

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

JAN 10 2001

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# Library Program Review Team Report

*Presented to*

Dr. J.K. Fernandes  
Provost, Gallaudet University

January 8, 2001

*Prepared by Program Review Team Members:*

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## ***Introduction***

As part of the Gallaudet University Library's 2000 Program Review, a five-member Program Review Team was impaneled and charged by the Provost's Office in accordance with the policies outlined in *Program Review Policies and Procedures*.<sup>1</sup> Team members from off campus included Ms. Althea Jenkins, Executive Director of the Association of College and Research Libraries, and Ms. Patricia Wand, University Librarian at American University. Team members from Gallaudet included Ms. Jill Hendricks of the Gallaudet University Press, Dr. James Madachy of the Gallaudet Department of English and Mr. Terry Coye (team leader) of English Works! and the English Language Institute.

Prior to meeting on December 4, 5, and 6, 2000, the Team read and reviewed the Library's self study report<sup>2</sup>. On our first day we toured the Library facility in the Merrill Learning Center. On December 5 and 6 we interviewed many people, including the University Librarian, all unit directors and many other staff from the Library; students; one member of the Library Advisory Committee; the Executive Director of Facilities; and the Executive Director of Academic Technology. We discussed our findings and outlined our recommendations during afternoon meeting times, and presented them in an exit interview attended by the Executive Director of the Library and several Library staff on December 6.

Unfortunately, the Provost was not available to meet with us either at the exit interview or at any other time during our visit.

The Team found our three days on campus to be rewarding, illuminating, and instructive. The process was well designed and effective, the interviewees honest and forthcoming, and the support from Ms. Eileen Matthews and Ms. Linda VanBrakle invaluable.

The Library Program Review Team findings and recommendations are clustered into the following seven categories:

1. Develop and implement a plan for fixing the building
2. Secure funding to support all library missions
3. Lead university efforts to develop information literacy on campus
4. Strengthen communication inside and outside the library
5. Embrace technology as integral part of the library mission
6. Use ACRL Standards to plan and assess library activities
7. Other recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> *Program Review Policies and Procedures*. Washington DC: Division of Academic Affairs, Gallaudet University, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *Gallaudet University Library Program Review Self-Study Report*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Library, October 30, 2000.

## **1. Develop and implement a plan for fixing the building**

The security system (to assure that books and other materials have been checked out) has not worked for years. The students are aware of this fact and simply walk out with books and other materials. This has been especially true of new books and materials. Even some of the deaf collection materials have been stolen. Some missing materials may be irreplaceable.

***Recommendation 1.1:** Request funding for and install a new security system as soon as possible. This request has been made before but not funded. The Provost must advocate for this need. The library advisory committee should also lend its support to this need. End-of-year funds could perhaps be tapped for this system. Write a rationale for funding with specific brands and price ranges of security systems.*

Almost to a person the library staff mentioned the difficulty of working in a building that has numerous problems in the physical environment. The building has leaked since the day construction was completed. Though several attempts in the past have been made to make the building waterproof, the leaks continue to cause damage to valuable library holdings and have led to the formation of molds in the duct system which some believe to be dangerous to the health of the staff. These leaks have helped to destroy or stain large areas of the carpet, which have been repaired haphazardly in the past, but are now being replaced. New carpeting is being laid. Students and staff complain about the lack of adequate lighting. Staff members are hampered by non-ergonomic chairs and crowded work conditions. Students are concerned about the lack of adequate and semi-private study space and the poor condition of the furniture in public areas. Some steps are being taken at present to rectify these conditions, and new study carrels have been ordered. The building has not been adequately maintained and cleaned.

