Recommendation 7:

Library Resources: The College should address the inadequacy of its library collections (Standard II.C.1)

Since the recommendation mandated by the commission in 2005, the library has moved purposefully, with the active and creative support of the office of Academic Affairs, to address the charge of inadequacy of all of its collections (reference books, circulating books, periodicals, electronic databases) on several fronts: Acquisitions; education; budgeting; inventory and weeding; and security.

I. Acquisitions

Books

The Library has expanded its electronic book holdings by adding successive annual NetLibrary e-book collections and similar iterations of the Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL). The NetLibrary collections augment the general stacks of circulating texts; annual GVRL editions reinforce the library’s reference collection.

Netlibrary accumulations over the last three years, plus the current academic year add on average 2,427 titles each year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Titles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2005</td>
<td>1,950 titles</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2006</td>
<td>3,153 titles</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2007</td>
<td>2,970 titles</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2008</td>
<td>1,634 titles (on order)</td>
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Since the recommendation was made, then, the Library will have added, before the end of the current semester, nearly ten thousand titles to its book collection, a book collection that will not be eroded through theft, vandalism, or loss. Subject as well to practically limitless web availability, these titles represent offerings that support both the college’s proffered curricula and faculty’s professional and students’ intellectual interests.

Annual GVRL editions up to 2008 have added 203 titles to the library’s reference collection. This current year’s edition will add 50+ more.

Databases

The library has added two new databases to its research collection, H. W. Wilson’s Current Issues: Reference Shelf Plus and OED Online. Unlike other available research databases (CQ Researcher and Facts.com), Current Issues: Reference Shelf Plus eschews providing a finished report of political and social topics. Instead it provides selected articles and essays from vetted...
and reputable sources, including those from the Web, to support pertinent thematic issues. This approach challenges students to synthesize selected research materials to support conclusions drawn from their individual interrogation of the texts. The OED Online is, of course, the cyber version of the venerable Oxford English Dictionary, the most authoritative English-language dictionary published.

The library expects to add other database titles in the near future. Titles under consideration are the Encyclopedia Britannica Online, PsychInfo, Gale Literature Center, and JSTOR, the latter a collection of exclusively scholarly journal articles in the humanities. The addition of database titles is subject to the unabated continuation of state funding via Telecommunication and Technology Infrastructure Program (TTIP).

Website

Accessibility to electronic texts and reference resources is enhanced with a major redesign of the library’s website http://www.wlac.edu/library. The newer design has greater visual impact with brighter colors and a combination of bold font styles. New navigational cues provide improved “GUI-ness” which translates, of course, into increased student time spent on research.

While the library has stepped up its efforts to improve existing issues with its collections (such as size, currency, appropriateness to respond to curriculum, or even physical condition), we are confident that these issues do not constitute a bar to effective research. In a recent visit to the campus, UCLA Chancellor Block responded to a faculty question about the adequacy of our collections to prepare students to transfer to UCLA by noting that students need research skills, which can now be taught with material on the internet. We are intensifying our efforts to educate students in the strategic and efficient utilization of resources in a variety of formats. Students are educated about the library’s resources and how to use them through orientations and library research classes.

Library Research Classes

With the largest offering of research classes in the District, the Library is working to increase enrollment in all of its courses (which consistently meet quantitative enrollment benchmarks) and to enlarge its palette of offerings with new courses. These classes provide students thorough instruction about the research process, thoughtful selection of appropriate resources, standards by which to evaluate both print and online sources, and the effective use of search strategies in use of databases and the Internet. Over the last few years, aggregate class enrollment has increased by 50% and retention by more than 25%.

Orientations

Over the last five months, the number of library orientations has more than quadrupled under a new program which encourages instructors to bring their classes to the library for an orientation.
This provides the library the opportunity to instruct a wider audience about the effective use of its collections, pointing out their limitations and how to circumvent them with other resources. For example, if students discover that a certain title is checked out or otherwise unavailable at West Los Angeles College, they are informed that it can be obtained through interlibrary loan from another college library in the District. Students are also made aware of the resources of local public libraries. In the unlikely event that an insufficient number of scholarly journal articles are not available in ProQuest, a periodical database, students are referred to GVRL, LexisNexis, Google Scholar, an appropriate professional web site, or to other library portals (e.g., www.lapl.org).

Web Site

The library even uses a link on its redesigned web site in an educational way. The New Books link highlights newly acquired books; but rather than a simple list of new books as in the past, the listing models evaluative, comparative, and interpretive behaviors. The New Books link is now a “Top 40” list of books categorized by subject matter and call number, each book annotated by a subject specialist. These new features of the link familiarize students with Library of Congress subject headings and call numbers. The entries also model proper MLA citing conventions and appropriate annotating strategies—skills library science students must demonstrate to pass their classes.

III. Budgeting

Because the library is an active WSCH and positive attendance center for the school, it contributes to the college’s revenue stream, and thereby achieves some standing at the budget table. The library is working closely with the college’s program review and unit planning, including the budgetary process, to reverse the funding trend of the last several years with the intent to return book and periodical budgets to pre-FY2000 levels of approximately $55,000; $20,000 each for circulating books and reference titles, and $15,000 for periodicals.

The library will also seek non-programmatic funding by increasing book sale efforts, investigating grants, and perhaps establishing a Library Foundation.

IV. Inventory and Weeding

To accurately assess the charge of inadequacy in regards to its hardcopy book collection, the library has undertaken a physical inventory of the stacks and its reference collection. The inventory project will help determine precisely what is on the shelves and in the catalog, what is on the shelves but not listed in the catalog, and what is indicated in the catalog but not on the shelves.
Weeding, in library parlance the transaction of eliminating from the collection unnecessary duplicates, overlaps, unused, and out-of-date books, is being accomplished in conjunction with the inventory project.

Inventory and weeding ultimately will create hardcopy collections of more currency that will more effectively support students in completing their assignments and pursuing their intellectual interests. Identifying gaps in the collection will also assist in collection development. A significant by-product of this activity will be an accurate online public record of the library’s physical holdings.

V. Security

The inadequacy of the collections is partially attributable to a failed security system. West’s self study refers to as much as $18,000 of books lost in a single year. With a current annual book budget of $15,000 to grow a collection this is clearly unacceptable.

The failed security system is being replaced with a state-of-the-art Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) system. That means that every book in the library will be re-tagged with a new barcode and that far fewer books will be lost through theft.

Until the new RFID system is installed, the college has provided monies to fund a staff of student workers, trained in part by the Sheriff’s Department, to ensure that library texts and other materials are not improperly removed from the premises.

The library is also investigating updating its video surveillance system which were disconnected, and not re-activated, after the library’s remodel two years ago.

VI. Conclusion

The library has made considerable efforts to rectify inadequacy of the library’s collections, and it is intent on working to ensure that students have a robust collection of reference sources, general circulating collection, periodicals collection, and databases to conduct their research. The library will continue to educate students on effective strategies for research in a growing collection that will be as secure from theft as possible. The library will work creatively within and outside of the college’s budgetary process to achieve budget-line parity of years past, while it re-conditions its collections through detailed inventory and careful weeding to meet current curricular demands.