

STANDARD SEVEN

LIBRARY AND OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

Overview

The rapid growth and change of information technology during the past decade has transformed teaching, learning and work environments at the college, presenting both promising and formidable challenges. The explosion of new possibilities facilitated by technology, as well as the need to maintain existing services and resources, requires substantial financial investments. Indeed, the ever-expanding range of options, and the demands for service from students, faculty and staff, exceed the college's ability to do it all. Thus, Wheaton strives to invest in the information resources and services that most directly enhance the core academic mission and support efficient operations. The institution has managed this with notable success over the past decade, but much work remains to be done in developing a solid foundation for the long-term.

Description

Wheaton set its course for the past decade with the decision to unify the three separate departments that worked to provide information resources and technology for teaching, learning and operations— the library, information technology and services, and academic computing. The motivation for this merger was the realization that thoughtful investment and employment of information technology would require a unified vision. The college's 1999 self-study forecast this issue, noting "continuing changes in technology itself will require new working relationships and changes in organization." The merger was made effective on June 1, 2004, following a deliberate and thoughtful planning effort, and the Library and Information Services structure was created. The pre-LIS organizations held an exhaustive stakeholders' needs/wishes analysis during the spring of 2003. That analysis gathered feedback from members of Wheaton's community about impressions of the current state of services, resources, facilities and infrastructure.

A critical step in planning for the merger was the drafting of a mission and vision for the new organization. The leadership of the nascent Library and Information Services coordinated a process of consultation, involving the staff of the independent departments as well as key stakeholder committees and the campus community itself. The resulting document makes clear that the new organization's vision is to "foster a community of self-sufficient, life-long learners—with clarity, agility, and efficiency." As an organization, it defines its mission as one of leadership in guiding the college community to maximize resources available in "the ever-changing world of information and technology." The explosion of information technology tools and resources over the past decade requires continuous cooperative planning and prioritization for information services.

Since then, the organization has evolved through a process of thoughtful planning, swift implementation and regular assessment of operations. The division closely collaborates with two important campus committees that address information services across the college: the Administrative Technology Committee (ATC) and the Library, Technology, and Learning Committee (LTLC). These committees, along with the Student Government Association (SGA), provide advice and guidance to LIS in carrying out its mission and goals. In January 2005, Wheaton formally recognized LIS as an independent administrative division of the college. Most recently, as of July 1, 2009, LIS and the Division of Academic Affairs were formally re-connected, with a secondary connection to the Division of Finance & Operations. This most recent move reflects our evolving understanding of how best to achieve Wheaton's strategic goals.

The college has worked assiduously to allocate sufficient resources for information technology, and to use its funds in the most efficient manner. During FY09, LIS operations represented 4.4 percent of the college's non-personnel operating budget and 4.4 percent of the college's personnel budget. These combined amounts reflected the third highest level of funding among the college's seven divisions for both non-personnel and personnel expenses. The college continuously strives to identify more efficient uses of technology resources,

to eliminate redundant expenditures, and to develop new paths toward long-term cost containment. In addition, Wheaton maximizes the purchasing power of its resources through participation in consortia. The Higher Education Library Information Network (HELIN), the Ocean State Higher Education Economic Development and Administrative Network (OSHEAN), and the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education (NITLE) are three prime examples. These partnerships enable Wheaton to share and contain costs associated with providing a comprehensive array of library, information, and technology services at a modern selective liberal arts college.

In fact, while the college has centralized core information technology resources and services within LIS, the application of these technologies has spread throughout the institution. This reflects the institution's goal of providing easy access to information technology tools that enhance teaching, learning and management while supporting students, faculty and staff in becoming proficient and knowledgeable users. Access to information technology services has grown greatly over the past ten years. More than half of all classrooms have an instructor computer with projection, for a total of 29 "smart" classrooms. In recent years, Wheaton has added, on average, one new smart classroom per year. Overall, LIS supports 66 public workstations, 131 classroom workstations, and 219 lab workstations. In addition, LIS currently purchases licensed rights to nearly 100 different software titles annually. LIS installs discipline-specific software titles in specialized computing labs as well as on some public computers located throughout campus. LIS also provides or maintains other computing devices ranging from digital video cameras, clickers, laboratory instrumentation, and specialized microscopes and telescopes. During the summer of 2008, the college installed ubiquitous wireless Internet access in nearly all indoor and some outdoor spaces on campus.