***Recommendation 1.2:** Develop a short term (one to three year) maintenance and replacement plan for alleviating as many of the problems in the Merrill Learning Center as is possible. Establish better maintenance and cleaning practices. In conjunction with Gallaudet's facilities staff, find creative ways to improve lighting in the public areas of the building and work with Facilities staff to continue replacement of furnishings.*

***Recommendation 1.3:** Investigate new ways to waterproof the present building.*

***Recommendation 1.4:** Consider opening up additional space by removing walls from underused classrooms. Use some classroom space for new public areas and/or the Archives. Plan for better use of staff workspaces.*

***Recommendation 1.5:** Make the building a single-use facility by moving all programs except TV production out of the Merrill Learning Center.*

***Recommendation 1.6:** Develop a long-range master plan to acquire sufficient and adequate space for all library needs both in programming and in materials. Investigate funding and designs for a new building close to HMB and the new 'smart' building. Review this master plan with the University's Space Committee and establish the library's priority in the University.*

## 2. Secure funding to support all library missions

The Gallaudet Library is seriously underfunded. As reported in a working draft of the *Gallaudet University Self Study*<sup>3</sup>, under development for presentation to the MSA Commission on Higher Education, calls for increased funding for the Library date back at least to the 1991 Self Study, which noted that funding was inadequate to meet faculty and student needs. The 1994 Vision Implementation Plan (VIP) report<sup>4</sup> called for staff reductions in the Library and an increase in the Library's budget to support collection of print materials. The staff reductions were made, but the increased funding never materialized. The VIP report also noted that the libraries in a comparable group of colleges were budgeted at an average rate of 4.6% of their institutions' budgets, whereas Gallaudet's Library was budgeted at only little more than 3%. Though the VIP called for an increase from 3% to 4% of the University's budget, in fiscal year 2000 the Gallaudet Library's budget has declined to 2.8% of the University's \$72 million budget.

The Library's lack of sufficient resources is compounded by its multiple and unique missions. Like other university libraries, the Gallaudet Library is responsible for providing materials and services to support research and learning by its students and faculty. Unlike other libraries, however, it also has a mission to collect and host the Deaf Collection, the world's most complete collection of books, periodicals, historical documents, and other materials related to deafness and deaf people. The Deaf Collection serves not only the Gallaudet community but is tapped by scholars across the country and around the world who can find its offerings no where else.

A third mission of the Library is found in its Archives and its museum-quality artifact collection. Unlike archives found in other university libraries, which collect institutional materials of interest, the Archives in the Gallaudet Library collects any and all materials and objects related to deafness and/or of historical and cultural significance to the Deaf community. A tour through the Archives revealed a plethora of hidden treasures: objects from past Gallaudet presidents; photographs of and by significant Deaf people; paintings; TTYs dating back many years; a wheel chair reputed to have been used by Edward Minor Gallaudet; etc. Many of these items are of museum quality. In fact, a Museum of Deaf History and Culture could—and should--be established using the materials already collected in the Archives as a foundation.

Though the Library has at least three missions, funding is inadequate for even one of them. As a result, the Library's collections do not meet the needs of its patrons. Materials for the Deaf Collection are aggressively acquired and maintained, but students complain that an insufficient number of copies are available for the number of people who want to use them. The general collection has been augmented by the inclusion of electronic databases and materials, but chronic underfunding and the hemorrhaging of materials through the non-existent security system have left the print collection so atrophied that students have to drive to other libraries to find the books they need right away. The acquisitions budget for the Archives collection is so small that donations are the only viable source of new materials.

<sup>3</sup> *Gallaudet University Self Study*. Prepared for the Middle States Association Commission on Higher Education. Washington, DC: Unpublished draft, November 2000.

<sup>4</sup> *Gallaudet University Vision Implementation Plan. Steering Committee Recommendations. Report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs*. Washington DC: Division of Academic Affairs, Gallaudet University, December 22, 1994.

It is time to rectify this longstanding neglect.

