Life Sciences Division Libraries Proposal – 3/2/09

In response to the Provost’s letter of January 15, 2009, Library Administration has directed the Life Sciences Division Libraries to draft a plan that addresses the Provost’s call to:

“…integrate library collections and service points in a way that will allow the greatest economies of scale, while also recognizing the need to support an array of library services that are appropriate to the needs of different populations and disciplinary communities.”

Specifically, the Provost asked that we consider integrating the Biology, Applied Health Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine Libraries with the Funk ACES Library, similar to what is being proposed for the Physical Sciences Division and Grainger Engineering Library.

For the purposes of this exercise, the Head Librarians of the Applied Health Sciences, Biology and Veterinary Medicine libraries were tasked with developing plans that address the Provost’s request to consider consolidation of our collections and services in the Funk-ACES Library. The recommendations for the individual units are outlined in the attached documents.

While there has not been enough time to develop thoughtful, consultative plans for the consolidation of current Life Science Libraries, the Division is committed to identifying and implementing ideas that make sense for the Libraries and our users. The Life Sciences Division recognizes the need to plan for service models that are sustainable for the future and we are prepared to contribute to the Library-wide operational changes and service reductions needed to meet uncertain fiscal challenges in FY10 and beyond. We recognize that this will require a fundamental change in the way we operate our physical facilities and we are prepared to address this challenge in the coming three years through careful planning, analysis and implementation.

Over the course of several meetings on the proposals, the Life Sciences Division members have identified several initiatives that will facilitate the new service models transition. We can begin to implement these activities immediately:

1. Ensure the Funk-ACES Library has adequate staffing to meet user demands and current obligations by re-assigning Division personnel.

2. Immediately begin identifying and transferring print copies of serials available electronically to Oak St. in preparation of upcoming moves/consolidations. This could include Google books and other monographs available electronically as well.

3. Start discussions within our departments/schools about new library service models and alternatives to the existing departmental libraries.

4. Begin a more aggressive acquisitions policy for electronic journal backfiles, reference works, and texts in the life and health sciences using both departmental library and central funds.
In addition to the reorganization plans being developed by the individual librarians, the Division members have also been discussing the opportunities our changing work environments provide. Particularly in the services we offer our users, there are several new initiatives that we are ready and willing to implement:

- On demand scanning and document delivery of print articles/book chapters
- Collaborative instruction
- Enhanced support for digitization efforts
- IM and Chat reference support
- Scholarly communications – author support services
- Centralized electronic Reserves projects
- Special project support teams

Role of the Funk ACES Library

Consistent with the Library's stated priorities, we recognize the role of the Funk-ACES Library as a crucial resource for the Life Sciences Division. We also recognize the immediate need to fill critical positions that will become vacant in the ACES Library this year so that it can continue to operate effectively. Our goal is to provide support to the Funk-ACES Library while increasing efficiencies and strengths for the Division as a whole. It must also be acknowledged that, given the size and capacity of the Funk-ACES Library facility, it can only house a fraction of the combined collections of LSD Libraries, and then, only if the Funk-ACES Library divests itself of a sizeable part of its existing collection. The Funk-ACES Librarian will develop a plan to accept the incoming collections and personnel from whatever proposals advance based on realistic assessments of the physical accommodations of the Funk-ACES Library.

Additional Life Sciences Considerations

While not specifically mentioned in the Provost’s letter, the Biotechnology Librarian and the librarians at the Natural History Survey Library (Institute of Natural Resources Sustainability) are also involved in the formulation of the Division plan. The Biotech Librarian serves as a new service model for subject librarians and her experience will help guide the development of our plans. The NHS Library is also an important component of the Life Sciences Division, both in terms of collections and expertise of the staff. Due to recent reorganization of the INRS, the status of this library within the Division and the University Library is unsettled, but it remains an important resource for the University which needs to be considered in any plans going forward from the Library’s Life Sciences Division. The Library of the Health Sciences is also not mentioned in the Provost's letter. While it is administered by UIC, it provides a significant amount of collections and service support to the life sciences community on campus.
New Life Sciences Service Model Planning

Ideally, our plans for consolidating service points will be designed to minimize support staff expenditures for LSD departmental libraries while maintaining the most desirable services that do not require our current support staffing levels. This will require us to rethink our current methods for providing circulation services and collection support services, with the likelihood that these services may no longer be supported in smaller departmental libraries in the future. One scenario envisions our end product as being highly effective service centers with little need for the level of staffing now employed for our current operations. We also envision a significant shrinking of our physical footprint in some buildings, which allows for further cost reductions should the Library be expected to pay for space based on square footage assigned. Regardless of the final product, this change in operations will need to be phased in over the coming few years.

