



TURNING THE PAGE

*A librarian
embraces
the digital
revolution*

by Colin Plonop

"I'm not scared about the future of libraries," said Deb Ward.

As director of the University of Missouri's J. Otto Lottes Health Sciences Library, Ward can understand why you might think she would be nervous, though. After all, with Kindles and iPads, Google and Facebook, who has time to go to the library these days? At first blush, it's easy to think that libraries are obsolete. Ward has a secret, though.

"We have more patrons than ever," she said.

Although the number of people walking through the library doors has declined during the past decade, electronic visits to Ward's library have more than made up the difference. Each day, hundreds of faculty, students, clinicians and researchers scour the library website for a wealth of health information. Since 2000, the health sciences library website has ballooned from fewer than 5,000 hits a year to approximately 250,000.

As the library celebrates its 25th anniversary in its newest home, Ward and the other library staff marvel at how their library has changed.

During the past three decades, changes in technology have come much faster than changes to their brick-and-mortar facilities. In fact, the library began its first major renovation in October 2011. The renovation is designed to make the library better fit modern technology and the changing needs of the people who use it. It will dedicate more space to computers and study space, and it will condense the enormous first-floor book shelves into a smaller area.

By the time Ward arrived at MU, the health sciences library had already resided in its current home for a dozen years. Diane Johnson, a 31-year veteran of the library staff,