*Recommendation 2.1: Rewrite the Library mission statement to recognize the multiple missions of the Library, and gain approval of the new statement from the University administration.*

*Recommendation 2.2: Work with the Provost to develop an overall plan for securing appropriate funding to support all approved missions of the Library.*

*Recommendation 2.3: The Provost must become the strongest advocate for the Library, to secure funding for the Library's building improvement, security system, and collection needs from appropriate sources both inside and outside the University.*

*Recommendation 2.4: Develop a plan for allocating scarce resources for collections development based on actual use and needs of students.*

*Recommendation 2.5: In the annual budget presented to the Provost, identify funds allocated and used to accomplish each Library mission.*

*Recommendation 2.6: The University shall increase immediately and significantly the funds available to the Library for collections development.*

*Recommendation 2.7: With the assistance of the Provost and the Development Office, the Library shall develop and implement a plan for funding, establishing, housing, staffing and maintaining a Museum of Deaf History and Culture. Deaf Way II would seem to provide an excellent opportunity to both inaugurate the new Museum and secure international donations to its collection.*

### **3. Lead university efforts to develop information literacy on campus**

Information technology has led to a massive increase in the volume of information and the complexity of information systems. Information has become a pervasive and essential part of our society and our lives. Since 1989, when the American Library Association issued its first national report<sup>5</sup> that defined the concept of information literacy, institutions of all types and citizens in all walks of life have embraced it. The information literate person is defined as *one who is able to recognize when information is needed and has the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information* (American Library Association 1).

The *Gallaudet University Library Program Review Self-Study Report* provides an excellent description of the library's bibliographic instruction program, which is focused on the formal teaching of making effective use of the Gallaudet library. Information literacy as a metaphor for student learning is very important to the Gallaudet student population because of its special

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<sup>5</sup> *American Library Association. Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Final Report.* Chicago: American Library Association, 1989. <<http://www.ala.org/acrl/nili/ilit1st.html>>.

nature. It will ensure that students acquire the critical and creative thinking skills needed to become life-long learners.

*Recommendation 3.1: Change the focus of the Library's instructional program from the current emphasis on bibliographic instruction to information literacy.*

Ensuring that Gallaudet students are information literate when they graduate is an effort that needs to be undertaken in a systematic way under strong leadership, and it must be embraced not only by librarians but also by faculty and administrators.

*Recommendation 3.2: Library staff shall take responsibility for, and be proactive in, educating the university community on information literacy and its role in the learning process.*

*Recommendation 3.3: Integrate information literacy instruction into Freshman Year Seminar (FYS) courses and/or as an independent short course.*

*Recommendation 3.4: Use the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html>) as the basis for incorporating information literacy instruction throughout the Gallaudet curriculum.*

#### **4. Strengthen communication inside and outside the library**

Every library struggles with the challenge of communication and the library at Gallaudet University is doubly challenged because of its special mission in a deaf community.

A library is an organization whose success depends on staff working closely as a team and whose operation is a series of interdependent functions. No employee in a library can succeed without the help of others whose work is affected by, and contributes to, the work of those around them. Hence, communication in a library is essential to its operation and to the success of its services in an academic community.

Within the *Gallaudet University Library Program Review Self-Study Report* and through the interviews communication emerged as a concern. Communication both within the library and between the library and the campus can be improved. Library staff report that communication within divisions is good and that the three division heads appear to share information adequately. Some staff expressed frustration with the lack of information that reaches them from other divisions and from the University Librarian.

The Program Review Team learned that some deaf staff perceive they are not being adequately informed nor included in many of the important conversations. Students observed that the signing skills of some library staff are weak, hence making it difficult for them to express themselves to deaf colleagues and students.

*Recommendation 4.1: Schedule regular meetings of all full-time Library staff.*

**Recommendation 4.2:** *Use multiple modes of communication within library; e.g., lists on e-mail that go to all full-time staff; bi-weekly staff newsletter; written memoranda; face-to-face interactions; e-bulletin board for information sharing; walking to workstations.*

**Recommendation 4.3:** *Open a dialog to address needs and issues of deaf employees.*

**Recommendation 4.4:** *Invite staff from any unit or level of the organization to address a problem; e.g., form cross-functional teams to create best solutions, to make service and program improvements, or to determine better ways to train or use student assistants.*

**Recommendation 4.5:** *Share library collection budget information in writing as early in the year as possible and with all who need to know. As the year progresses, share information regarding budget changes.*

Library staff as well as several people outside the library acknowledged that the vital importance of the library to the academic community is not recognized on campus. There was general agreement among those interviewed that the library has become less visible as more information has become available online. Some faculty report that they are adequately served by what they and their students can find on the Web. Several people from outside the library who were interviewed remarked that they had learned much about the library from the interview and they left the interview better informed about its mission, resources and challenges.