We are prepared to immediately begin assessing our current collections in order to prepare for future consolidation efforts. The rapid change over to electronic access rather than access to paper collections provides significant opportunities for economies in staff processing and circulation services. We will identify large sections of our paper collections that can be transferred to Oak Street or withdrawn.

We will also begin to identify methods for operating our facilities, and maintaining the services we need to retain based on feedback from our constituents, with less staff support needed in departmental libraries. This will likely require forming new partnerships, with both Library units and academic departments, which currently do not exist. Developing these new partnerships will be crucial to the successful implementation of our new service model.

Attachments:

1. Applied Health Sciences Library Proposal
2. Biology Library Proposals
3. Veterinary Medicine Library Proposal
1. **Applied Health Sciences Library**  [working draft: 03-02-09]

Given the Applied Health Sciences Library’s high use rate and the importance to the College of AHS of 1) maintaining a cohesive collection; 2) retaining the AHS Library’s identity; and 3) supporting the College’s four accredited programs, we propose that the AHS Library remain in its current central location, while realizing savings in other ways. Developing a sustainable library service model for the future will involve considerable creative collaboration. Although the AHS Library presents a more complex picture than most because it doesn’t fit neatly into one model or another, we want to make an active contribution. In FY09, the AHS Library’s student wage budget was reduced by 20% and its GA position eliminated. We propose that the AHS Library reduce open hours in the following manner. 1) Eliminate evening hours during summer term II semester (a net reduction of 8 hours/week in summer). 2) If acceptable to the College, during fall and spring semesters, eliminate Saturday afternoon hours and reduce open hours on Sunday to 2pm-8pm (a net reduction of 5 hours/week in fall and spring). These reductions in open hours for FY10 would immediately net another savings of 22% in the AHS Library’s student wage budget.

We believe that in the future, the AHS collection could be serviced more from either the ACES Library or central Main Library points. The Main Library might be more logical because of proximity to our present location. We could take further advantage of central journal check-in, and of central print reserves, especially for lower level undergrad courses. AHS faculty already utilizes electronic reserves, but we could promote this service even more. By migrating some servicing of the collection to central points, the two civil service staff in the AHS Library can begin to take on new roles, whether in the AHS Library or elsewhere in the Library. The two staff are highly valued by the College for their active role in providing assistance to students in the AHS Library. If the circulation, shelving and retrieval functions were taken over and handled consistently and effectively by a centrally managed pool, the librarian and staff would be more available to contribute to public service in the unit and beyond, and to Library-wide service initiatives, such as chat reference, IDEALS, digitizing, etc. Further, with less supervisory responsibility, the librarian would be free to focus on collection development, explore more customized services and faculty liaison activity, pursue collaborative instruction projects, yet still offer specialized reference service during office hours in the unit. Staff collection support will continue to be required until the Library transitions to fuller electronic access.

While it is important for the AHS Library to maintain its present collaborations with physical sciences and engineering and life sciences, we will also benefit from building stronger collaborative relationships with the UIC Library of the Health Sciences Urbana branch and complementary behavioral science disciplines. The College of AHS is multidisciplinary by nature; the faculty pursue research collaborations with counterparts in fields as diverse as engineering, nutrition, immunology, neuroscience, and sociology, psychology and human and community development, for example. Research is focused on improving health and well-being with college-wide research initiatives in the areas of aging and disability. The many aspects of sport and its role as exercise are also predominant subjects. But the overarching research and teaching focus for the College, preventing chronic disease and promoting health and wellness
across the lifespan, has most affinity with health science and behavioral science. The College of AHS is bringing to campus two new degree programs in health: the graduate level Masters in Public Health (MPH) and the undergraduate Interdisciplinary Health (I-health). To meet growing curriculum needs in the health sciences, the Library must partner closely with the UIC Library of the Health Sciences to develop collections and instructional services that serve common goals.

