



Stafford made significant contributions to Zollinger Library

Staff Reports

After spending a nearly 42-year career in library sciences, Cecilia Stafford, M.L.S., will officially retire on Oct. 1, leaving a legacy of accomplishments that has impacted not only UNM-Gallup, but the New Mexico State University branch campus in Grants, as well as Tulane University, and the University of New Orleans.

“I began work at UNM-Gallup’s Zollinger Library on Aug. 1, 2016, after serving as library director at NMSU-Grants for 10 years,” Stafford explained. “I moved to New Mexico from New Orleans in Aug. 2006—one year after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast region—leaving my position as Associate Dean of Libraries at Tulane University, where I was employed for 21 years.”

Prior to her service at Tulane University, she worked as a public services librarian at the University of New Orleans following three years as a branch manager in the Jefferson Parish Public Library system beginning in July 1979 immediately after receiving a Master of Library Science degree from the University of Alabama.

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 08 October 2021 04:25

Her tenure at UNM-Gallup began with an immediate impact as she served as library coordinator for the Zollinger Library building expansion project, where Stafford worked with UNM's main campus architectural and construction planning staff, building contractors, and UNM-Gallup physical plant staff on the library's expansion and renovation. The expansion, which was funded through a statewide General Obligation bond, created the lower level of the library specifically for student study areas and expansion of the library collection.

"I also helped launch the 'Book of Giving Tree,'" Stafford said. "Children's books were collected through donations for distribution to children attending the campus holiday celebration.

"Library staff gift-wrapped the books to hand out to children of all ages and to assist children who created their own 'Lobos Love Reading' bookmarks adorned with 'I Love Reading' stickers, tassels, and colored pens and crayons." she said.

She said that expanding access to electronic databases, journals, and reference sources that support student and faculty research is one of the accomplishments she is most proud of during her time at UNM-Gallup, along with improving off-site access to online resources through use of a proxy server that provides a simple gateway to most library resources using a UNM netID and password.

Stafford was also instrumental in improving the library's presence on the UNM-Gallup website by adding many useful resources that include a writer and speaker toolkit that provides an open access assignment calculator designed to help students stay on track with their research; online access to the most respected citation manuals and writer guides used at colleges and universities nationwide; and adding links to open access videos that guide students in their preparation of in-person and online presentations.

During the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Stafford helped design and implement an online appointment system that allowed library staff to provide in-building use of the Zollinger Library, except during periods when McKinley County was locked down. "Even when library use was limited, library staff continued to offer curbside service for pick-up of print materials and WiFi hotspots," she pointed out.

Stafford also worked with the Faculty Library Committee and Carmen Wellborn, senior Web

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designer at UNM-Gallup, to create the Experts' Corner on the library's webpage. "This resource is designed as a searchable database to connect those on campus who need to consult an expert with those on campus who have the needed skills and research interests," she stated with pride.

Stafford's awards include serving as president of the UNM-Gallup Faculty Assembly for the 2018-2019 academic year and was selected as the Academic Librarian of the Year in 2019-2020 by the New Mexico Consortium of Academic Libraries. This prestigious award is given annually to a member of NMCAL in recognition of significant accomplishments in academic librarianship.

Stafford plans to continue to live in Gallup with her husband of 35 years. "My plans include growing flowers, fruits, and vegetables on our half-acre downtown property," she said. "We'll make frequent trips and have overnight stays at our log cabin in the Zuni Mountains; take camping and sight-seeing trips throughout the Four Corners in our pop-top camper van; and I will dabble in creating Southwestern and mountain-themed stained-glass panels and sun catchers to sell at art and flea markets throughout the region."