

Library Self-study Reports from Departments

Media Lab

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Name of reporting department

Name of coordinator

Names of other staff involved in unit self-study process

1) Description of department or service

The Media Lab is a do-it-yourself facility that provides the equipment and space for producing media materials in various formats for class or personal use. Production processes and services currently supported by the Media Lab include, among others, audio recording, analog-digital conversion of audio media, cassette duplication, lamination, dry mounting, scanning, CD-burning, color copying/printing, and the creation of slides. Digital still and film cameras can be checked out by qualifying users. Written instructions for how to use the various pieces are provided; staff assistance is also available.

2) Who is served

Primarily, the Media Lab serves UWSP students and faculty/staff from across campus. Some professors send their students to the Media Lab for class projects. Members of the larger community (especially K-12 teachers) also take advantage of the services offered.

3) Staffing

a. Levels and numbers

- One Supervisor (faculty)—PhD in Education, MLIS in Library Science, MS in Special Education; four years of college-level teaching in educational foundations; nine years of work experience in an academic library; no background/training in multimedia production.
- One full-time staff member in charge of the daily operation (LSA Senior)—MS in Media Technology; 27 years of work experience in the Media Lab.
- Six part-time Student Assistants—trained in-house.

b. Sufficient to meet service needs?

For the most part, staffing is sufficient to support the services currently offered. Through cooperation with the immediately adjacent Instructional Material Center (IMC), and the flexibility that comes with the cross-training of some of the student workers, adequate service level is being maintained even during periods of staff shortages (break-time, annual and sick leave). Only at times of turn-over among the student workers (typically at the beginning of the academic year) might services and hours be temporarily reduced.

c. Well-qualified and trained?

Lacking expertise and training in the area of media production, as well as the time to pursue such, the current supervisor, while able to handle the status quo, is unable to provide the vision and leadership to move the Media Lab forward into the 21st century.

4) Facilities

The facilities are adequate. There is ample room for a group of students to work. A separate small room has been used as recording studio.

5) Technology

For the services currently offered, the technology is adequate—with three exceptions:

- (1) The color/copier is aging and, with spare parts difficult to get, will not last much longer.
- (2) Voyager's Media Scheduler, which the Media Lab uses for the circulation of the digital cameras, has not lived up to its promises. With its current settings, it does not allow users to make reservations online.
- (3) While most UWSP students use IBM-compatible PCs, computer applications are made available only on a Mac platform.

6) Supporting statistics

Patronage Statistics, June – November 2007

	Students	University	Community	Total
Lamination	69	94	85	248
Dry mount	47	6	11	64
Transparency	6	1	0	7
Audio recording	21	7	3	31
Print (b/w & banner)	5	1	0	6
Color copy/printer	13	14	24	51
Digital still/movie camera check-outs	55	3	3	61
Computer (misc. use)	47	14	16	77
Office equipment (cutters, staplers, etc.) ⁴		11	9	24
Other (opaque projector, etc.)	3	13	0	16
Totals	270	164	151	
Grand total				585

7) Results of recent assessment activities

Service awareness and use: Statements made by faculty members of the School of Education (SOE) during a recent focus group (January 2008) indicated much unawareness about the Media Lab's services. That such unawareness is not limited to the SOE faculty was brought to light by the recent campus-wide faculty and student surveys (February 2008). Of the faculty respondents, 48% indicated that they were either hardly aware or not aware at all about the services offered by the Media Lab, 71% that they never use it, and 76% that they never suggest to students to use its services. It thus does not come as a surprise that 63% of the responding students had no or hardly any knowledge about the Media Lab. Only 19% had used it two times or more during the past year.

Users, usage and user satisfaction (point-of-service user survey, Dec. 2007): With only 17 respondents (despite a two-week survey period), the available data are sparse and any generalizations should be done with caution. With one exception, all respondents were students, the majority of whom were very satisfied with both "today's" and previous services—with regard to promptness, helpfulness of staff, helpfulness of written instruction, equipments and overall quality. Not one respondent checked any of the dissatisfied or very dissatisfied boxes. Among the reasons stated for using the Media Lab, work on a class assignment or a personal project were most frequently mentioned. Five respondents use the Media Lab primarily for preparing teaching materials.

8) Special projects underway or major changes being implemented

In close cooperation with other units/departments (IT, Communication Dept., Dept. of Computing and New Media Technology), the Media Lab recently (fall 2007) took on the role of a depository of digital

still and video cameras, available for check-out to qualifying users in specific courses. We are still in the process of ironing out some of the bugs.

