

PUBLIC SERVICES PRIORITIES RETREAT 2007

Introduction

In the next five years we will see unprecedented arrays of formats, technologies, and patron behaviors in their use of libraries and materials. While all of the infrastructure supporting the functions of the library are important, more than ever it is necessary to connect and support the parts of the infrastructure that directly support users. The University of Arkansas is student-centered. The University of Arkansas Libraries are user-centered.

The groups of users served by the library are more varied than just segmenting them into the traditional categories of students, faculty, staff, and others. Undergraduate and graduate students have different needs than faculty than staff on some levels and on others they are quite similar. The methods used to access information and libraries have changed tremendously and we must meet our users where they are and by the means that are common to each group. Gaining the right information from users to let us know how and what they want from the library is a critical step. Surveys, focus groups, and other tools should be incorporated into an assessment plan for services and collections.

Collections, whether owned or accessed, require adequate funding. In times of tight budgets, it is even more critical how collection budgets are established and spent. While our library budget is tied to the university budget, we must be diligent in the making the case for increases to the base, if the goal of reaching ARL remains a priority. While more data is available to assist in making collection decisions, the analysis process is more complicated. Efforts to establish routine methods of gathering data and incorporating into decision structure need development.

Integration of traditional and emerging resources and the requisite management of processes and procedures require coordination across the enterprise. Use of materials in print will continue to show declines while that for electronic formats and media will show increases. Use of web resources in their various configurations continues to expand along with information seekers' expectations.

The information landscape is changing at a rapid pace. Shifts in unit production of popular and scholarly materials from paper-only to a combination of paper and print on demand (POD) electronic versions are evident. Production rates of electronic-only formats are growing faster than print-only counterparts, with forecasts for stronger shifts in future. POD is likely to increase. Traditional services and collections will not go away, but we have to find the optimal mix between them and the new and figure out a way to sustain the efforts.

The following priorities were developed by having all employees in the public services division to submit the top five issues, either from the initial lists distributed or add new

ones they would like to see covered in the retreat. These ideas were compiled and individuals were asked to rank all the ideas to establish the priorities listed below:

1. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

These ideas focus on how the organization works and what policies and procedures drive the culture of the organization. The structure of the organization and the planning processes that are used to develop goals and objectives are also included.

- Provide more information about the restructure and reassignment of positions
- Work on effective communication throughout the organization – between departments, between supervisors and employees, between divisions
- Incorporate accountability and transparency in decision making
- Review staffing provided on nights and weekends in relationship to day time
- Allow wider input for project planning
- Determine the proper balance between serving primary clientele of the university and those of the community
- Work on leadership and direction for the organization

2. FUNDING AND BUDGETING

Adequate funding and a budgeting process that is user-centered are needed to support and sustain current programs and allow for the implementation of program innovations. Related issues:

- Support for personnel at all levels
- Identify regular funds for promotional materials
- Continue to support travel for all levels of personnel for development, participation in organizations, and keeping current
- Create a fair and equitable budget allocation process
- Provide competitive student wages
- Advocate for classified staff pay increases
- Balance fund allocations with recognition that some disciplines are driven by higher cost than others
- Provide a portion of the materials budget for experimentation with new access methods
- Develop a fundraising plan that is open to all
- Look for innovative ways to get the most of student wages with greater flexibility for supervisors

3. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

These ideas relate to measures to employ in improving and gaining new skills for personnel at all levels. Identification of competencies needed to provide services and technical expertise to operate effectively in an electronic environment requires that programs be developed to provide training opportunities on work time.

- Provide release and work time to develop new skills
- Gain greater employee input into in-house training programs
- Develop a vigorous training/orientation program for all levels of personnel
- Develop cross-training programs between units, departments, and divisions

- **Ensure the acquisition of core competencies in public service areas to provide correct information to patrons**
- **Remove barriers that interfere with empowerment of staff to make decisions and act independently**
- **Establish mentoring programs for youth (e.g. Fayetteville High School Students)**
- **Provide mentoring for all personnel**
- **Improve the management of positions that have dual assignments in public service and collection management**
- **Create a strategy for recruitment, retention, and education of new staff/faculty**
- **Review recruitment policies and procedures**
- **Develop new ways to motivate staff**
- **Provide training and support for new or expanded duties**
- **Provide training opportunities for time management**

4. ASSESSMENT

Develop a culture of assessment to determine overall effectiveness and outcomes of efforts. Find a way to assess our worth to the mission of the university and tell the story.