This plan presents a more cautious approach to planning for the future, but in this case, the caution is warranted because the AHS Library is used heavily by a large cohort of students who consider it a central gathering place, and as such it is integral to the mission of the College of Applied Health Sciences.
2. Biology Library proposals

Recognizing the need to minimize the number of individual departmental libraries, here are two scenarios for closing the Biology Library. One follows the historical divisional structure and recognizes the fact that it is tempting to see Funk ACES and Grainger Engineering libraries as symmetrical hubs for life sciences and physical sciences respectively despite the actual differences between the two situations. The other plan takes a more truly interdisciplinary tack and proposes a merged science library.

Issues:

The basic life sciences literature represented by the Biology Library collection is used by faculty and students from many different disciplines across campus, including all of the physical sciences, psychology, anthropology, business, library science (informatics), and many others outside of the two schools of Integrative Biology and Molecular and Cellular Biology. The converse is partly true, with SIB and SMCB people using Biology, Chemistry, Natural History Survey, and Health Sciences libraries (and Vet Med as well) heavily and other libraries much less. The faculty do not see themselves as having affiliation with the College of ACES or Applied Health Sciences but do see strong connections with Chemistry. Many have joint appointments with the Illinois Natural History Survey or the College of Medicine.

Faculty primarily use electronic journals and page books to their offices; apart from a few taxonomists who use old, un-digitized books and journals they do not come to the library often, although when they do they are usually in a hurry. Graduate students also use electronic journals and page books, but are more likely to browse the collection since they do not know the literature as well and are more likely to check out large quantities of books.

Undergraduates primarily use the library as study space, for class reserves, and to obtain books and articles (at the last possible moment) for term papers. Most of their classes are in Burrill and Morrill Halls. If they have no classes in the area, will they travel all the way to Funk to use the library? How will this closure affect the Library of the Health Sciences faculty and students?

At a guess, about 2/3 of our 80-85,000 journal volumes are currently available electronically, and purchasing all remaining electronic backfiles that are currently available (about $120,000 worth) would bring that up to 3/4. At least some of the remaining journals are duplicates or very rarely used so our core physical collection could be significantly smaller than it is. Our monograph collection could not be weeded as dramatically but some portion could certainly go to Stacks or Oak Street. Processing all these materials takes time, of course.

The Provost’s Letter, Done Right

ACES staff (and perhaps staff from other LSD libraries?) move large quantities of volumes out of ACES for at least one year while Biology staff are also transferring volumes out and selecting materials to move to Funk Life Sciences Library (or whatever it’s called). Libraries that are moving in to Funk LS transfer material to Funk in call number order, or as space permits. Diane moves to Funk LS as Biology Librarian (after the collection moves), Melody moves to Funk as CPLA/Asst ACES librarian (late summer 2009). Biology reserves go to
Grainger/Undergrad/Main/Funk (location TBA). Biology closes after transfer to Funk is complete or nearly so. A staff member remains at Biology to finish Stacks/Oak Street transfers, if needed. Other staff members are transferred to other units with staffing needs.

The two schools of life sciences have expressed some interest in using the existing Biology Library Reading Room as a learning commons-type room with computers, TA office hours, IT help, and perhaps office hours for a librarian. While this plan obviously requires funding from one or both schools, it is certainly a viable and useful new service model for the library as well.

**Mid-Campus Science Library**

Permanent merger of multiple mid-campus science libraries including Biology, Chemistry, and Geology, in the current Biology Library space. Biology can make space for 15,000 Chemistry volumes as soon as the end of Spring Semester 2009; Chemistry moves their material to Burrill Hall in the summer or as soon as possible. Geology moves in ASAP after Biology clears enough space. Tina and Lura keep offices in Noyes and Natural History or move to Burrill, as desired. Combine reserves in Burrill. Keep one staff member temporarily at Geology to finish map cataloging and analytic cleanup project. Melody goes to ACES as CPLA/Asst ACES librarian Summer 2009. New science library has 1-2 staff members; other staff members are transferred to other units with staffing needs. Pending discussions with College of Medicine administrators and Library of the Health Sciences librarians and staff, a closer relationship with Health Sciences is also possible.

