

**ASSESSMENT OF THE WILSON LIBRARY *PROGRAM REVIEW* AND THE LIBRARY
EXTERNAL REVIEWER: DR. THERESA S. BYRD, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN, UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO
JUNE 22, 2011**

SCOPE OF REVIEW

On May 2, 2011, Dr. Byrd visited the University of La Verne's Wilson Library as part of a departmental review related to the University's assessment initiative. This report describes Dr. Byrd's observations and recommendations resulting from her visit. The review of the library came at the request of Dr. Vinaya Tripuraneni, University Librarian. Dr. Tripuraneni served as the primary contact for the day. The goal of the program review was to evaluate the quality of the library resources and the effectiveness of the services provided and to assess if the library is meeting its strategic goals and objectives. The following three objectives from the Wilson Library Strategic Plan were identified by the librarians as critical priorities and used as a lens for the program review.

Priority One: The Library's top priority was to achieve the staffing levels needed to successfully implement strategic goals and objectives (Strategic Plan Objective 5.1).

Priority Two: The Library's second priority was to improve resources which support the curricula and wide range of academic needs of the University by increasing holdings and budget dollars annually (Strategic Plan Objective 1.1).

Priority Three: Ensure equitable delivery of information literacy curricula and comparable student learning experiences whether courses are taught on the main campus, regional campuses, or online (Strategic Plan Objective 2.3).

REVIEW PROCESS

The most important resource provided to Dr. Byrd to conduct her review was the *Program Review* that was developed by the Wilson Library faculty. This document was extremely thorough and excellently prepared, and the information in the appendices, such as library budgets and expenditures, peer comparison data, and the User Satisfaction Survey results were especially helpful. In addition to reading the *Program Review* and reviewing the Wilson Library's Web site and various policies, Dr. Byrd spoke with three faculty members (one from each college), library faculty and staff, the University Librarian, and the Provost. She also toured the library building.

THE REVIEW OF THE WILSON LIBRARY PROGRAM

The Wilson Library faculty and staff have developed impressive and powerful vision and mission statements. Mission and vision statements tend to be perfunctory. However, in reading the Wilson Library's mission and vision statements, Dr. Byrd was struck by the clarity, peppiness, and succinctness of the statements. "The Wilson Library's vision is to be recognized as an innovative and outstanding academic library by supporting the dynamic information needs of its diverse users and educating them for the challenges of 21st century research. Our mission is to empower our users to identify, collect and

critically evaluate information while applying learning, scholarship and intellectual growth to their lives” (Wilson Library Faculty 2). The mission and vision statements are appropriate to guide the library faculty and staff in providing services to both faculty and students.

The Wilson Library’s goals and objectives are aligned with the University of La Verne’s strategic plan and outlined in the following broad categories:

Strategic Goal #1 Resources

The University of La Verne Wilson Library will develop, deliver, and maintain high quality academic research resources that satisfy the evolving needs of its user population (or curricular needs).

Strategic Goal #2 Information Literacy

The University of La Verne Wilson Library will develop, deliver, and maintain high quality programs and information literacy curricula that satisfy the evolving needs of its student population.

Strategic Goal #3 Faculty

The University of La Verne Wilson Library will provide resources and services to support excellence in teaching, scholarly research, and academic service for all faculty.

Strategic Goal #4 Reputation

The University of La Verne Wilson Library will build its image and reputation as a leading private academic library among its peer institutions.

Strategic Goal #5 Sustainability

The University of La Verne Wilson Library will be organizationally and environmentally sustainable.

Strategic Goal # 6 Diversity

The University of La Verne Wilson Library will build on the University of La Verne’s commitment to diversity in all aspects.

SERVICES

The Wilson Library serves three colleges: the College of Education and Organizational Leadership, the College of Business and Public Administration, and the College of Arts and Sciences. It serves seven regional campuses and total enrollment includes 7,500 students, both on campus and off campus. Though the library staff is small, they are service-oriented. The library is also experimenting with using Web 2.0 tools to offer services. The library has a presence on Facebook and the Web, and the Web and Instructional Technology Services Librarian uses additional tools such as RSS feeds, blogs, and mobile applications.

