

REPORT OF A SITE VISIT TO ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY ON
JUNE 13,14, 1991

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Building--poor design is a major barrier to a functional layout; too much expansion; creating functions out and some rooms should help somewhat

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INTRODUCTION

President Meyer clearly articulated the intent to increase the level of academic excellence at Illinois Wesleyan University, cited a number of indications that the institution is moving in this direction, and stressed the importance of bringing the library to a level capable of supporting an excellent academic program. In discussions with teaching faculty and library faculty, however, both gave strong indications that they do not fully comprehend the goals of the academic program. It is beyond the consultant's charge to address this issue. It is simply reported as having surfaced as a fairly widespread concern.

There are many aspects of the library that need attention, and there are steps that can be taken now to move the library toward excellence. While future goals need to be articulated and kept in mind, laying the foundation for future excellence by resolving existing problems is a prerequisite that may require all of the staffing and financial resources that Illinois Wesleyan University can muster for its library for some time to come. If the goal is to build an excellent library, an excellent foundation must be the first concern.

Although the issues have been divided under separate headings, most have a close relationship to the others. Examples: the poor image of the library on campus is a problem that has its roots in building design, collection, staffing, and financial support; building design affects staffing, collection usage and library image.

Reports based on a brief visit always contain misreadings, omissions, and suggestions to do what is already being done. It is stressed that the recommendations of this report be taken as suggested options, not a prescription.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Building--poor design is a major barrier to easy access and layout and to a functional layout; too small to accommodate much expansion; creating space by moving some functions out and some rearrangement of main floor pieces, with extremely difficult stairs, offices, balconies, and

Collection--the first concern is to make it relevant to the needs of its users; set goal to meet 90% of user need; suggestions on how to define both user need and the cost of meeting it; importance of selectivity in developing and managing public square footage in collections; need for selective enrichment; importance of quality cataloging; processing capacity as a limiting factor

Staffing--library experience should outweigh scholarly attainment in future hiring; need for and additional paraprofessional staff; review need for branch library renovation

Public Relations--library image a major, multifaceted problem; staff need to get out to interact with users and sell library services; improve visual impact of reference area and use more highly trained public contact person; develop library-departmental liaison so that librarians are advocates for departments; community task forces to resolve library problems; change community perspective so library is seen as "their" library

Financial--bring support of library to 5% of gross G&E; set goals in context of what is needed and what support is available

Technology--OK overall; lean heavily on ILLINET; barcode books and users; phase out the card catalog; faculty have media concerns that need to be addressed

1. Place shelves with wider spacing between shelves in a location easily visible as one enters. Make this major public service area open and inviting to the user.

2. In order to accomplish "1" above, open up at least some of the first floor space by moving circulation/reserves to a location adjacent to the entrance and to technical services. Remove the offices near circulation and cluster them behind technical services, or with the offices in the periodicals area.

SHEEAN LIBRARY BUILDING

Poor building design is a major barrier to a functional layout and easy access to materials for students. Although attractive, Sheean Library is very poorly designed to serve as a library. The building is badly cut up into small pieces, which makes a logical layout of spaces and functions extremely difficult. Stairs, offices, bathrooms, and elevator, which should be grouped along a wall or in a corner, are scattered about, further reducing the utility and flexibility of the space for library purposes. Technical services are placed in the most critical area for public services, just inside the front door. Usable square footage in Sheean is probably far less than the physical size of the facility would indicate.

If, in the overall campus planning process, there is another need which this building could logically satisfy, I would recommend new library construction rather than renovation and addition. If new construction is not possible, renovation and addition could certainly improve things.

In any case, the building is too small to accommodate much expansion. As a temporary measure to gain space, areas such as the lounge, media center, auditorium, and special collections might be moved out and the space used for books, or some other purpose more central to the library mission. Any major increases in collection, staff, or study space will require additional square footage.

Without building plans, measurements, and specific quantities, it is difficult to make specific recommendations on the building, but it would be useful to consider developing a plan to open up some space, bring like things together, and improve the appearance and functionality of the reference space. The following are examples of what might be considered.

1. Get all the reference collection together in one place on more shelves with wider spacing between shelves in a location easily visible as one enters. Make this major public service area open and inviting to the user.
2. In order to accomplish "1" above, open up at least some of the first floor space by moving circulation/reserves to a location adjacent to the entrance and to technical services. Remove the offices near circulation and cluster them behind technical services, or with the offices in the periodicals area.