A new “smart” building that will incorporate the very latest in academic technology and direct student services is under construction right next door to the Merrill Learning Center, but has no physical or programmatic connection to the Library.

The Program Review Team requested twice to adjust its schedule in order to meet with the Provost about the importance of the library to the University but she was unavailable. This was read by some as another indication of the lack of priority given to library funding and programs by the university administration.

**Recommendation 4.6:** *Inform campus and university administration regarding the importance of the library in the learning process. Plan a multi-phased public relations program that involves all library staff who will volunteer to help. Offer training to develop advocacy skills among library staff. Incorporate advocacy and public relations into responsibilities of library staff.*

**Recommendation 4.7:** *Articulate the varying needs of different library users and develop plans for the best ways to serve:*

- *1<sup>st</sup> year students;*
- *upperclass students;*
- *graduate students;*
- *faculty;*
- *researchers.*

**Recommendation 4.8:** *Initiate discussion with Academic Technology and with the School Of Undergraduate Studies (soon to become the College of Arts, Sciences and Technology) about*

*ways to integrate Library services and information technology with the facilities, programs and services slated to be offered in the new "smart" building.*

***Recommendation 4.9:** Survey users on a regular basis (e.g. every three years) to determine their satisfaction with the library and share survey results with the community. Collaborating with appropriate campus units, design a survey instrument that will reflect the unique needs of Gallaudet University.*

***Recommendation 4.10:** Work with the University Development Office to write a fundraising plan for the library. Choose priority activities or naming opportunities that will attract outside funding. Work for some early successes that can be leveraged for bigger and continuous gifts.*

## **5. The Gallaudet University Library should embrace technology as a key method of Library content delivery to end users of Library programs and services.**

Like all university libraries, the Gallaudet University Library is struggling to cope with the profound changes that the development of new informational technology is bringing. The Gallaudet Library has no overall technology plan, and written policies regarding technology use are limited. For example, there is no clearly stated, written, uniform standard regarding operating systems, software installation, and personal use of computers. Instead, standards are expressed in conversation. One example of an unwritten standard is the recommendation that the Library staff use Windows NT as their default operating system (because the University supports that system). Standards like these should be written down. The technology plan should also include a provision that if a different operating system needs to be used, the user should have a compelling reason to justify the extra expenses that may be incurred.

Changes in informational technology are rapid and expensive, requiring a careful eye to the future and judicious use of scarce resources. New technology also offers some savings: members of the Library's Collections Management department indicate that some vendors charge lower prices for electronic subscriptions than for print subscriptions to the same journals.

***Recommendation 5.1:** Develop and implement a comprehensive technology plan for the Library.*

The self-study report and interviews with Library staff indicate that some staff lack sufficient training in basic areas such as software installation, management of files, and the troubleshooting of basic problems. The Review team salutes the Library's efforts in working with that unit to develop a course to be taught in January 2001 and encourages the Library to take the initiative in forging further collaboration of this kind.

Several interviewees noted the challenges inherent in teaching technology-related courses to deaf staff due to the need that deaf people have to divide their attention between the course instructor and their computer screen when applying newly learned information in the process of completing course work. It is suggested that hearing staff also need to have time to process information given to them, although to a lesser degree. These factors, combined with the economic need to

reduce the use of interpreters for courses given off-campus, make it even more imperative that the Gallaudet Library work on strengthening its working partnership with the Academic Technology unit.