9) Goals or desired directions of the unit

Confronted with external changes in media production technology and some (vague) criticism of being outmoded, the Media Lab is seeking to take on new roles. The two recent attempts to collaborate with other departments/units have been only partially successful. The SOE made it clear that they are not interested in the Media Lab getting involved in portfolio production. The recently added digital camera circulation function clearly meets a demand. However, while circulation has increased this semester, a major expansion of this service seems unlikely.

A recent search was conducted for media production services provided elsewhere on campus—services in support of academic programs or end-user service that enhances other media initiatives—in order to determine what is lacking. One currently unmet need was identified: support for students who need to incorporate multi-media components into their assignments and projects by providing suitable equipment (upgraded PCs and Macs) and software for multi-media production (I-Movie, Final Cut Express, various Web authoring tools, etc.). Training and hands-on support is also necessary to support the general student population as they design assignments and projects. Current and anticipated changes in staffing provide the opportunity to retool and meet these needs. If approved, an Instruction and Multi-Media Librarian (proposed position to be created through the conversion of a recently vacated classified staff position) would provide the expertise and leadership needed to revamp the Multi-Media Lab and its services. In close collaboration with the Instruction and Multi-media Librarian, a new highly qualified classified staff manager would replace the current manager (who has retirement plans).

10) Other information

For staffing purposes, the Media Lab collaborates closely with the Instructional Material Center (IMC), with which it shares the northern half of the Library's 3rd floor. The Media Lab, like other special Library departments, has more limited hours open (M-Th: 7:45 am - 9:00 pm; Fri: 7:45 am - 4:00 pm; Sat: 1:00 - 4:00 pm; Sun 6:00 – 9:00 pm) than the Library as a whole.

The money for equipment upgrades and supplies is generated through the sale of consumables (blank CDs, DVDs, transparencies) and charges for some of the services (such as the color copier).

11) SWOT analysis of department – see attachment.



Department: **Media Lab**

Participants: **Axel Schmetzke, Jim Maas, and Kathy Davis**

S.W.O.T. Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS (Internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffed operation with ample space • Provides some production services not available elsewhere on campus • Supports some programs through the circulation of equipment • In-house resource for print & design products 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES (Internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly marketed • Declining utilization (due to change in technology) • Lack of usage statistics that justify the various services • McIntosh platform confusing to some users • Current supervisor lacks expertise in multi-media production
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES (External)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmet needs for training and tech support on campus (in certain niches) • Retirement of staff (time for renewal) • Collaborative campus-wide planning encouraged by UWSP administration 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS (External)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in technology • Retirement of staff (and possible loss of position) • Declining/stagnating budget campus-wide • Perception of administration that services are outdated

Strengths:

The Media Lab provides the equipment for media production not elsewhere available on campus (such as the laminator, the dry-mounting machine and the CD-tape duplicator). The space is sufficient to accommodate a group of students working collaborative on a project. In addition, the Media Lab provides support to some programs through the circulation of equipment (for the most part, digital still and video cameras). The staff in charge of the Media Lab is available to assist other Library staff with print and design projects.

Weaknesses:

Survey outcomes indicate a low awareness about the Media Lab and its services and equipment across campus. Changes in technology, enabling students and faculty to produce a variety of media types with their personal computers, has lead to a decline in the Media Lab’s utilization. With the majority of

students and faculty using IBM-PC machines, the Media Lab's McIntosh computer, powerful as it may be, leaves some users frustrated. The current library faculty supervisor lacks expertise in multi-media production. His plate already full with other responsibilities, he is not in a position to provide more than a minimum of supervision.

Opportunities:

Preliminary discussions with other media-producing services on campus have revealed one particular need that is not met elsewhere on campus: support for students who seek to incorporate multi-media components into their assignments and projects by providing suitable equipment (upgraded PCs and Macs), software for multi-media production (i-movie, Final Cut Express, various Web authoring tools, etc.), training and hands-on support. With the current classified staff manager soon to retire and a new Instruction and Multi-Media Librarian position to be created through conversion (if approved), the focus of the Media Lab could be rethought and redirected. A new classified staff manager could be recruited whose particular skill set matches the new services to be provided. A highly qualified supervisor could provide the necessary leadership and innovation--in close consultation and collaboration with IT and other suitable units on campus.

Threats:

Changes in technology, which have already led to a reduced utilization of the Media Lab, may ultimately catapult it out of existence entirely. With the Media Lab staff person rapidly approaching retirement age, and his replacement being uncertain in the current budgetary situation, the Media Lab may not have the staff to continue its operation. Perceiving the current Media Lab's services as outmoded, the administration may take the retirement of its current staff as an opportunity to close it down.