3. Another way to accomplish "1" would be to phase out the card catalog, open the wall, move technical processing to the other side with circulation, and expand reference into the former technical processing area.

4. Consider getting bound periodicals off the main level and getting all bound periodicals into one area of the library.

5. Get rid of the doors that hide the indexes.

Structural considerations may not allow all of the above to happen, but whatever can be done to provide a coherence, ambience, and sense that services and materials are organized and available to users upon entering the library should be done.

COLLECTION

The primary criterion for determining the focus of the library in an undergraduate institution must be the curriculum. *Building a large collection without first focusing on the materials that need to be in the library to support the curriculum is like building a cathedral without a foundation. *Students will not use a library that does not provide the resources they need to carry out their assignments, no matter how many volumes it contains. In most libraries, 20% of the collection accounts for 80% of the use. Identifying and acquiring that 20% is essential.

An accepted standard is that a library should meet 95% of the needs of its users. Carleton, with a current annual book budget of \$437,000, meets only about 90% of user demand, with another 5% coming from St. Olaf and 5% from other libraries. We would need to at least double our present budget to reach 95% of the need, and another doubling would be needed for every percentage point beyond 95%. If Illinois Wesleyan University plans to increase the quality of its academic program to a degree that students use books substantially more than they do now, a reasonable goal is to satisfy 90% of the need locally, 5% from Illinois State, and 5% from elsewhere.

Since the faculty are the ones who plan and implement the curriculum, Illinois Wesleyan University needs to institute a planning process for collection development that involves all academic departments with the library staff. There is more than one approach, but the following could begin this process:

3. "Books for College Libraries" is a basic select retrospective undergraduate bibliography. It includes

1. Prepare a profile of desirable levels of collecting in all subjects and subject divisions. This can be done in a few days at no cost other than the time invested by simply telling a large jobber--Baker and Taylor or Blackwell--that an all books plan is being considered and you want a profile done. The jobber will provide forms that cover all subject areas and their divisions with a choice of five levels of collecting ranging from "not at all" through "comprehensive". A company representative will come and spend 1-2 hours with each academic department to complete the forms. The results will be keyed into a computer to produce a printout that will indicate approximately how many volumes were been published the past year in each subject division at the collecting levels that are specified, and what the current cost would be to acquire them. The profile and associated report will provide a good sense of faculty priorities, the amount of current collecting the faculty feel is needed, and the approximate cost of collecting at that level. You can then decide whether the jobber should automatically send cards giving basic bibliographic information on new publications that match your profile, whether the actual books should be sent on approval, whether either of these services is needed only for certain subject areas, or whether no aspect of an all books plan is needed. There is no obligation on the part of the customer to do anything. We started at Carleton by getting books , but now we only get cards.

2. "Choice" is a monthly listing of new books that are recommended for college libraries with reviews by faculty in all fields. It is the best source for information on current books of interest to college libraries. Illinois Wesleyan University gets the bound version, but not the cards. Adding a subscription to "Choice" cards would allow library staff to circulate the cards to appropriate departments as a primary source for selecting new materials. "Choice" cards are more select and have fuller information than those that come from a jobber under an all books plan, but both can be done. A card subscription is \$215.

3. "Books for College Libraries" is a basic select retrospective undergraduate bibliography. It includes past recommendations from "Choice" plus other materials not covered in "Choice". "Books for College Libraries" is available on computer tape, which can be run against the institution's tapes of OCLC records to produce a listing of local holdings as compared to a widely accepted basic college library collection. Your Illinois State Network Office may be able to run tapes of local holdings against Choice tapes or direct you to an agency that can do it. The tape run will produce a basic retrospective list of areas of strength and weakness for review by faculty and staff, along with a list of desirable retrospective materials for possible acquisition.

The above procedures could provide a sense of the current and retrospective books needed to support the curriculum and the funds needed to acquire them. All faculty will know what is being collected in all subject areas--essential where fields overlap, as in nursing and microbiology. All faculty will be aware of basic retrospective gaps in their field. Occupational fields, such as Nursing, are not covered in "Choice" or "BCL". Faculty or other specialists in these fields must be consulted to identify appropriate bibliographies for review.

I refer to the attached "Statement of Purpose and General Collection Management Guidelines for the Carleton College library for a discussion of the responsibilities of the library toward faculty researchers on page 1, labeled "1", and collection quality on page 3, labeled "2". I cannot improve on these statements.

