



October 2, 2000

Donald J. Kenney, Chair
Promotion and Continued Appointment Committee
University Libraries
Virginia Tech

Dear Mr. Kenney:

With this letter I invite the University Libraries' Promotion and Continued Appointment Committee to evaluate my qualifications for promotion to professor on the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Accompanying this letter are [my curriculum vitae](#) and most recent job description, a [summary of relevant activities](#) from 1993 to the present, a list of references, copies of publications and presentations, and a sampling of letters of appreciation.

Seven years have passed since my successful application for promotion to associate professor, and I believe that I have met the criteria for promotion to professor as described in the library's [Procedures on Promotion and Continued Appointment](#) (revised 2000). I became the director of the Scholarly Communications Project in December 1993, accepted responsibility for the Special Collections Department in late 1995, and merged the two units under a single name, Digital Library and Archives, in July 1999. During this period, I made significant contributions to the library, the university community, and the profession.

I have contributed to the library and to the university by helping to establish new online services and resources. When I became the head of the Scholarly Communications Project it had five journals online. Since then I have extended the roster to 21 current publications. I have also played a significant role in establishing, improving, and maintaining the library's online course materials service (EReserve), the digital image database (VT ImageBase), and the university's electronic theses and dissertations initiative (ETDs), among other activities.

During my tenure as head of Special Collections I have directly contributed to improved services and resources. I successfully promoted the transition to everyday use of new technologies among all department personnel while maintaining traditional resources, processes, and services. The Reading Room also became an Internet access point so that patrons could use Special Collections on the Web. I established standards for digitizing images.

By collaborating with colleagues at Virginia Tech and VIVA, I helped the department get funding from sources outside the university to support our activities. These include digital library grants funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation, as well as a National Endowment for the Humanities, and funds from VIVA for digitizing images.

Through my work at University Libraries, I have established a very good professional reputation. I have had articles accepted for publication and papers accepted for presentation at national conferences. I actively participated in professional organizations through service on committees, editorial boards, and institutes. I received invitations to make conference presentations from international, national, regional, and state professional organizations. I am also frequently

invited to other universities to share my expertise in digital library services and resources, and to write for scholarly journals and books.

Through publications and presentations I share my philosophy that digital libraries should not be separate from libraries. Many researchers working on digital libraries fail to consider the broad range of services and resources that libraries provide. As a result, their digital library projects largely develop only search and retrieval systems that lack a service component and the breadth of resources available in a variety of formats in university libraries.

Merging two radically different units such as Special Collections and Scholarly Communications has been challenging. My supervisory responsibilities increased considerably with the merger but because they are knowledgeable personnel who know their responsibilities, we have set priorities and accomplished a tremendous amount by working cooperatively. Balancing the special handling and storage necessary for rare and unique materials and budgetary and space constraints led to difficult decisions. Without having the resources to actively further develop exemplary areas of the Special Collections, I have focussed largely on improving access to the materials already in the unit. To do this, I initiated new workflow processes that make our unique resources known to researchers through the Web.

I have been fortunate to have a role in the library and the university that has allowed me to learn about new technology and new scholarship and to take what I have learned and turn it into useful library services and resources that universities around the state, the nation, and the world seek to emulate. I believe that I have met the criteria necessary for promotion to professor.

Sincerely,

Gail McMillan
Associate Professor
Director, Digital Library and Archives