

KENDON LEE STUBBS

*Citation upon the Presentation of the
Thomas Jefferson Award*

October 30, 1998

Mr. Rector, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

When Thomas Jefferson built the Academical Village, he placed the library at the head of the Lawn, in the Rotunda. He believed the library was central to the academic enterprise. Kendon Stubbs, Deputy University Librarian, for nearly forty years has built on that belief and positioned the library as a full partner in the educational process. His “long-standing record of commitment to the University, coupled with his unflagging intellectual energy for innovation” are unparalleled in research libraries, and the University of Virginia has benefited from a lifetime of service from this unique and multi-talented individual. He is a man of astonishing breadth, talents, and achievements whose diversity of interests and expertise span English and Japanese literature, and Virginia horticulture. His versatility and catholicity would have earned the respect of Jefferson himself.

A native of Washington, D.C., Kendon Stubbs earned degrees from St. John's College, the University of Virginia, and Columbia University. Since the early 1960s, Mr. Stubbs has worked in virtually every part of the library and has overseen the growth of the University's collections from just over 1 million to 4.5 million volumes. In the early years, Kendon Stubbs worked to build the circulating and special collections, often making unusual acquisitions possible in support of scholarship. He developed new library services, continually striving to serve better the University's students and faculty. But, far more important, he always has been an innovator and visionary, seeking and succeeding at every turn to improve collections and services. His crowning achievement has come in this decade with his development of U.Va.'s digital library. The Electronic Text Center, founded in 1992, is now internationally recognized and accessed over one million times per month by people all over the world.

Thomas Jefferson wrote to Robert Fulton in 1810: “I am not afraid of new inventions or improvements, nor bigoted to the practices of our forefathers ... Where a new invention is supported by well-known principles, and promises to be useful, it ought to be tried.” Over nearly four decades, Kendon has recognized and adapted new technologies to provide the best possible service to the University - often while colleagues elsewhere watched from the sidelines. He also recruited many undergraduates and graduate students to work in the libraries, serving as a mentor for young scholars and librarians who have gone on to their own successes in the field. Kendon Stubbs has also earned national recognition for his work on statistical measures of library effectiveness and his work on user surveys. He has held key appointments in the Association of Research Libraries and the American Library Association.

Kendon Stubbs shuns public notice and is quick to share credit with others for his own ideas, innovations, and accomplishments. Faculty who have worked with him describe his impact: “He has been a key figure at the University for decades ... We turned to Kendon not only for advice, but to get things done.” And, “Kendon looks at technology as one of the ways to achieve an educated citizenry.”

One of Mr. Stubbs’ most distinctive qualities is his immense enthusiasm for the new venture. As an admirer from another university put it: “Kendon is a keen-eyed observer of several worlds - his own University, the world of research libraries, the world of scholarly communication, and others beside. His gift is to manage the details without letting go of, and indeed while constantly refreshing, the strategic vision.”

To the University’s great benefit, this quiet, unassuming visionary has spent his entire professional life shaping the library of tomorrow.

In an 1815 letter to John Adams, Mr. Jefferson wrote, “I cannot live without books.” Thanks to Kendon Stubbs, fewer people will have to try.

It is with great pleasure that I present the 1998 Thomas Jefferson Award to Kendon Lee Stubbs.

John T. Casteen III
President