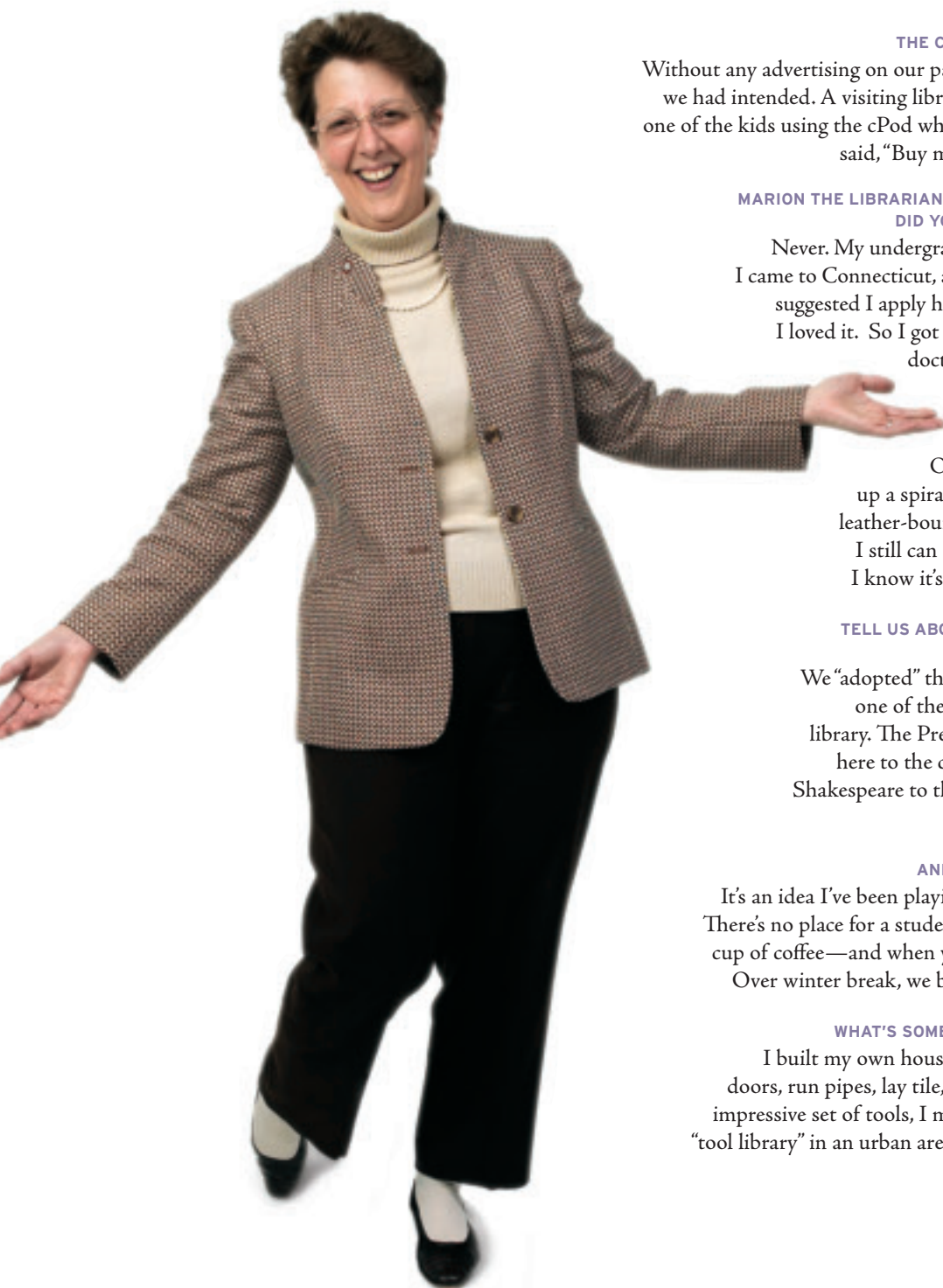


# Randi Ashton-Pritting M'98, EdD'03

## The Mastermind behind Mortensen

Randi Ashton-Pritting, director of University libraries, doesn't take no for an answer. When a furniture manufacturer told her it would be impossible to translate her idea—a work space where several students could collaborate, using multiple keyboards hooked up to a single computer screen—into a viable design, she wasn't deterred.

Unveiled this past fall, Mortensen Library's two cPods (see photo, p. 9) are already very popular. But cPods are just one of several unusual brainchildren from Ashton-Pritting, a 27-year veteran of Mortensen Library whose enthusiasm and innovation seem to have redefined the term university library.



### THE CPODS CAUGHT ON AWFULLY FAST, DIDN'T THEY?

Without any advertising on our part, the students started using them exactly as we had intended. A visiting librarian from another college stopped and asked one of the kids using the cPod what he would do to improve it, and the student said, "Buy more." I'm hoping to get funding for two more.

### MARION THE LIBRARIAN FROM *THE MUSIC MAN* WAS NOTHING LIKE YOU. DID YOU ALWAYS DREAM OF BECOMING A LIBRARIAN?

Never. My undergraduate degree is in textile chemistry. But when I came to Connecticut, a friend of mine who worked at the University suggested I apply here. They plopped me down in the library, and I loved it. So I got my master's in library science and ultimately a doctorate in education. I became director in 2002.

### WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE BOOK AS A CHILD?

Believe it or not, it was *Don Quixote*.

One day when I was about 10 years old, I went up a spiral staircase at the library and found a gorgeous leather-bound book with the most beautiful illustrations. I still can recall the smell, the size...everything about it. I know it's an odd book for a kid to love—but that's me.

### TELL US ABOUT ANOTHER INNOVATIVE LIBRARY PROGRAM—THE PRESIDENT'S COLLEGE.

We "adopted" the President's College about a year ago, and it's one of the best things that's happened to the University library. The President's College offers adult education classes here to the community on a broad range of subjects, from Shakespeare to the environment. They're a great group, and all the profits go to the library!

### AND NOW THERE WILL BE A CAFÉ IN THE LIBRARY?

It's an idea I've been playing with for the better part of five or six years. There's no place for a student studying in the library late at night to get a cup of coffee—and when you're studying that late, you need something. Over winter break, we began to convert part of the library into a café.

### WHAT'S SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I built my own house with my husband, Bill. I can hang windows, doors, run pipes, lay tile, paint. I have my own toolbox—with a pretty impressive set of tools, I might add. When I retire, I'm going to set up a "tool library" in an urban area to loan out tools to struggling homeowners.

Cool or what? ■