Library Response to the
Self-study Visitation Team Report
December 16, 2008

Introduction

Following the receipt of the visitation team report, all Library staff met in department/unit groups and as a Library faculty group to discuss the report and recommendations of the team. These discussions were summarized in writing and sent to the Library Self-study Steering Committee, who served as the writing team for the response.

The Library found the self-study and the external review to be valuable experiences, and we thank the team for their efforts. We appreciated having Library strengths, including quality service provided by the staff, affirmed in the team report. Areas of weakness or areas of recommended change were nearly all ones with which we have wrestled, and it was reassuring to have them acknowledged in the report. In a few cases, we feel the team did not gain an adequate picture, perhaps due to the brevity of the visit, to support recommendations. Those are also noted in the following response.

Staffing

The visitation team recommended examining the current job alignment with an eye to providing services more efficiently and using underutilized strengths. Our strategic planning will examine staffing, and action has been taken on some specific team recommendations:

Government Publications: If allowed to fill this open position, the job description calls for one librarian to oversee federal and Wisconsin documents as well as do outreach and assist in main reference and instruction.

Information Literacy: Currently a library faculty member coordinates bibliographic instruction. There is interest in expanding his role to include assessment and involvement in campus-wide academic planning (if it is possible to lighten his work load in other areas). He has begun coordinating library input in the campus General Education Program revision process.

Marketing: The team recommends the assignment of outreach efforts to a librarian. A half-time librarian currently has marketing in her job description, but other duties have often placed outreach efforts on the back burner. The Director is also taking an active role. The need for more emphasis on outreach efforts will be discussed as part of the staffing strategic planning.

Workload analysis: While not opposed to analyzing work patterns, the library faculty disagrees with the examples given of imbalance--teaching load distribution and reference desk assignments. When fully staffed, the work load distribution in these two areas is well-balanced, in our opinion, given the variation of other duties among faculty. The team suggests temporary staffing during the staffing analysis and strategic planning stage. However, this will be difficult to implement given the specialized knowledge (i.e. government documents) or extensive training needed for these positions.
Nine-month contracts for library faculty: We understand the difficulties in continuity, completing summer projects, and sometimes supervision that uneven summer contracts can create. Most faculty have for years acted professionally in regard to summer contracts and their responsibility for supervising a unit. This question will continue to be addressed especially for positions that are needed year round and in the context of new hires.

Second master's degree for faculty: This question led to discussion of alternative uses of a second master’s (e.g. not required for tenure but required for promotion). We recognize this requirement limits candidate pools when hiring. However, we value the breadth that additional education adds to our work and assert the merits of being members of the University faculty. Further study is needed.

Staffing summary from the Library: Although the faculty has continuously evaluated positions as faculty retirements occurred, the loss of past positions (technology librarian, for example) as well as the prospect of losing future positions undermines those efforts. We cannot continue to provide excellent service or continue to provide the resources, instruction, and hours we do and develop new initiatives with fewer and fewer faculty and staff. We suspect even the most conscientious workload analysis of library faculty and staff will not turn up large numbers of hours spent unwisely. We will, however, be looking seriously at staffing patterns and the Library mission as a part of strategic planning.

Facility and Space Utilization

Consolidation of service points: The consolidation of service points and processing activities were issues strongly recommended by the visiting team. Library staff members are not currently in agreement on these topics and further discussions and service/space evaluations are needed to study these issues. This will be included in the Library’s strategic plan.

LRC comprehensive space review: The visiting team pointed out the proliferation of various campus services and programs within the Learning Resource Center and recommended an evaluation of space utilization. The library staff members have been concerned about this issue for some time and would welcome a comprehensive review of the facility with the goal of housing appropriate and complementary services (e.g. the Tutoring-Learning Center, IT, and Assistive Technology) within the LRC. Input from the IT and Tutoring-Learning Center self studies and external reviews will be invaluable during this review. The library also welcomes the opportunity to use the expertise of consultants who specialize in library design to help construct a viable building plan.

Updating of library spaces: Recent improvements in the LRC facility were recognized by the visiting committee. The Library has made tremendous progress in the improvement of the facility in service, study, and staff areas, but there is still a considerable amount of work to be done. The Library is currently addressing the replacement of furniture, carpet, and compact shelving and the addition of aesthetic improvements as part of the ongoing goal to update the Library. Further analysis of potential faculty and student group study/research areas and classrooms will be included in future space planning and in the Library’s strategic plan.

Archives updating: The space constraints of Archives have been a concern for some time. The Library recognizes the potential benefits of expanding and improving the Archives collection and patron spaces. Plans are already underway to improve current spaces with new carpet, furnishings and compact shelving. We will explore the possibility of assigning the Archivist to supervise Special
Collection services and collections. The expansion of the Archives area will be part of the overall building plan evaluation.