Like most academic libraries, the Wilson Library has a hybrid collection – that is, a combination of print and electronic resources. Because of the institution’s large off-campus student population, the librarians have appropriately shifted purchasing power to e-resources for journals and databases to provide students and faculty with access to resources 24/7. The library offers a full complement of services including circulation, interlibrary loan and document delivery, reference, instruction, collection

development, workshops, 41 workstations, 9 laptops, and wireless access. The library supports online courses by linking its resources and services in Blackboard, the University's course management system.

The Wilson Library offers its users a variety of services that are comparable to other academic libraries. The Wilson Library's Web page is attractive, informative, and user-friendly. To serve users, it contains a number of online forms, e.g., Research Appointment Form and Selection of Materials Form. Having a good Web presence is important for academic libraries in the 21st century when users need 24/7 access to information and resources. A good library Web page is particularly important for the Wilson Library because of the large number of off-campus students the library serves.

INFORMATION LITERACY

The Wilson Library librarians' information literacy philosophy is grounded in the ACRL Guidelines for Instruction Programs in Academic Libraries (June, 2003). The librarians offer information literacy through course-related instruction in which librarians teach in person and by phone. The Wilson Library faculty collaborate with instructional faculty to offer information literacy courses. To assist faculty with scheduling an instruction session, the librarians have developed an online form that is available through the Wilson Library Web page. In designing their library instruction program, the librarians also work with the faculty in the three academic colleges (College of Education and Organizational Leadership, College of Business and Public Administration, and College of Arts and Sciences). Librarians offer students in-person research appointments to discuss and evaluate research needs and/or to educate users about research resources, methods, and practices. Appointments are usually scheduled in advance and the scheduling form is available online through the library's website. The Wilson Library librarians have developed an Information Literacy Policy to guides their instructional efforts.

The librarians develop LibGuides that point students to library resources in their discipline and provide a way for students to directly contact a subject librarian. The librarians are revising the existing library tutorial to aid students in better understanding the research process and as a foundation for information literacy skills. The librarians also utilize a liaison program to offer library instruction programs to the colleges, although it is a weak liaison program because of the number of liaison areas each librarian has been assigned. In addition, as liaisons, the librarians provide instruction and outreach services to students at the institution's regional campuses, which involves them coordinating with the Director of the regional campuses, the Education Coordinator, and faculty members to arrange the instruction sessions. The planning and travel arrangements for visits to off campus sites are complex and require significant coordination and cooperation from supporting university units. The University Librarian and President must approve travel plans.

REFERENCE

Wilson Library offers an array of reference services, including a reference desk staffed with a librarian, walk-in, and virtual services, e.g., chat, e-mail, and QuestionPoint, a cooperative 24/7 instant messaging reference assistance service. The librarians are offering all the reference services that other academic libraries offer their users, but there is one point of concern. There is a weakness with providing in-person reference assistance. The *Program Review* states "A (part-time) librarian provides in-person, online or

phone reference to La Verne patrons during week-day night (Monday – Thursday, 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.) and weekend hours (Saturday - Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.). The librarian sets appointments, provides instruction and provides walk-in assistance. If further assistance is needed, the librarian refers patrons back to subject specialists” (Wilson Library Faculty 7). Such limited in-person staffing of the Reference Desk means that walk-in patrons may or may not be able to meet with a librarian because a librarian is unavailable. The Wilson Library relies heavily on virtual reference services, such as chat, e-mail, and QuestionPoint. The librarians are to be commended for being creative and innovative and purchasing QuestionPoint to provide users with reference service 24/7. However, the in-person service must be strengthened. Students study late and reference service ending at 7:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday is much too early. Typically, in academic libraries, Sunday is a big night for students to study and use the library. Moreover, the Wilson Library survey data indicated that students prefer in-person to e-mail service. Students do not plan their research in advance but rather wait until the last minute to discover that they need a librarian’s assistance. The reliance on virtual reference services and the limited in-person staffing of the reference desk by the librarians is due to having only six librarians. The shortage of librarians is resulting in inadequate in-person staffing of the Reference Desk and students are paying the price.

