

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY STANISLAUS
University Library Support Unit Review
Executive Summary
September, 2008

Self-Study

The University Library's self-study highlighted the following environmental variables and their impact on library collections and services at CSU Stanislaus:

- Constrained budgets throughout the history of the institution have resulted in gaps in the subjects and date ranges covered by library physical collections.
- Substantial increases over the last five years in costs associated with employee compensation and library materials, supplies and equipment in a period of static or decreasing budget allocations to the Library have put tremendous pressure on library collection development.
- An accelerating trend toward electronic access to virtual collections of information resources and away from more traditional methods of access to physical collections means that library physical collections are often the information resource of last resort.
- At the same time, the increasing complexity of navigating and effectively using vast arrays of electronic information resources has exacerbated the difficulty of retrieving relevant and meaningful information.
- Relatively stagnant growth in library faculty and staff F.T.E. has made it virtually impossible to keep up with the demand for library services.
- Mounting pressure on university faculty for research, scholarly activity and professional development has challenged library faculty to re-conceptualize their relationship to their colleagues in the academic departments and programs.
- An increasing demand for self-paced and online learning in virtual classroom settings has forced library faculty to reexamine long-held assumptions about library reference and instruction.
- An increasing focus on the assessment of student learning outcomes is demanding the development of new ways to measure the effectiveness of library collections and services.
- Changing usage patterns of library collections, services and facilities have led library faculty and staff to question traditional assumptions about the role of academic libraries in higher education.
- The proposed renovation and expansion of the library facility has created uncertainty among library faculty and staff about the future of library collections, services and organizational structures.

The following implications of these changes in the environment were brought to light in the self-study:

- Without substantial augmentations to the library acquisitions budget it will not be possible to fill gaps in the physical collections or acquire and store locally any more than the most basic resources needed to support university curricula.
- Over time the portion of the library budget that will be spent on electronic information resources will grow and the portion spent on physical collections will shrink.
- While use of library physical collections is clearly on the decline, there is no evidence that demand for library facilities and services will abate in the foreseeable future.
- Interlibrary loan will continue to be a growing source of needed physical items not owned by the University Library.
- Library faculty and staff will continue to be challenged to stay abreast of the changing information technology landscape and to redesign library collections and services to meet the current and future needs of the university community.

- More time, effort and resources will be focused on reorganizing and retraining library faculty and staff.
- Library special collections will be further cultivated as a source of definition and distinction for the University Library, for their unique contribution to research and scholarship within the University and beyond, and thus as a justification for additional institutional resources.
- The need to educate the university community about the availability of library information resources and services will intensify, as will the need to develop and provide more sophisticated discovery and retrieval mechanisms
- Consequently, the need for instruction in the use of electronic information resources will intensify, as will the need to deliver instructional programs in a variety of formats.
- Constrained institutional resources will result in increased pressure on the Library to justify its budget and to assess and clearly demonstrate its positive contribution to student learning outcomes and institutional goals and objectives.

External Review

The external review yielded a series of specific recommendations for improvement, which fall into seven topical areas as are outlined below.

Funding and resources:

- Consider a campaign to transform the campus view of the Library from a service unit to an institution of instruction. This may secure enrollment funds based on FTE to augment the current budget.
- Explore other funding possibilities through Outreach to community and alumni (“Library Advancement” and/or “Friends of Library”) and pursuit of appropriate grants.
- Continue collaboration within the CSU library network to make more effective use of limited resources.

Planning and participation:

- Make planning processes more transparent and participatory; involve Library Faculty and staff in the following activities:
 - Allocating the internal budget
 - Planning physical space for collections, staff, and patrons
 - Regularly monitoring agreed upon goals, objectives, and milestones to be sure that progress or adjustments are being made as appropriate
 - Promoting an “idea culture” within the Library community.

Communication:

- Improve the organizational structure to better facilitate communication, both vertically and horizontally, using a multi-pronged approach that would include the following and/or other strategies:
 - The “internal council” described in the Self Study
 - A smaller body with rotating delegates that could serve as bi-directional conduits for information in their respective areas
 - “Delegate” representation to the various planning committees
 - Bulletins and announcements sent via email and/or a web page to all staff
 - All-staff meetings with announcements, member’s items, and question and answer sessions as a regular part of the agenda

- Eliminate the dotted-line reporting path from the Library Assistant III in Special Collections to the Library Dean
- Appoint a rotating “Head” or “Coordinator” to provide oversight and general direction for the Reference/Instruction Faculty

Decision Making:

- Consider reformulating the current decision-making model, which relies on the unanimous consent of the library faculty. Possible alternative models include the following and/or others:
 - Implement a conventional Robert’s Rules of Order model whereby issues to be decided are heard in discussion and the majority carries the vote.
 - Implement a representative management team that includes the coordinating librarian from each of the library functional units, as well as staff representation.
 - Establish a rotating Department Chair of the Library Faculty.
 - Engage the services of a consultant to analyze the library organization and recommend an appropriate decision-making model.

Staff morale and professional development:

- Where possible, cross-train staff for mutual support, better understanding of other unit’s operations, and morale/community building.
- Create a technical support position or responsibilities within each Library Unit to increase self-reliance and relieve demands on Library Systems staff.
- Address needs and concerns related to deferred maintenance, safety corrections, and environmental health; show spirit of concern for health and well being of all staff in stressful, reactive atmosphere with static resources and increased workload.

Supporting data:

- Identify ways to collect more supporting data on Library effectiveness, and improve response rate on student surveys.
- Seek regular data from course instructors (both tenure track and lecturers) about the Library’s effectiveness from their point of view.

Student outreach and instruction:

- Increase the Library’s profile as a student-friendly, social space; look for ways to demonstrate to students how the Library can help them.
- Consider developing a mandatory, library technology/information literacy course for students early in their academic careers that could better help them meet course requirements and achieve academic success.
- Collaborate and plan with instructors, chairs, and deans to introduce Library instruction elements within courses and degree programs in order to increase the Library’s profile as a key factor in academic success.