Periodical needs are more difficult to ascertain than book needs, and the potential for costs getting out of hand are much greater. We recently learned that both Wesleyan (Connecticut) and Bucknell had to cut periodical expenditures by \$100,000 this year. It must be decided how much can be spent on periodicals and a process of review and allocation among the departments must be developed. Periodical jobbers can indicate how many periodicals are in a given field and their average cost. This can be factored in with data, such as the size of a department, number of majors, currency of the field--are periodicals more important than books to this discipline?--to arrive at an equitable formula that distributes available funding to best meet the need. Katz and similar bibliographies that review periodicals can help the process, but there are no firm guidelines. An investment in books has a better long term payoff than one in periodicals, but scholars also need the current material in their fields found only in periodicals. The number of periodical subscriptions at Illinois Wesleyan University is low, and should be increased somewhat, but caution and rather heavy leaning on other local resources and networks to meet much of the need is recommended. We are hopeful that the future will bring improved electronic access to periodicals, but not soon.

I refer to the attached "Statement of Purpose and General Collection Management Guidelines for the Carleton College library for a discussion of the responsibilities of the library toward faculty researchers on page 1, labeled "1", and collection quality on page 5, labeled "2". I cannot improve on these statements.

Cooperative arrangements and networking with other libraries to obtain seldom used material.

I do not mean the foregoing to imply that there should not be at least some pockets of excellence in a library that are not related to the curriculum. An excellent, well chosen collection in a subject not taught, but which may add an intellectual or cultural dimension to the collection or support a course that did not previously exist, should be considered. The key here is enrichment and excellence, not quantity.

Undergraduate students are not trained researchers. * Simply collecting books without stringent winnowing to eliminate materials not relevant to the curriculum will result in a collection that is difficult for students to use and in impediments to use of the library. A library is like a large file that needs to be maintained and periodically pruned of obsolete and irrelevant material, as must any other file if it is to be of maximum utility. * Large quantities of irrelevant material reduce the likelihood of pertinent material being discovered through browsing, greatly increase the number of entries that must be read in an online catalog to locate useful material, and increase the likelihood that students will use dated or unsuitable materials. All of this creates obstacles to students finding the material they need and increases their level of frustration with library usage. Since we select and purchase less than 1% of what is produced, there is a 99% chance that gift material will consist largely of materials we decided not to buy in the past. Of course, if the institution has not purchased the materials needed to support its current curriculum in the past, the chances of acquiring relevant material by gift increase somewhat. However, what is relevant and what retrospective materials are needed must be identified before a prospective gift can be evaluated.

Simply adding material in quantity is not cost effective. To process and maintain 1,000 volumes, one of which will be used in a decade, costs about \$15-20,000 in processing and storage costs. That volume can be borrowed when needed for about \$15--1/1,000th the cost. This is why we need cooperative arrangements and networking with other libraries to obtain seldom used material.

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staff

*The rate of collection growth is limited by the capacity of the library to process materials. Quality processing is essential to any library collection, because this is what enables students to locate the material in the library that is pertinent to their needs. Material that cannot be found is, to all intents and purposes, not there. Cataloging must be done to stringent standards by highly trained, experienced staff. Part-time student help cannot do cataloging. We once tried using very able and responsible student help to do very simple reclassification, and ended up spending several years of trained staff time to revise and correct what they had done. At Carleton, it takes three exceptionally competent staff to acquire about 11,000 volumes per year, and 3 more highly trained and competent people to catalog 11,000 volumes per year. Illinois Wesleyan University has only half the number of staff in these areas, and cataloging capacity is well under 10,000 volumes per year. The Cornbelt collection represents many years of work for the processing staff that must be done in addition to the processing of new acquisitions, which will approach processing capacity if the goal is to purchase 5,000 volumes per year. The only solutions are to greatly reduce the quantity of material to be processed by being highly selective and keeping only what is clearly relevant to the curriculum, to pay an outside service to catalog the material, or to substantially increase processing staff.

When politically expedient, the Arends Collection should be moved to a larger Illinois archival center, or at least, out of the library. It takes up an inordinate amount of space and appears to have limited relevance to the undergraduate curriculum. Its research value would be greatly enhanced if it were part of a larger research center.

The view was expressed by faculty that some specialized collections, such as the art slide collection, are disaster areas that need attention.

STAFFING

The professional staff are able and exceptionally active and hard working. It is difficult to see how some of them manage all of their library responsibilities along with their activities within subject fields.