RESOURCES

The University of La Verne was founded in 1891. Given the age of the institution, it is very obvious to the external reviewer that the library has been underfunded for a very long time. There generally is a direct correlation between long-term funding patterns and volumes counts in an academic library, especially once the age of institution is counted as a factor. See the chart below for a comparison of the University of La Verne’s Wilson Library with four peer institutions.

School	Year Founded	Total Library Expenditures	Number of Books, Serial Backfiles and Other Paper Materials
Chapman University	1861	\$3,284,286	238,620
Pepperdine University	1937	\$5,174,547	324,174
University of La Verne*	1891	\$482,100	177,682
University of San Diego	1949	\$4,491,066	432,811
University of San Francisco	1855	\$8,289,200	1,137,159

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data for 2008

Likewise, Wilson Library has a low number of electronic reference books and databases at just 64. The University of San Francisco has 250 databases and the University of San Diego has 124 databases. Today, even with libraries switching from print to electronic journals, 254 print subscriptions is a low number for a library that serves graduate students and indicative of previous funding problems. However, the good news for a library that suffers historically from inadequate funding for its print journal collection is that the current trend in academic libraries is to switch from print to electronic journals to provide 24/7 access to users. University Librarians are cancelling print subscriptions, except where disciplines require print, or

for current browsing purposes, or when there is a lack of a perpetual license for e-journals. These head librarians are transferring the savings from canceled print journals to purchasing e-journals. The Wilson Library librarians are already following this trend of a preference for electronic format for materials. Therefore, any new funding the library receives can be added to the electronic journals budget and the librarians can eliminate journal stacks in the Wilson Library to create more seating space for students.

In the area of collections, the librarians are becoming more effective and efficient by devoting a portion of the book budget to a Yankee Book Peddler (YBP) approval plan to purchase new books and remaining funds are allotted equally among the three colleges. Both academic and research libraries are using approval plans to assist with collection development, and using an approval plan is a smart move on the part of the Wilson Library librarians because with the YBP subject profiles completed the books are automatically delivered. The library gets the best books on a subject while simultaneously reducing the amount of time-consuming collection development work that the librarians must perform.

The librarians want to implement the “YBP Notification Slip Plan” feature, which makes it easier for faculty to order new books, but are unable to because the Library Accounting Assistant position was eliminated. Since the Library Accounting Assistant position was eliminated, the Executive & Financial Assistant to the University Librarian has been doing all the acquisitions work. This means that this individual has the equivalent of two full-time jobs: the University Librarian Executive & Financial Assistant position and the Library Accounting Assistant position. This is not a feasible arrangement. It is highly unusual for an academic library to not have at least a Library Accounting Assistant, a support staff position. Many academic libraries also have an Acquisitions Librarian, a professional librarian position, because of the subject expertise needed to work with faculty and other librarians in ordering materials. The vacant Library Accounting Assistant position is negatively impacting acquisitions work in Wilson Library, and this position should be reinstated immediately.

The library provides audiovisual materials to support the teaching and research needs of its users. Currently, the library does not have a separate budget allocation for audiovisual materials. Although audiovisual funds are allocated equally among the three colleges, the library has not set aside a portion of the book budget for media. The external reviewer suspects the dollar amount for audiovisual materials changes every year because the University Librarian is uncertain about how much money the library will receive for materials. The inadequacy and instability of the audiovisual budget means that the liaisons cannot expect a specific amount of money to spend for media resources. Without a stable audiovisual budget, faculty cannot be assured that the audiovisual materials they need to support instruction will be purchased. For statistical reports, such as the NCES Academic Library Survey and Association of College and Research Libraries, allocating a specific amount of money for media will improve the University of La Verne’s position when comparisons are made with peer institution in this category.