The key to facilitating efficient use of information technology lies with sufficient staff. As of January 2009, LIS comprised 61 staff employees representing approximately 55 FTE positions. LIS staff members hold a variety of bachelor and graduate degrees, technical certificates, and work experience relevant to their responsibilities. Employing approximately 250-300 students annually, LIS is the largest single employer of student labor at the college. These student employees represent the equivalent of about 37 FTE positions.

The primary focus of information technology application is in the academic enterprise. The LIS Research and Instruction (R&I) Department leads in this area, providing focused support to teaching, learning, and research, particularly as they are enhanced by the use of library and other information resources and through technology. Librarians and academic technologists serve as subject specialist liaisons who support the research and curricular needs of particular academic departments. Liaisons collaborate with faculty across all academic departments to infuse technology and information resources and skills throughout the curriculum in direct support of student learning and faculty teaching and scholarship.

The college archivist & special collections curator became a formal R&I member in 2004. As a result, student exposure to and demand for materials from Wheaton's own unique collections have increased significantly across disciplines. Aligning the College Archives & Special Collections operations more closely with R&I activities also provides the added benefit of enriching the library instruction program while offering increased LIS support, particularly for the humanities.

R&I librarians teach students to practice and perfect information literacy skills both in the classroom and in one-on-one or small-group research consultations. Teaching is directly targeted to students' needs, a specific research assignment, and an understanding of a faculty member's goals for a given course. All First Year Seminars (FYS), which are designed to assist students in developing skills in "library research and the use of electronic technology for their learning," are assigned a library liaison with whom students work closely over the semester, and often beyond. Many academic departments follow a research skill development plan for the major that identifies required courses with a library research component in them. Other academic departments are planning to do so, while one-third of the departments have yet to consider such a proposal. To assist departments in the planning process, R&I developed an information fluency model that describes visually the progressive nature of information literacy and technology skills development.

As part of the college's efforts to produce "graduates [who are] scientifically and technologically literate," LIS has recently piloted a technology literacy program with student employees in LIS with the following goals: (1) Find or create an instrument so students can self-assess their technology literacy, (2) Improve Peer Software Training Sessions: Maintain 1-to-few format, increase student throughput, increase depth of material covered, to address Levels 1-3, (3) Provide simple access to online instruction or other self-scheduled learning opportunities, and (4) Establish community expectation of Level 1 technology literacy for all LIS staff and students.

LIS staff members sponsored and participated in faculty workshops that occurred as the current Connections curriculum was designed. R&I staff have been included, although not universally, in several academic department curriculum planning retreats, writing program planning, and academic departmental reviews. LIS traditionally offers a slate of faculty workshops devoted to library and technology topics in January and May, and also intermittently throughout the academic year.

The division's Technology Support group offers academic technology consults and training to all faculty, staff, and students. College standard software training, Computing @ Wheaton training, and technology orientations are available to all new faculty, staff, and students during fall and spring semester student orientations. Technology Support training is available to all faculty, staff, and students by request.

Librarians, along with their faculty colleagues, share responsibility for evaluating the quality of information resources selected by students for their assignments. Most, although not all, FYS library components include a class session or part of a session specifically addressing this topic. Librarians weave the topic into non-FYS class presentations, reinforcing what faculty teach in their classes. Librarians emphasize critical evaluation of sources with students in one-on-one research consultations, as well.

