**Environmental Scan**  
UWSP University Library – January 2009

The purpose of the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point University Library environmental scan is to support and inform the strategic planning process. A comprehensive environmental scan surveys key developments within and outside the library profession, the university community, and larger social, technological, economic, and political trends. The UWSP University Library’s environmental scan provides information on:

- System-wide and University vision and priorities
- UWSP Demographics
- National University Library Trends
  - Technology
  - Collections
  - Outreach/Collaboration
  - Facilities
  - Services
  - Assessment
  - Library Leadership/Organization

**System-wide and University visions and priorities**
As a vital part of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, the University Library seeks to further the University’s efforts to fulfill UWSP vision 2015 and annual goals. As part of the Consortium of University of Wisconsin Libraries (CUWL), the UWSP University Library seeks to fulfill our role in achieving the system-wide “One System One Library” vision to maintain and improve collections and achieve efficient services in an environment of flat or reduced budgets and rapidly increasing costs.

**Demographics**
The UWSP University Library serves an undergraduate and graduate student body of approximately 8,700 students. Students attending UWSP are primarily Wisconsin residents with an average age of 21.5 and approximately 40% of the student body lives on campus. The University Library also serves a faculty population of approximately 400. In addition to the campus community, the University Library serves Wisconsin residents and makes resources available to state-wide users through Interlibrary Loan and Universal Borrowing.

**Library Trends**

**Technology**

Students and faculty demand increasing access to resources and expect a robust digital library integrated into a variety of systems. Library systems have not kept pace with advances in other information systems and do not supply the seamless access that users expect. In addition, there is an expectation that
information technology will continue to evolve and demands for technology-related services and technology-rich user environments will continue to grow.

- The library is only part of the infosphere and is often not the starting point.
  - Users seek information from a variety of places, including (but not limited to) the library. Users typically begin at a search engine (mainly Google).
  - Libraries link to tools and resources from outside places in order to draw users into the library environment.
- Rapidly changing technology trends will drive how libraries make available their resources.
  - Mobile technologies
  - Personalization, Specialization and Compartmentalization – libraries need to synthesize information from multiple sources and interfaces, specialize it for particular uses and mobilize it for a personalized user experience.
  - Integration of new resource discovery tools and a changing role for the OPAC - including uncontrolled vocabularies, tagging - libraries will need to synthesize controlled vocabulary structures with unstructured tagging/folksonomy.
  - Online social networking – leverage the increased use of and the library’s role in these unique learning environments.

**Collections**

In an increasingly digital world, users expect access to library collections anywhere and at anytime. These expectations impact how libraries select, process, and provide access to collections. These decisions are being made in an environment facing rapid growth in the amount of information available and a decline in available funding.

- There is an increased emphasis on digitizing collections.
  - Libraries are becoming involved as creators.
  - Digital formats are changing publishing models, service models, and copyright issues.
  - Migrating from print to digital formats calls for new service models and also affects the library as place.
  - Shifting priorities from on-site library collections to the design and delivery of library services. Print materials are being moved from prime library space and these spaces are increasingly being used to support collaborative learning and interactive learning areas.
- Collection development is in part guided by CUWL initiatives:
  - Exploring article purchasing to enhance faculty research.
  - Providing cooperative digital repositories and collections (Minds@UW and UWDC).
  - Increasing shared system resources to meet research needs of students and faculty.
  - Developing a shared electronic collection that spans beyond the UW system.
  - Reexamining collection development practices system-wide and on individual campuses.
  - Developing remote storage facilities.
- Difficult budget situations call for increased accountability and assessment of library collections.
Outreach/Collaboration

Libraries increasingly need to collaborate with other information providers including campus units, other libraries, and national online information providers. The library cannot expect users to build their workflow around the library – the library must reach out into existing workflows.

- Need for increased library visibility and branding by promoting value added services and resources
- Collaborative library initiatives include:
  - Promoting library services and resources in campus initiatives.
  - Expanding the library presence in campus portals, course management systems, social networking sites and increased collaboration with faculty for specialized course support.
  - Digitizing resources and enhancing access to online information.
  - Collaborating with other academic libraries to provide enhanced services.
  - Opportunities for the Library and IT to collaborate.
  - Seeking alliances with public libraries, library consortia and the K-12 community.
  - Collaborating with other community partners, such as businesses and nonprofit organizations.

Facilities

Over the past five years academic libraries have made dramatic changes in their facilities to accommodate new trends in technology and services. Academic libraries are now emphasizing the library as a physical space for students and faculty to study, conduct research, write papers, practice presentations, hold meetings, and to take a break.

- Academic libraries are changing their facilities to accommodate a higher demand for technology.
- Academic libraries are creating innovative collaborative study spaces and meeting rooms equipped with computers and other high tech media equipment.
- Library classrooms are designed for collaborative work and are equipped with the latest teaching technology.
- Special accommodations are being created for faculty and graduate student research and production.
- Service desks for traditional library services and other services, such as tutoring and IT help, are in very close proximity to each other. Typically these service points are all on the same floor.
- Service desks are being consolidated to provide users with convenient access to help.
- Recreational facilities such as coffee shops and gaming centers are being created in libraries.
- Library book and bound periodical collections are being weeded and moved to stacks (periodicals), basements, and off-site storage facilities to make room for collaborative work areas, study spaces, tutoring centers, multimedia equipment, coffee shops, and teaching facilities.
- Exhibition, performance, and meeting spaces have been created in academic libraries.
Services

The Learning Commons concept has had a profound influence on library services over the past five years. Academic libraries are merging service points, blending traditional library services with technology and tutoring services, and even offering some recreational services. These changes in services have made academic libraries the epicenter of academic achievement on university campuses across the country.

- Academic libraries are including and integrating services beyond traditional library services such as tutoring, writing centers, and technology support and instruction.
- Academic libraries are promoting and delivering traditional library research and instructional services more aggressively.
- Academic libraries are consolidating service points to provide easy “one stop service” to users.
- Academic library services are becoming increasingly available online for the benefit of distance education and residential students:
  - By integrating services into course management sites (D2L, Blackboard) and web portals such as MyUW (Madison)
- Library instruction is less general, is increasingly aimed at specific projects or classes and is more integrated into the overall academic program.

Assessment

Higher education is increasingly viewed as a business, bringing calls for assessment, accountability and quantitative measures of library contributions to the research, teaching and service missions of the university. Users increasingly view themselves as customers and demand facilities, resources and services attuned to their needs and concerns.

- Difficult budget situations have increased demand for accountability and quantitative demonstration of positive impact on student graduation rates and retention.
- Develop a culture of shared purpose and continuous improvement through outcomes-based assessment.
- Participate in campus and system assessment initiatives.

Library Leadership/Organization

The library as an organization and the leadership of that organization is being impacted by the continual change in the way libraries think about collections and services. In today’s environment of rapid change and flat budgets, it is important that libraries remain flexible and responsive to current trends.

- The skill set for librarians is continually evolving, resulting in the need for continuing education and training in:
  - New technologies, Web 2.0, 24x7 services (we are all electronic resources librarians).
  - Assessment skills and techniques.
- Organizational focus is shifting from creation and management of large on-site collections to design and delivery of library services:
  - Staffing models/organizational charts need to remain flexible.
  - Positions are affected by retasking and changes in workflow.
Due to difficult budget situations and the expanding instructional role of librarians, some traditional library tasks are being delegated to para-professional staff.

Libraries are increasingly adopting best practices models (ACRL).

Works Consulted