The librarians have an online form on the Wilson Library Web page for faculty to order books and liaisons encourage and work with faculty in ordering books. Faculty are increasingly busy these days and have less time for ordering books, so the YBP plan is an asset for them too. However, librarians should still seek the expertise of faculty in building the collection – print, electronic, and audiovisual. The liaisons also weed

the collection when time permits. The Collection Development Policy guides the development of the collection.

The library has been historically underfunded. The Wilson Library budget increased from \$387,437 in 2007-2008 to \$482,100 in 2010-2011. Over the last two budget cycles, the Wilson Library has received funding increases but the years of inattention by the University has left it significantly behind similar peer libraries. Despite a flat budget for 2009-2010, the University provided the Wilson Library with an 8.12% increase for 2010-2011, and it appears now the administration understands that the library must be better funded to serve both undergraduate and graduate programs at seven regional centers. The librarians have augmented the University of La Verne's collection through interlibrary loan and document delivery, LINK+ consortium, and Inland Empire Academic Library Cooperative (IEALC). Consortia are great but they are only as good as the member libraries' collections. No library can own every book these days, but there must be a commitment to purchase books for libraries to be able to participate in resource sharing efforts. Thus, consortia only work if all member libraries' home institutions fund their libraries and continue to add resources (books, journals, and media). To maintain the Wilson Library's good standing in LINK+ and IEALC, the administration must provide the library with annual funding increases. These consortia are incredible resources for the University of La Verne's students and faculty and it is impossible for the University to eliminate the book deficit after years of neglect, but it can improve funding to meet the needs of 21st century students and faculty.

The low funding level for all types of materials is of concern for a library that supports graduate programs, especially three doctoral programs. This concern was expressed by a business faculty member and the librarians. Library resources and services are important to students' success. The University's administration should try to provide the library with an annual increase to assist with maintaining inflation. For 2010-2011, librarians are told to budget approximately 2.3% for books (Bruning) and 7% to 9% increase for journals (Bosch, Henderson, and Klusendorf 34). But, in tight budget times, the library benefits from any increase in its budget, which translates into improved service for faculty and students who use the library's resources.

FACILITY

The Wilson Library building was built in 1996, and it is a modern facility. It contains open stacks and study spaces, meeting/conference rooms, library instruction classrooms, study carrels, student study rooms, faculty study rooms, and computer workstations. On the day the external reviewer toured the library and spent time in the building, it was very vibrant with student activity. Early in the morning students began using the library. By early afternoon, all the computer workstations were filled. The library currently seats about 225 students, and the Association of College and Research Libraries standards for seating indicates that it should contain 600 student seats for the University's student population (Standards Committee of ACRL's College Libraries Section 254). There are opportunities in Wilson Library to create more spaces for student seating. For example, there are empty current periodical shelves on the first floor and bound journals on the second floor that can be moved to create more seating for students. Also, on the first floor around the computer workstations, the library lighting looked dim. Perhaps

consideration can be given to improving lighting in the library and creating more spaces for students seating, especially soft seating. The “Library as Place” is important on academic campuses today.

ORGANIZATION

The Wilson Library staff consists of 6.5 librarians, 6.5 staff, and 2 student assistants. The library staff possesses the proper credentials to perform their jobs and are extremely customer-service oriented. However, with 13 employees, the library is severely understaffed. The average peer comparison group has a total staff of 36.06 and the median peer comparison group has a staff of 29.75 (Wilson Library Faculty 31). In 2008-2009, the library, through attrition, ended up with three vacant positions, and these three positions currently remain unfilled. With only six librarians, the library is struggling to meet its mission. Being understaffed is certainly affecting the librarians’ ability to provide in-person reference services. Today’s students work late. This means that in-person reference service must be extended beyond 7:30 p.m. during the week and later than 5:00 p.m. on Sunday.

The librarians’ outreach services to the regional centers to teach information literacy and assist students with research needs has been curtailed because of fewer librarians and cuts to travel funds. Adult students need information literacy instruction in order to complete class assignments and their research papers. In addition, these students, who may not be as comfortable with technology, must be able to talk face to face with a Wilson Library librarian. Sometimes students do not know the right questions to ask regarding assignments and research. But when conversing with a librarian he/she sees the facial expressions (the glazed over look or stressed look) and understands how to delve deeper with the reference interview. Even if a student contacts a Wilson Librarian virtually because the librarian is familiar with the curriculum, he/she is more likely than a QuestionPoint librarian to better meet the University of La Verne student’s need.

