Keys Community College

Just as the focus and physical aspects of Florida Keys Community College have changed since its doors opened in 1965, the Library and Learning Resources Center has seen dramatic changes in not only those who use its facilities, but what those persons want in the way of services.

FKCC is the smallest of Florida's 28 community colleges and is the most remote as it occupies a 100-acre site (with 80 percent under water) on Stock Island only a stone's throw across a channel from Key West at the end of the 125-mile Florida Keys. The college was established by the State Legislature in 1963 as Junior College District of Monroe County. It was two years later that the first classes, with 40 students, were held in the former Douglass High School. In 1968, not only was the name changed to Florida Keys Junior College but it moved to its present site on Stock Island, where a few buildings were built. Another name change came in 1970 as the college was designated Florida Keys Community College and, in 1980, the FKCC opened a Middle Keys Center at Marathon High and an Upper Keys Center at Coral Shores High.

In 1992, construction of a new campus began and, by December 1996, a state-of-the-art \$40 million facility was completed. The six-building campus was named after FKCC President William A. Seeker, who assumed his position in 1979. Enrollment now is around 3,000 a year and FKCC has a \$6 million annual operating budget and employs 123 faculty and staff.

FKCC offers associate in arts degrees, associate in science degree in areas such as business, computers, diving business, electronics, marine biology and propulsion, nursing, performing and visual arts and photography. Certificate programs are offered in business data processing, electronics engineering, marine propulsion, office systems, small business and emergency medical services. Adult vocational training academies are offered in law enforcement officer and correctional officer.

FKCC's library has grown with the college and a full-time librarian was first hired in 1967. Initially, there were only a limited number of books that were course-

related and general reference. By 1973, the library occupied three classrooms. The general collection was split between two of the rooms with a third serving as the main reference center and office for staff and desk operations. In 1976, the library was moved into its own facilities and its collection began to expand. While not always having a trained librarian on staff, the hiring of Librarian Maria Soule in 1980 allowed for major improvements to take place.

In 1993, the Library Information Network for Community Colleges (LINCC) replaced the old card catalog system giving users access to a much broader range of resources. The library also took on the designation as the Learning Resources Center to allow for a great diversity of services such as a computer lab, internet access, distance education through telecourses, as well as serving as Monroe County's only depository for federal government documents. There has been the addition of Southeast Florida Library and Information Network (SEFLIN) interlibrary loan services and a close working relationship between the FKCC library and the Monroe County Public Library system. The current collection totals around 30,000 with 170 periodicals.

The audio-visual services have grown from phonograph record and cassette tapes to video collections, CDS and CD-Roms. The LRC staff also coordinates satellite teleconferencing and downloading of special distance learning programs as well as originating production of FKCC promotional and instructional videos.

In 1996, when the new campus was constructed, the library was moved into spacious facilities offering borrowers not only more space for study and general reading, but a climate- controlled, well-lighted space that was appreciated for its quiet, relaxed atmosphere. The library/LRC also serves as a campus cultural center as a permanent Art Gallery is part of the new facility offering on-going exhibits including painting, sculpture, metal work, photography and clothing design.

While FKCC's library continues to be a resource center for students, staff and community, the rapidly-changing technologies have prompted expanded use of the library's computer lab for word processing and research as well as movements to make access to the internet resources faster and easier.

Library attendance has climbed to nearly 50,000 visits a year, while total circulation of materials inside and out of LRC facilities is around 21,000 annually.

Staff assistance with reference exceeds 20,000 a year, while interlibrary loans exceed 1,600 annually.