*Recommendation 5.2: Identify and remove obstacles to staff training in technology.*

*Recommendation 5.3: Make better use of existing training available on campus. Incorporate training into the overall technology plan for the Library.*

*Recommendation 5.4: Continue work with Academic Technology to develop and teach appropriate training classes for Library staff.*

*Recommendation 5.5: Increase technology partnerships with Academic Technology.*

It was clear from the self-study report and from interviews with Library staff that the loss of a full-time Systems Analyst has caused difficulties for the unit. The Director of Information Services has assumed systems analysis duties and performed them admirably; however, by trying to do two full time jobs simultaneously she is unable to devote the time she should be giving to her primary duties. A fulltime systems analyst could assume all technology-related duties currently performed by the Director of Information, plus take the lead in developing and implementing the overall technology plan recommended above. Dr. Day is to be commended for holding open two vacant positions until the issue of whether or not a Systems Analyst position should be created was resolved.

*Recommendation 5.6: Assign one vacant position to that of Library Systems Analyst.*

Interviews with Library staff indicate that student workers are often problematic. We note that part of the problem may be due to lack of knowledge about information technology and lack of skill in its use.

*Recommendation 5.7: Train student assistants more extensively in technology of the Library.*

WRLC software can be used to identify and track circulation patterns, which may assist the Library to ascertain which books or periodicals are most frequently used. This knowledge could then be used to guide collections development.

*Recommendation 5.8: Take full advantage of available WRLC software capabilities for making management decisions.*

There is some disagreement among Library staff about the appropriateness and viability of having an open computer lab housed and supported by the Library. Good arguments were offered on both sides of this debate. Students stressed the need for access to computers in the Library because computers are essential tools for the kind of research and study activities they perform there. Also, students point out that access to other computer labs on campus is limited. Some library staff suggested that the former lab was subject to vandalism and was often used for

personal email and word processing rather than for research. Others suggest that Academic Technology should be responsible for computer labs on campus, not the Library.

The Program Review Team feels strongly that the information technology available in Internet-connected personal computers make them essential tools for library patrons, even when they are used for email or word processing rather than for searching databases. The increased use of electronic journals increases the need for more computers. Furthermore, since librarians are among the campus professionals most knowledgeable about information technology—including email and word processing—, we see the provision of computers, and training and assistance in their use, as key elements in the mission of the Gallaudet Library.

One way for the Library to provide access to personal computers in the Merrill Learning Center would be to reopen and staff the now-closed computer lab. Another way would be to distribute the computers in open areas around the building that would be more convenient for patrons and easier for staff to supervise.

***Recommendation 5.9:** Redistribute computers around public spaces within the Library, and/or re-open and staff the computer lab.*

***Recommendation 5.10:** Increase the number of public access computers.*

## **6. Use ACRL Standards to plan and assess library activities**

In today's knowledge environment in which technology is changing rapidly, the volume of knowledge is exploding, formats are proliferating, and points of access to knowledge are rapidly increasing, both the role and future of libraries on college and university campuses are being questioned. Although the symbolic vision of the college or university library as the "heart," the "center of intellectual activity," and the repository for the record of human knowledge continues to resonate, questions are being raised about the library's sustainability in the future and the legitimacy of its role.

We found the Gallaudet University library to be no different than other academic libraries in this respect. In meetings with students, faculty, and librarians during our two-day visit on campus, we heard numerous questions and comments on a wide range of topics and issues with respect to the library's ability to respond to the information needs on campus, to encourage student learning, to aid faculty research, and to support the university's mission. Many of the concerns raised by students addressed outputs issues. They did not think that the library was capable of contributing to their learning, and they cited inadequate collections, computer access, and service hours. Students also said that the library faculty was not able to create an environment conducive to learning.