The library is organized into two divisions: an Academic Division (librarians) and an Administrative Division (staff). Along with the two divisions, cross-functional teams, which are formed on an ad hoc basis, are utilized to bring the people (librarians and staff) in the organization together. Examples of the Wilson Library’s cross-functional teams are the Assessment Team, the Information Literacy Team, and the Technology Team. Since most academic libraries are organized around public services and technical services or some combination of these two departments, the external reviewer was curious about the Wilson Library’s organizational chart and wondered if it worked. Having talked with both the library faculty and staff, I can say that it does work. I believe the University Librarian has been very creative in breaking tradition and organizing her library differently to compensate for being understaffed.

Yet there is only so much that can be accomplished using creativity to provide services and designing an organization structure that can compensate for long-term understaffing in a library. Chronic understaffing results in burnout and/or emotional melt downs. The main problem caused by Wilson Library being understaffed for the past three years is echoed in the voice of the staff member who said, “the staffing has got to be improved because mentally and physically we are tired.” This is a cry for help. A faculty member spoke about the shortage of librarians, she said, “One wish I have is to have one liaison

rather than multiple liaisons because of workload.” This faculty member’s comment indicates that the shortage of librarians is affecting the continuity of service.

During a discussion with the librarians, they expressed three concerns. First, for the budget process, the librarians believed that the library is not viewed at the same level as the three colleges but rather it is grouped with support units, such as the Center for Teaching and Learning. Second, they expressed concern about not having voting privileges on University committees. Third, the librarians were perplexed about the library being grouped with support units rather than with the colleges for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) report. The librarians want to be considered an academic unit in the WASC and PEPPIT documents. They want to maintain their non-tenure track status but serve on committees with voting privileges.

For budgetary issues, which colleges or unit the library is grouped with is not important, but rather how much money the library receives is the issue. Does being grouped outside the funding process for the three colleges affect the amount of money the library receives? The WASC process is over and how the report was arranged does not change the fact that the library is an academic unit that reports to the Provost. As for the librarians voting on committees, part of the problem is that the library does not belong to a college; thus, the librarians need more clarification about faculty status and committee representation. During the external reviewer’s meeting with the Provost, she spoke with him about the librarians’ concerns. The Provost is aware of the librarians’ concerns about committees and voting rights and plans to address this issue.

Based on her campus conversations, reading the *Program Review*, and being very knowledgeable about academic libraries, the external reviewer fully support the librarians’ statement below about the Wilson Library’s staffing:

The University of La Verne Wilson Library is understaffed by a significant margin. In comparison with 15 peer institutions, the University of La Verne Wilson Library operates on less than half of the average number of library employees (17 FTE employees at Wilson Library vs. 36 FTE employees at peer libraries) and serves, on average, over 1,000 more FTE students (6,154 FTE students at ULV vs. the group average of 5,025 FTE students). Of these 15 peers, less than half hold the same classification as ULV; Doctoral/Research Universities - Intensive, with the remainder classified as Master’s Colleges & Universities I or II or Baccalaureate Colleges - Liberal Arts (see Appendix H: Peer Comparison Data). The University of La Verne is a Doctoral/Research University (Wilson Library Faculty 19).

In addition, to enduring staff shortages and cuts to travel funds, the library’s professional development funds have been cut. It is important for librarians in academic libraries to be active professionally and to attend conferences because this is a great way for them to get ideas and see what other academic libraries are doing. It is a mistake to cut professional development funds during difficult budget times. The lasting result is a library faculty and staff who are out of touch with current trends and services and unable to provide the University with innovative services and technology that users demand.