In future hiring, it is suggested that more emphasis be placed on attainments within librarianship and less on attainments within a subject field. A small library usually has only one person in each library specialty, and it is important that they come having learned their trade from experts in their specialty in a larger setting, and with an established network of colleagues within their specialty whom they can turn to. Neither Carleton nor Illinois Wesleyan have any capacity to train a new person in a specialty that no other staff member has. The background of library staff hired for the past several years shows little evidence of substantial experience in other libraries. Concerns might also be raised about the priorities of those who obtain a PhD in another discipline, somewhat later take a library degree, then remain very active in the subject field. No sense was gained of the actual division of staff time between library activities and other academic activities.

There is no strong evidence of involvement either in national library organizations or in national level continuing education on the part of the library staff, but there is substantial involvement at the state level. Perhaps the Illinois library establishment is large enough that it is felt national involvement is not needed, or perhaps available time and travel funds are more likely to be used for meetings in other disciplines. I feel all professional library staff should attend at least one general national library meeting per year in order to keep up with current issues in librarianship, and also, attend an occasional national meeting devoted to their library specialty to meet and interact with their colleagues.

Where there seems to be a real staffing hiatus is at the paraprofessional level. Paraprofessionals are highly trained, salaried staff who typically have a baccalaureate degree and manage the day to day operations of a major area of the library. They are roughly equivalent to the technicians in the sciences. Paraprofessionals relieve librarians of much time-consuming operational detail so that librarians can concentrate on overall management, reference, bibliographic instruction, planning and analysis, continuing training in library specialties, learning new technology, interacting with both the user community and professional colleagues in and outside of the university, etc. We have five paraprofessionals at Carleton, and they are the most productive workers we have. They reduce the need for additional professionals, and in some cases, can substitute for a professional librarian.

The amount of student help seems about right at Illinois Wesleyan. There should be sufficient permanent staff supervision to ensure that students are working and not studying. I have no sense of the amount of summer student employment. Students who work 40 hours per week in summer can be trained to do anything permanent employees can do, and are a real asset throughout the year. A small pay increment for experience helps to retain them. Students who work only 8-10 hours per week during term can perform only very simple, repetitive tasks. They can be a real liability if continual training and retraining by permanent staff is required. All librarians should be assigned whatever student help they need to manage the clerical aspects of their work.

There is a single personal computer for all clerical staff to share. We find that PC's increase productivity for most staff. A review of the need for more PC's for clerical library staff may be in order.

The need for a separate music library should be reviewed. Branch libraries in undergraduate institutions almost always come about as the result of a political situation rather than an operational need. They are terribly inefficient and cannot begin to provide the level of service provided at the main library. It is not possible to duplicate the machines, the hours, the backup capability, and the services of a main library at a branch. A branch library also leaves a gap in the main library collection that reduces access to materials in that field for the rest of the community. Out of a staff of only 5 librarians, does it really make sense to allocate 90% of one position to 7% of the student body in a field that is not particularly library intensive? Books, journals, and the librarian could move to the main library, with scores and recordings remaining in the music building under the management of a clerical person.

Some additional library positions that seem to be desirable are:

- A business-science-nursing librarian, but not another branch library
- A bibliographic instruction librarian to manage and coordinate the overall educational program of the library
- A recent graduate with aptitude for and training in reference, to be hired as a paraprofessional to act as a principal main public service contact for the library
- A paraprofessional with cataloging ability in the technical services area to manage the day to day operation of the area. This would be a low cost way to increase processing capacity and free up some additional professional time.

Some of the following concerns are:

Discontinuity of service. The library is staffed by a high school graduate who is not trained in library work and who is not a member of the library profession. The library is not a branch of the university and is not a part of the university system.

During hours of use, the library is not open to the public. The library is not a part of the university system and is not a branch of the university system. The library is not a part of the university system and is not a branch of the university system.

Do whatever it takes to get the library open during periods of heavy use. The library is not a part of the university system and is not a branch of the university system. The library is not a part of the university system and is not a branch of the university system.

Establish librarian liaisons to work with departments on all of their library needs, including new developments in their field. The librarian liaison should be seen as the advocate for the department in the library, not just someone from the library who talks to them occasionally.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The library has a major image problem and is greatly underutilized. Illinois Wesleyan has the same size student body as Carleton, but in comparison, the average Illinois Wesleyan student checks out only 1/4 as many books, 1/5 as many reserve items, and 1/7 as many interlibrary loan items. A large increase in holdings will not, by itself, increase use. The building design has been previously mentioned as a contributing factor to a poor image, but there are many others.