Librarians expressed their frustrations with the inadequacy of the library building, a lack of funds for developing collections, and the absence of financial support for training and participation in professional association activities. Librarians and other library staff were also concerned about

input issues. For example, they observed a decline in library attendance and materials circulation. The *Gallaudet University Library Program Review Self-Study Report* is very thorough and captures the library's operations in an excellent manner. However, although the report gives an in-depth view of library operations, along with some descriptions of inputs, it fails to respond to outputs and outcomes (i.e., how the library contributes to student learning and faculty research). In an environment where knowledge growth is so expansive, traditional measures (inputs) of library quality no longer suffice.

If the Gallaudet University library's role is to remain integral to the university's learning, teaching, and research mission, it must begin to evaluate its collections, its services, and its activities with respect to the contributions each makes to the mission of the university. The library staff cited the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) *Standards for College Libraries* in its report. The ACRL *Standards for College Libraries* considers inputs, outputs, and outcomes in its criteria for library evaluation, presents points of comparison with peer institutions, and raises a number of questions that should be answered under each of these categories.

*Recommendation 6.1: That the Gallaudet University library use the ACRL Standards for College Libraries inputs and outputs, points of comparison, and the evaluation questions raised under each category as the basis for evaluating, reporting, and realigning its programs to better serve the mission of the University.*

## **7. Other recommendations**

Several students and staff expressed concerns about the hours that the Library is open. One student suggested that hours could be increased during the week, and reduced on weekends (Friday through Sunday). Also, problems result because full time staff are sometimes unavailable in the Library on weekends.

*Recommendation 7.1: Survey Library users to determine what hours would best fit their needs.*

*Recommendation 7.2: Have at least one full time Library staff member on duty during all open hours.*

Some staff expressed concern that student workers were unreliable and too often ineffective. Student workers seemed to have limited knowledge of information technology or of the functions of Library units other than the one in which they worked. Student worker training is left to their immediate supervisor in their unit.

*Recommendation 7.3: Explore providing all student workers with a common orientation to library functions and services. Provide increased training in use of information technology.*

*Recommendation 7.3: Review opportunities available to student workers. Provide system for rewarding and promoting successful workers into more demanding, higher paying jobs.*

Several staff indicated that their work is hampered or complicated by work done in other units. Some staff feel that they have insufficient opportunity to identify and help bring about needed changes. The lack of written policies for accomplishing shared tasks inhibits production. The Library's vacant positions provide an opportunity for change.

***Recommendation 7.4:** Analyze work flow in all units for increased efficiency and possible staff reallocation.*

***Recommendation 7.5:** Outsource all copy cataloging. Reassign staff to tasks that may only be done in the Gallaudet Library.*

***Recommendation 7.6:** Explore new organizational structure that utilizes staff effectively and facilitates change. Form cross-unit teams to resolve problems and identify new areas of needed change.*

***Recommendation 7.7:** Place the question of how best to utilize the remaining vacant position as the first item on the agenda of an all-staff meeting.*

## **Conclusion**

The Gallaudet University Library succeeds despite a difficult environment. Students praise the staff for its commitment to their education and its personalized assistance. The Program Review Team found its staff to be well-trained, dedicated, knowledgeable, creative, forward-thinking, student-centered and eager for positive change. New instructional technology has improved services and information availability. The circulation rate is higher than that of libraries in comparable universities. The Deaf Collection, a jewel in the Gallaudet crown, draws scholars from across the country and around the world. The Archives is a growing trove of hidden treasures waiting to be revealed.

However, a poorly designed and maintained building, chronic underfunding, and neglect by the University administration have undermined both the general collection and staff morale. A leaky roof and a feeble HVAC system threaten irreplaceable historical objects and materials, and the non-existent security system has allowed at least 3% of the print materials in the Library to walk out the door. Poor lighting and an aging general collection discourage students, who often travel to other libraries for study and research. The colors are drab. Snakes slither through the collections.

Improvement in communication—both inside the Library and between the Library and other units—is needed, along with formal plans for improving funding, the use of technology, and the design and maintenance of the building. Better training and use of staff is in order.

We are confident that, with an increased commitment to the Library by the University administration and careful use of available resources, the Library can build on its current strengths and meet the very significant challenges that it faces.