CONCLUSION

The library faculty and staff, working with a severe staffing shortage and a budget below that of peer doctoral/research institutions, has managed to develop and deliver its programs and services effectively. The library faculty and staff have clearly articulated goals and objectives for the Wilson Library in the strategic plan, which is aligned with the University's strategic plan. The library's goals and objectives while tailored to address the Wilson Library environment are typical of those developed by academic libraries, especially libraries that have staffing and budget problems.

The strengths of the Wilson Library include a qualified staff, with a strong customer-service orientation; appropriate services – reference (virtual and in-person), instruction, and collection development, circulation, interlibrary loan and document delivery; collection enhancement through consortia (LINK+IELAC); workstations, laptops, and wireless access; suitable facility; excellent, user-friendly Web page; and creativity and innovation – Blackboard, e-books, ILLIAD software, Web 2.0 tool, mobile apps, and QuestionPoint; and an effective leader.

The weaknesses, which have already been mentioned, are staffing that has resulted in a weak liaison program and lack of a librarian at the reference desk after 7:30 p.m. during the week and after 5 p.m. on Sunday. The University is encouraged to fill the three vacant library positions that were frozen during FY09-09 and FY09-10. Inadequate funding for resources has resulted in the Wilson Library being below peer institutions for books, journals, databases, and audiovisual materials. Since 2008, the Wilson Library's budget has increased, but the library's budget is still significantly below its peers. The University is encouraged to continue increasing the budget in an upward spiral. The Wilson Library's User Satisfaction Survey revealed "Patrons feel that library resources and services are important to their success. 61% of library patrons indicated that library resources and services were essential for accomplishing their academic/research goals, with an additional 26.9% rating the library as very important. Increasing staffing levels would enhance and improve library service for patrons" (Wilson Library Faculty 19).

In the digital age of the 21st century, the Wilson Library's preference for electronic journals and databases is very appropriate to serve the University of La Verne's multi-campus environment and adult working student population. The University must remember that strategically Wilson Library assists with marketing to prospective students and it plays a role with student retention and success. Students that have bad library experiences due to lack of resources eventually make unhappy alumni, which translate to problems for University Advancement with fundraising.

As an external reviewer, I offer the following recommendations for the Wilson Library.

Recommendation #1	Reinstate immediately the three eliminated librarian positions, or at a minimum, because of budget constraints, one position each year over the next three years. Also, immediately reinstate the Library Accounting Assistant position. The University's administration should continue to work on improving the library's staffing until it is equal with peer institutions.
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- Recommendation #2 Increase the library’s materials budget annually. The University administration should make a significant increase in the library’s budget, and the President and/or Provost should continue to work on improving the library’s resources until financial support is equal with peer institutions.
- Options for the University to use for improving funding for Wilson Library include:
- The Office of Academic Affairs in the next two to three years can make library funding a priority.
 - The Office of University Advancement can identify a donor who would like to fund several databases annually and in return the Wilson Library will add his/her name to the banner of the databases on the Library Web site.
 - The administration, at a minimum, should commit to an annual 2.3% increase for books, a 7% to 9% increase for journals, and a 10% increase for electronic databases.
 - The administration, in addition to regular annual increases, can provide one-time funding to purchase significant e-journals and/or databases.
- Recommendation #3 Restore the travel budget to ensure equitable delivery of information literacy skills for all students regardless of whether courses are taught on the main campus, regional campuses, or online. Restore professional development money to enable librarians to maintain professional adroitness and to be able to attend conferences and training sessions.
- Recommendation #4 Provide Wilson Library with more, not less funding for work-study and student workers to offset staff shortages, even with restoring librarian and staff positions, as well as to increase student workers from 2 to 8.85.
- Recommendation #5 Solve the problem of the librarians not belonging to a college and the need for them to have more clarification about faculty status and representation on committees with voting rights.

The librarians have listed 15 action recommendations in the *Program Review* (Wilson Library Faculty 19). These 15 recommendations incorporate the sentiment of my 5 recommendations above. I believe that all 15 recommendations were appropriate, but selected 5 as priorities for focus by the University’s administration. Given staffing and resources, the Wilson Library faculty and staff are doing a very good job serving the University of La Verne’s faculty and students.

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