Libraries today can no longer afford to be reactive. Library staff need to get out and sell themselves and their services in the same way that computer centers have had to do. Faculty and students both are most comfortable with people they know and have seen before. Librarians need to be seen as available, approachable, and highly service oriented, rather than as arcane specialists who can be approached only through the medium of a receptionist. Staff must to get out and interact with both faculty and students about their needs as users and ways in which the library can help to meet them.

Some of the following measures may help:

Discontinue the public information desk staffed by a high school graduate who is not equipped to identify and resolve research problems. Make the primary public contact a librarian or a paraprofessional trained in reference, at least during hours of heavier use. During hours of heaviest use, a librarian could be teamed with a student assistant who could show users where particular resources are, demonstrate the online catalog, and do some of the leg work for the reference librarian. The librarian or paraprofessional, not the student would be the primary public contact.

Do whatever can be done with the main level reference collection to make it cohesive, attractive, inviting, and visible as one enters. Set up a reference or help desk that is conspicuous and makes a statement that this facility is here to resolve library problems. Students should be lining up at that desk during periods of heavy use.

Establish librarian liaisons to work with departments on all of their library needs, including resource development in their field. The librarian liaison should be seen as the advocate for the department in the library, not just someone from the library who talks to them occasionally

A single library committee cannot do it all. Get some librarian-faculty-student task forces working on library problems and needs. Get the student governance system involved in issues like the noise problem.

Consider a library newsletter once a year to let faculty and students know about changes and new capabilities of the library.

Redo library guides to incorporate some graphics and some humor. Increase the printed helps.

Get the library catalog onto the campus network.

Sponsor something, such as a computerized campus bulletin board to demonstrate the library's service orientation to the community.

Support for and use of the library will grow to the degree that the community begins to see it as "their" library, rather than the library staff's library, the administration's library, or the University's library.

FINANCIAL

Library support needs to have some relationship to university support. The standard for library support is 5% of gross G & E. This is the goal to strive for, but if 5% is not possible, decide what the level is to be and determine library allocations on the basis of the available funding and stated needs, goals, and priorities that have been developed for the library.

Endowment for book acquisitions helps to insure continuing quality in the collection. Several colleges have raised \$1,000,000 in book endowment funds by asking alumni to endow one book per year at a cost of \$500-\$800. Although some "Friends" groups have been successful, many feel that the return from such groups to the institution is not worth the time investment. "Friends" do, of course, have PR value.

TECHNOLOGY

The library is fortunate to have access to ILLINET Online for its Public Access Catalog and circulation support. ILLINET is going to be the least expensive way for Illinois Wesleyan University to gain access to most of the general purpose databases and other online services that it will require. Illinois Wesleyan University also has databases on CD-ROM for Business and Nursing, and this is probably the best way to meet these needs for the next several years. It is appropriate that OCLC is being used for technical processing.

It would be very desirable for the library to begin a program to barcode books and other library materials, and to provide barcode ID's for users so that keying of circulation data would be eliminated. This will reduce the potential for error and make the circulation process both faster and easier for users.

All databases available to the public in the library should be made available on a campus network.

There should be printers on some of the IO terminals for users and some personal computers in the library for public use, so that data can be downloaded.

The library should be working toward phaseout of its card catalog in order to concentrate its efforts on improvement of the online catalog.

Faculty voiced concerns about other areas of technology, such as access to classrooms with media equipment, need for a campuswide AV policy, and the need for some courses to be able to link text, images, and music. *Some faculty feel that their need for the technical facilities to carry out their teaching responsibilities is far more acute than their need for more books.*

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that library facilities at Illinois Wesleyan University are underutilized and inadequate in almost all areas--building, staffing, collection, financing--to support the level of excellence to which the institution aspires. There is no easy solution to the problem. Adding more books, increasing staff, building more space, or spending more money will not, in isolation, produce excellence. A library does not exist as an independent entity, but must be reflective of, supportive of, and relevant to the academic program of the institution as expressed by its curriculum, if the library is to fulfill its intended purpose.

Library goals must be defined in the context of the goals of the academic program which it supports, because library usage is directly related to what occurs in the classroom. Therefore, ways must be found to lead the faculty to overall acceptance and support of the library as an integral and relevant part of the academic program of the institution.

The consultant has suggested a financial goal of 5% of G&E, a collection goal of meeting 90% of user need, procedures for involving the community in defining and costing user need, some ways to improve the functional layout of the library, directions for future staffing, and ways in which community involvement with the library might be improved. It is hoped that these suggestions will be helpful in improving the image and the relevance of the library at Illinois Wesleyan University, and will place it on a path that will ultimately lead toward excellence.