Robots in the Library: Automated Storage & Retrieval Systems

Lowell Walters
*Associate Dean of Library Technologies & Collection Services*

Tom Fesmire
*Head, Cataloging & Metadata Services*

Gregory A. Smith
*Director, Management Information Services*

In 2011 Liberty University decided to build a new library on an aggressive schedule. The timeline from decision to occupancy took less than 36 months. We wanted our library to look less like this . . .
... and more like this ...
Our consultant encouraged us to consider 3 collection storage options:
The big issue was whether to house our least used materials in an automated storage/retrieval system (ASRS).
We decided to include an ASRS in our new building, housing most of our collection there.
This choice enabled us to devote the vast majority of our new building to house people rather than resources.
As a result, our new building can seat 2,300 users and accommodate future collection growth. Spaces and furnishings support both individual and group activities.
Some of the distinctive features of our ASRS deployment were:

- 70+% of the total library holdings
- Pre-loaded bins
- 1st library deployment for vendor
- ASRS as technological showpiece

Getting the customized warehouse control software to interface with our Ex Libris Voyager system required some “hacking.” This is illustrated in the catalog display:
Like us, many libraries are seeing a drop in materials circulation:
We envision that more libraries will consider the ASRS option for storage of older, less popular materials. Come to our session to find out what we learned from our experience.