**Library Programs and Services**

**Library Resources 101 (LR101):** The library faculty is committed to assessing and streamlining the LR101 course. While the team suggests suspending the course, the faculty finds this recommendation contradicts the Library’s and our institution’s teaching mission. The course is highly valued by students, evident in student evaluations, and goes into greater depth than the “one-shots” that often characterize information literacy programs. The faculty will cut back to three sections on a trial basis, continue to use D2L, and discuss other pedagogical methods to improve the course.

**Library Instruction Program:** The team recommends a shift in focus for the Library instruction program to include new information literacy initiatives, increased upper-level instruction and distance education. The faculty and the current coordinator of bibliographic instruction agree that assessment and more involvement in campus-wide academic planning should be expanded. Making information literacy a requirement for all English composition courses, as suggested, may not be easy to implement as it requires not only additional library staff time but also the cooperation of, and additional commitment from, all ENG 101/102/150 instructors. The library faculty currently provides instruction to 70% of the English composition courses, and they can only address certain aspects of the broad set of skills subsumed under “information literacy.” Data of the past three years show that, on average, 22% of all library instruction sessions were provided to courses at the 300 level (junior) or higher. Access Services currently provides some services to distance education students, but strategic planning should also look at better ways to meet the needs of distance education.

**Media Lab:** The library faculty and staff agree with the visiting team recommendation that the revamping and renewal of the Media Lab—its mission, services, equipment, staffing and supervision—should be considered in the upcoming strategic planning process. Current and anticipated changes in staffing provide the opportunity to meet these needs. If approved, an Instruction and Multi-Media Librarian would provide the expertise and leadership needed to revamp the Media Lab and its services.

**Library Collections**

**Library Resources:** As the team noted, campus dissatisfaction with current allocation levels mirrors that of the library faculty and staff. Inflation and lack of funding increases have taken their toll on our collections, despite efforts to cut duplicate formats and resources no longer used. This year, we did receive an additional $100,000 added to our base budget by the Provost. The Library appreciates this increase, but adequate budgeting for electronic and physical collections on a continuous basis still remains a challenge. For example, periodical subscriptions increase 7-10% annually making it very difficult to maintain current subscriptions with no proportionate increase in the periodicals budget line. The periodicals review project continuously examines and reviews usage and duplication (print and online) in an effort to streamline our periodicals to provide access to as many titles within budget constraints.
**Universal Borrowing (UB):** The Library promotes Universal Borrowing heavily and, as a result, it is a service greatly appreciated by our campus. We feel that our UB numbers show our commitment to the UW System “One system, one library” philosophy.

**Weeding:** The library faculty and staff agrees and is conscious of the team’s mentioned need for weeding and a systematic assessment of the collection to fill gaps and develop the collection in new curriculum areas. A weeding project is currently underway in Government Documents.

**Government Publications:** The library faculty is in general agreement with the recommendations of the report concerning government documents. Most of the team’s suggestions are already taking place, and we are awaiting approval to fill the position. The position description moved the Wisconsin documents supervision into the same position as federal documents, expanded the duties to include instruction and main reference duties, and called for outreach to departments.

**Video/DVD collection:** The library faculty and staff recognize that the video/DVD collection is currently not browsable by students and agree that efforts to make this collection more visible and accessible to all should be made.

**Governance and Decision-making**

**Role of the Library Director:** The unintended difficulties the new Library Director experienced in trying to work within a strong tradition of faculty governance revealed the need for clarification of the Director role and for continuing collaborative efforts.

**Faculty advisory group:** The organization of such a group, serving as a sounding board and advocacy group, is worth pursuing. We believe a group who is not a part of the Faculty Senate structure but could send issues to Senate as needed would be most efficacious.

**Public Relations and Outreach**

The visitation team suggests more emphasis on outreach for library liaisons, more programming, and a librarian assigned to outreach (with more of a priority attached), and these will be explored. This was also an area identified by the Library in the self-study for further exploration and development. Specific concerns of the team included communication about the Ideas Room (just opened the week they arrived and now more fully publicized for student use) and the video orientation (done as a student project and will be considered for production and updating by the library).

**Budget**

The visiting committee recognized the library’s budget as comparable to similar institutions. With the addition of $100,000 to the base budget this year, the Library’s budget issues have temporarily diminished. Library faculty members are examining specific collection needs and are making plans for the addition of new electronic and print resources. Current campus and system-wide budget constraints have caused library administration to be cautious with the allocation of new funds. Careful consideration is needed to assess the feasibility of maintaining new long-term commitments in the
current economic environment. Library faculty will continue to work closely with campus faculty to meet program needs and build a relevant collection.

**Summary and Further Recommendations**

**Strategic planning:** While the Library has had a continuing goal of providing excellent services, collections and other resources, the lack of strategic planning was identified at several points by the Library in the self-study. We agreed with the visitation team in proceeding with strategic planning without delay and have formed a Strategic Planning Steering Committee. They are already meeting to discuss specific ideas about strategic planning voiced by the visitation team and organize the process. Our challenge is developing a worthwhile plan for the Library, its services and resources, in its context of support of the mission of the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point.