

10-1-2012

## Georgia Library Spotlight - Irvine Sullivan Ingram Library, University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia

E. Lorene Flanders  
*University of West Georgia, lflander@westga.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq>

---

### Recommended Citation

Flanders, E. Lorene (2012) "Georgia Library Spotlight - Irvine Sullivan Ingram Library, University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 49 : Iss. 4 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol49/iss4/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia Library Quarterly by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu).

# GLA SPOTLIGHT

## **Irvine Sullivan Ingram Library University of West Georgia Carrollton, Georgia**

Imagine an Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) school preparing students for farming and other rural occupations transformed into a university that was named one of the Best Southeastern Colleges by the Princeton Review and one of America's Best Value Colleges. Today, this is the image of the University of West Georgia, a doctoral-granting destination institution whose academic heart is the recently-transformed Irvine Sullivan Ingram Library.

In 1906, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Perry Act, creating an A&M school in each of the state's twelve congressional districts. With strong local support, Carrollton secured the Fourth District A&M School, which opened under the leadership of its first principal, John H. Melson. Melson's wife Penelope volunteered as the school's librarian. Appropriating a linen closet, Penelope Melson organized 325 donated volumes. During its first century, the Agricultural and Mechanical school became a junior college, then a four-year college, and finally a doctoral-granting university. Likewise, its library evolved from a 1908 linen closet to a classroom, to a WPA-funded structure, and then to the present 1968 building, which was expanded in 1980.

In 2011, University of West Georgia completed an \$8 million library renovation, transforming an aging building into a sleek and technologically-enhanced twenty-first century research facility that also houses a Starbucks bistro. The library expanded student work space and added additional classrooms, study rooms, and office suites for faculty and staff through



the use of compact shelving and by expanding electronic collections to reduce the collection footprint.

Students can check out laptops with Wi-Fi access or watch documentaries using one of the flat screen monitors that display digital signage featuring information such as research tips and program announcements when idle. Throughout the main floor, glass whiteboards facilitate group work. 24/5 library hours, enlivened by the Friday Night LIVE series featuring local music groups; nationally-touring exhibits; poetry readings; book discussion groups; and lectures make this colorful, modernized, and interactive research facility a hotspot for students and challenge old notions about what a library is and should be. At UWG, the library is frankly—cool.

Support for student learning was at the heart of planning for the renovation. Ingram Library's instruction program is unique in reaching hundreds of students each semester through a for-credit course that is part of the university's core curriculum. Students who complete LIBR 1101 typically have higher grade point averages, retention and graduation rates than those of students who do not take the course. The

university's EXCEL Center offers evening tutoring sessions in library classrooms, enhancing academic support outreach during the evenings. 24/7 chat reference is available, and student tech assistants are available to meet on-site patron needs.

A centerpiece of the renovation project was the re-creation of the State Capital Office of Speaker Thomas B. Murphy, who served continuously as speaker of a state house of representatives longer than any individual in the nation's history. The library's Annie Belle Weaver Special Collections houses his papers, but Speaker Murphy's office includes the original furniture and memorabilia—including his stuffed bobcat and hundreds of gifts from constituents—that he gathered during more than four decades of service in the Georgia House of Representatives, which he led from 1974 until 2002. The library takes particular pride in offering experiential learning opportunities for graduate students who work with its archival collections and who have helped develop the exhibits.

Adjacent to the Murphy Reading Room is the Center for Civic Engagement, which promotes social responsibility and public service through research, scholarship, and culturally-enriching programs and exhibits. The library's programming mission is also supported by the Penelope Melson Society, a friends group organized in 2008 in honor of the library's centennial. The Melson Society supports exhibits, lectures, author visits, and musical performances that have drawn thousands of visitors to campus from the community and local schools. These programs offer students opportunities to learn, as well as to interact with people of all ages and backgrounds from the West Georgia region. Through its welcoming facility, collections, services, and programs, Ingram Library supports student success and promotes the role of libraries in lifelong learning.

To learn more about the Ingram Library, please visit our website at <http://www.westga.edu/library>.

*Photo credit: Xiaojuan You, University Communications and Marketing*