Bender of Twigs

Muhammad Usmani

Muhammad Aamir Usmani joined University Libraries in February 1997 as a Micro Systems Support Technician with the title Library Systems Manager. As a 1992 WSU graduate in Computer Science, Usmani was already familiar with the University and quickly set about making a positive impact. In his first year, Muhammad was tasked with fixing several newer technology items that had never quite worked properly. His first major project was establishing a local area network (LAN) to provide public PCs access to library journal databases provided on CD-ROMs. As both telecommunications and library input were required for the success of this project, Usmani quickly developed positive relationships within and outside of the library. Many of these relationships still exist today. During this first project, his new library colleagues discovered they had gained a partner who was tenacious in troubleshooting, collegial in seeking input, and dedicated towards improving library services. The success of the early project also foreshadowed how Usmani would become a major contributor in the transitioning library services into the growing digital environment. His supervisor, Associate Dean James Eller, understood Usmani's potential impact, writing in his first evaluation that "After years of not having anyone with Usmani's automation skills on the staff, the library must make every effort to retain him." Usmani's 25 years with the University Libraries indicates the library leadership over the years has whole-heartedly agreed with this early assessment and Usmani's importance to the University Libraries.

Throughout the years, Usmani has had several titles that reflected his growing responsibilities. At one point his talents were shared with University Computing where he provided oversight to HelpDesk and student laboratory activities. In each of his roles, including his current one as Director of Library Technologies, Usmani contributed to and guided the transformation of technology infrastructure and introduction of new public and staff services. Within the University Libraries, he helped with the transition from IBM 3270 terminals to PCs, created the University's first installation of a non-Apple-based WiFi network, was an early adopter of public PC authentication, was the first to provide card-based public printing, the first to provide public scanners, add 3D printing, and was essential to the University Libraries' success as it moved systems from mainframe-based, to server-based, and now more and more to cloud-based.

Throughout his time with the University Libraries, Usmani understood the power of applied learning. He was and is a strong advocate for adding and having graduate and student assistants as members of the libraries' technology services team. Over the years, he has mentored over 150 graduate assistants who have gone on to be productively employed throughout the country and world. These students stay in contact with him sharing the news of their lives. As one former graduate assistant recently said, "He is one of those unique people who nurtured and guided me whenever I needed it."

Beyond his professional responsibilities, Usmani has been generous with his service commitments. He extended his support of student growth through his long-time service as advisor to the WSU Muslim Students Association and Pakistani Student Association. He has served on numerous university committees including the IT Advisory Committee, the WIN Portal Committee, the LUMINUS content management team, Library Web-Page redesign team, and the President's Diversity Council.

I can't believe that 25 years have passed! It has been a true privilege and honor to have Usmani as my colleague. Muhammad, thank you for your many years of service. Congratulations on being inducted into the Order of Bender of the Twigs!

WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

Kathy A. Downes
Dean of University Libraries