- **Ground more of our management decisions with data**
- **Evaluate programs and their effectiveness**
- **Assess services and collections on a regular basis**
- **Determine appropriate assessment tools for user instruction**
- **Evaluate patron needs against services provided**
- **Determine role of library and public services division in the academic sphere**
- **Examine assessment of service, both quantitatively and qualitatively**
- **Make data and statistics truly useful in library management**
- **Access the needs of users**
- **Evaluate library instruction in person and online**
- **Understand and know the user needs and the impact they have on collections and services**
- **Assess in-person and electronic classroom instruction and remote services**

5. SPACE (EXISTING AND FUTURE)

Design of public space for services and use by primary clientele should be maximize efficiency for the users and the staff that serve those users. While our current facility is serving us well, new programs and innovations may require re-purposing of space or reconfigurations that are more effective.

- **Assess the space needs (long and short range) of the Fine Arts Library**
- **Expand capacity of electronic classrooms to accommodate larger class sizes**
- **Review existing space and determine the best use of space in light of changing library landscape (areas such as Periodicals Reading Room, Reference Offices, Government Documents are examples)**
- **Decide on the public face we want to present**
- **Plan for library expansion**
- **Create more comfortable sitting areas – replace all metal chairs**

- Work with parking office to gain designated parking area for library employees
- Install security cameras in the library
- Create additional group study rooms

6. COLLECTIONS

The cost of materials and collections accounts for the major portion of the library budget. New trends in publishing and increasing cost for access requires that we institute a systematic process to evaluate collections and connect purchases to programs, research emphasis, and general student learning needs.

- Revise the schedule for distribution of subject fund allocations
- Analyze gaps make decisions to deal to deal with them
- Develop a better program to handle damaged materials
- Determine the optimum balance between access and ownership
- Address the choices of access versus ownership for needed services and collections
- Review procedures for cataloging free web resources
- Improve on the collections budget and ordering process
- Develop process to select and manage digitization of collections for preservation and access
- Review the direction, leadership, understanding, and cohesiveness of subject groups within the library
- Continue efforts in electronic resource management and incorporate best practices
- Expand DVD collections
- Evaluate value of employee expertise versus outsourcing (server space, digitization, cataloging)
- Determine the future of Government Documents as an entity in Mullins and as a type of material
- Assess the future of the library catalog and library resources in electronic environment
- Determine how to handle aging collection
- Increase foreign language materials – complete courses of Spanish and Chinese (Rosetta Stone Library Edition)
- Develop plan for institutional repository
- Study open access issues – collections and software
- Speed up process for eliminating books that are unsightly so that our library is more inviting and extra space is created for an increase in popular culture material, i.e. fiction books, DVDs, etc.
- Weed general collections to more materials that have not been used in the last five years to storage

7. PROGRAM ISSUES

These ideas relate to overarching program considerations and their development in a climate of change.

- Create an environment of change with built-in flexibility
- Adopt innovative methods in public relations
- Intensify efforts in creating awareness of resources by users and librarians

- **Back-up floater hours of schedule support**
- **Build collaborative projects within U of A System and other academic libraries in the state**
- **Develop new programs/traditions to deal with a changing mission**
- **Require some type of identification for community users to gain access to computers with guest passes**
- **Develop a comprehensive plan for evacuation, emergency/disaster procedures, and emergency preparedness**
- **Enhance distance education services to deal with increases in distance education**
- **Continue to monitor trends in document delivery and employ best practices**
- **Establish computer access policies for various user groups, especially for community users**
- **Expand service hours**
- **Employ standards of service to ensure patrons receive accurate information**
- **Match library services and programs to the needs of campus clientele and courses/research conducted at the U of A**
- **Integrate media services with multi-media services in the research commons and in other parts of the library**
- **Achieve closer collaborations with University Departments**
- **Offer new electronic devices and services such as PDAs, Ipods, instant messaging, RSS feeds, etc.**
- **Develop a coordinated outreach program for faculty, classrooms, residence halls, labs, etc.**
- **Re-institute the preservation program**
- **Structure public relations program targeted to various groups**
- **Remove barriers to access**
- **Create a stricter policy for people who severely break the rules of the library (e.g. people who access pornography)**
- **Use subject orientation versus departmental orientation in the provision of services and approach to collection development and training**
- **Develop a strong model of instruction and availability for support and training of new library users**
- **Consolidate service points and use tiered service desk staffing**
- **Craft a new vision statement**

*Submitted by Alberta Bailey
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December 1, 2006*