Since the formation of R&I, LIS has expanded the number and expertise of staff available to support and contribute to the Wheaton curriculum. Most notable reflections of this expansion and "growth by substitution" are:

- Doubling the number of faculty technology liaison positions from 3 to 6
- Creating a visual resources curator position
- Creating a science librarian position

To meet increased demand for digital services associated with instructional technology, LIS redesigned a position vacancy in 2008—now entitled systems administrator for curricular support—to focus expertise and attention on supporting LIS services that enhance teaching, learning, and research.

This reallocation of staff resources has allowed the integration of library research teaching into the college's courses to grow rapidly over the past ten years. Since 2000, the number of courses with instruction steadily increased from 66 to 113, a 71 percent rise. In addition, the number of student/librarian one-on-one research consultations increased steadily and even more significantly (from 57 to 544, an 850 percent rise).

Faculty technology liaisons regularly explore new technologies and introduce them to faculty and students to enhance teaching, learning and research. Examples include mobile devices in the classroom for leveraging our ubiquitous wireless service, the Moodle learning management system (LMS), called onCourse at Wheaton, as an open source software alternative to the Blackboard LMS, and externally-hosted collaborative tools such as GoogleDocs. Other examples include the Madison Digital Images Database; NVIVO software for the social sciences; Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) capabilities for the humanities and other virtual collaborative environments including blogs, wikis, Moodle, GoogleDocs and the DSpace pilot project.

During the past decade, the library has dramatically increased the number of available electronic resources, including access to databases, electronic journals and newspapers, and e-books. These resources, combined with traditional resources that we continue to acquire, highlight new curricular emphasis on “race/ethnicity and its intersections with gender, class, sexuality, religion, and technology in the United States and globally.” LIS has an institutional repository (IR) pilot project underway. The project, begun in 2007, focuses on the preservation of and wider access to Wheaton-produced intellectual content, using DSpace open-source software.

In 2006, Wheaton joined the HELIN Consortium and migrated its library catalog records to the shared HELIN union catalog. In addition to the resources available in the college's library, Wheaton students, faculty, and staff may borrow books from other consortium libraries via patron-initiated loan as well as through on-site borrowing. The diversity of materials available through HELIN significantly boosts the level of research that can be conducted by students and faculty. The library's traditional interlibrary loan operation increases the likelihood that the library can readily acquire specialized research materials, both digital and print.

The increased emphasis on electronic information resources and participation in HELIN are not only initiatives that enhance broad access, but also acknowledge the realities of finite physical resources. The Madeleine Clark Wallace Library's original physical structure dates from the 1920s. The college embarked on three progressive expansion projects—during the 1940s, the 1960s, and 1979-1980—to keep pace with expanding collection size and student enrollment. During the past decade, the college remodeled the library's main floor, expanded library hours of operation, added two electronic classrooms, and added more seating.

In the fall of 2003, library staff began coordinating an ongoing, long-term weeding project to alleviate crowding in the stacks, and to encourage faculty to evaluate the book collections. Since that time, several academic departments (including biology, chemistry, economics, French, German, Hispanic Studies, Italian Studies, math/computer science, music, philosophy, physics/astronomy, and psychology) have collaborated with library staff on book-weeding efforts. Subsequently, the library has withdrawn nearly 17,000 titles and sharpened its future collection-development focus.

In 2008, library staff began a comprehensive review of the library's reference book collection, including the selection of new materials, weeding, and the coherence of the physical and digital collections. As a result, the library increasingly favors digital format over print and other physical formats. Additionally, the library is undertaking an effort to create and maintain a dynamic population of online subject guides, dubbed CASA (Course A-to-Z/Subject Access).

In addition to advising the college community on effective use of information technology, the institution also acts on the responsibility to guide and enforce appropriate use. Wheaton has an established electronic services acceptable use policy (AUP) governing student, faculty, and staff use of the college's technology systems and resources. The college relies on an escalating-consequences process for responding to student AUP violations. Essentially, the severity of consequences increases depending upon the number of violations reported for a single individual, leading ultimately to the College Hearing Board based on a violation of the College Honor Code.