This plan reunites libraries that used to be combined—Biology, Geology, and Health Sciences used to be one library, with Geology split off in 1959 when Burrill Hall was built and Health Sciences split off later (in the 1980s?). This choice does not create a Life Sciences hub, but the Provost’s letter doesn’t do that either. SOLS faculty utilize Chemistry, Health Sciences, Natural History Survey, and Vet Med collections rather than ACES or Applied Health Sciences although all of these departments and more use the Biology collection. While faculty do not go to the library very often, graduate students and undergrads still do so and abandoning the central part of campus to create science libraries on the north and south ends does not increase services to them. This proposal combines several units, cuts down on the library’s footprint, eliminates several staff positions, creates an interdisciplinary space, and retains a library presence in the middle of the campus.
3. Veterinary Medicine Library Proposal (3/02/09)

There are a number of significant issues that will influence the decision and timeline to close the Veterinary Medicine Library and consolidate the collections and services with Funk ACES. On the positive side, the merger of the two libraries would result in an improved collection by combining their respective animal health sciences and nutrition collection strengths. The Vet Med Librarian could also provide much needed support in ACES, even in a part-time capacity, due to their existing unfilled professional positions. The two FTE Vet Med staff members would then be available for reassignment, and over $12,000 in student wage expenditures would be saved by the Library.

The issues that would need to be addressed before such a move could take place are outlined below. While the issues may take time to resolve, planning and preparation for the merger could begin almost immediately in order to set up the logistics needed to facilitate the physical relocations later on.

Accreditation issue

The UI College of Veterinary Medicine is accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association. The AVMA Accreditation Policies have a specific standard for library support for the colleges. While this standard is open to some interpretation, it should be noted that the accredited veterinary schools in the US and Canada do maintain an identifiable library collection and librarian to address this requirement. The University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine is next scheduled for AVMA Accreditation in 2013. It may smooth the accreditation process if the library merger takes place after the visit. In informal conversations with several CVM staff, including the Library Committee members and the Dean, this is the most significant concern.

Clinical Staff Needs

The Veterinary Teaching Hospital operates two clinics on a 24-hour basis. The collection is frequently used by the clinic staff and the 4th year students in clinical practice. Electronic resources and the clinician’s personal collections meet many of their information needs, however, emergency situations do arise where immediate access to the print resources of the Veterinary Medicine Library is essential. Having the Library’s print resources close at hand ensures timely access in critical situations.

Course Reserve Collection

The most highly used service in the Vet Med Library is the Course Reserve Collection. These materials, selected by instructors each semester, consist of books and other materials with required reading for each course. In order to ensure the availability of these materials for all students in the classes, a two-hour loan period is enforced, with fines assessed to materials returned late. Until these materials are available electronically, or the instructors revise their course reading requirements, the collection must remain available and accessible to the students.
Study Space

The Vet Med Library provides significant study space for students in the College. A mix of private study carrels, study tables, and a group study room provide seating for over 130 students. Public access computers, a number of CVM-networked computers and wireless network access are provided here. It is not likely the students will find another location in the College for studying and class preparation.

Collections

It is estimated that nearly 1,000 linear feet of shelving space would need to be made available in Funk ACES to accommodate the Vet Med Library’s “working” collection of monographs. Another 1,000 linear feet would be needed for the veterinary journals not yet available electronically. This figure (~2,000 lf) represents less than 40% of the existing Vet Med Library collection. While combining the collection of the Veterinary Medicine Library with the Funk ACES Library would build a stronger resource, there are areas where the collections don’t mix well. Currently there is very little medical component in the Funk collection, so the general medical texts that make up nearly 50% of the Vet Med collection would be out of scope for the agriculture collection. Ideally, the medical collection would be more appropriate in the Health Sciences Library

Location

The Veterinary Medicine Library is located in the College of Veterinary Medicine building and adjacent to the Veterinary Teaching Hospital on the south end of campus. The primary users of the Vet Med Library are mostly located within 100 yards of the facility, while the Funk-ACES Library is approximately one mile north of the veterinary campus. There is no direct bus service and parking at ACES-Funk is severely limited.

Alternatives

For the purpose of this exercise, only the elimination of the Veterinary Medicine Library is being outlined. While the permanent closure is the desired outcome in terms of cost, there are alternatives to closing that would provide some cost savings, but not to the extent of eliminating the library. Briefly, they are:

- Operate the existing Vet Med Library with fewer staff
- Maintain existing space but reduce the size of the collection and staff by becoming a branch of the Funk-ACES Library
- Eliminate the Veterinary Medicine Library, but leave a largely unstaffed “reading room” of select materials for use by the Veterinary Teaching Hospital.
- The College of Veterinary Medicine has developed a facilities plan to restructure the entire Vet Med campus area. Among the plans are a relocated “library/café” If, and
when, this project gets underway would be the ideal time to implement any significant changes to the Vet Med Library, including closure.