The college publishes recommended practices and guidelines regarding copyright compliance and educational fair use on the college's web site. College policy prohibits creation and distribution of printed course packs. The library operates an electronic reserve (e-reserve) service that captures document images, stores, and retrieves them. E-reserve service is available for any course, including password-protecting documents on a course-by-course arrangement. The library circulation staff manages this service, purchases copyright permissions as needed, and monitors the materials submitted by the faculty for e-reserve use.

LIS educates the campus community, particularly students, on the risks of illegally sharing copyrighted material through printed and electronic communications. For example, LIS distributes reminders to students via print and email about illegal use of file sharing and its consequences at the beginning of each semester. When a student connects a computer to the campus network, LIS tools scan the computer. If peer-to-peer software is present, the LIS tool automatically warns the student of the risks, including a reminder of the availability of instructions for removing the software.

The college assesses the efficacy of its information technology services in promoting student learning in several ways. For example, National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) of first-year and senior students conducted in spring 2008 included a section on information literacy. Wheaton's results—the first feedback on information literacy gathered by the college—are positive. Mean comparisons show Wheaton exceeding the mean for peer-group institutions in these areas. They underscore the value of the library and its resources in students' lives. In addition, LIS randomly polls students during the final exam period regarding their impressions about collections and services the library offers. The most significant reported change in perception among students is their delight in the ease of borrowing books through the HELIN consortium.

As well as soliciting informal feedback from students about information technology services and resources, LIS participates annually in several peer benchmarking activities (e.g., Oberlin Group, CLAC, EDUCAUSE). LIS also engages in multiple surveys such as NSSE, FYS survey, the senior survey, and the Merged Information Services Organization survey. These tools gather feedback from campus constituencies about LIS strengths and areas that need improvement. All of these data, combined with feedback from key constituent committees such as ATC and LTLC, inform decision making and contribute to planning.

While the college's primary focus is on teaching and learning, information technology also contributes greatly to efficient management of the institution's operations. Wheaton was an early adopter of a fully integrated administrative information system (Banner), and the use of this resource has grown and changed over the past decade. All campus employees who have a need to do so can access Banner administrative information pertinent to their roles and responsibilities. Similarly, the use of the Web has grown and changed. In fact, the introduction of Banner services on the Web, and its integration with other information resources and services—some of which are external to the college—has been a major area of development in recent years. For example, students' emergency contact information is synchronized with an external service that powers the college's emergency alert system, thus enhancing campus security and safety.

The growing importance of these information technology tools or resources has led to several organizational changes, including the establishment of a Web Strategy department in 2007 and the addition of Banner-knowledgeable programmers in many of the administrative divisions of the college. These professionals collaborate with colleagues in the LIS division to integrate information management resources of the college. In Admission and Student Financial Services, high school students are able to check on the status of their application via a Web interface. Banner on the web also facilitates the college's participation in the federal direct lending program and connects current students and their families with student financial aid loan processors. In finance, the college maintains an extensive web site with updated information that allows the Board of Trustees' Investment Committee to oversee management of the college's endowment. Most recently, the Web Strategy department collaborated with the Banner programming staff to establish a Web-based portal, *InsideWheaton*, that pulls together Banner data and other information resources—from the library's HELIN catalog to campus administrative calendaring software—into one interface.

The college's evolving web site is designed to welcome visitors to the college and serve as a gateway for the many resources and services available to constituents. *InsideWheaton* and the deployment of virtual private network (VPN) software make convenient access to an increasing number of proprietary and licensed electronic resources. For example, all library electronic resources (including subscription-based content when permission is obtained) are available from any networked computer on campus. Off-campus access is available to authorized Wheaton users.

Appraisal

Wheaton has endeavored to invest in information resources and services, as the description of this standard has established. And yet, the financial resources allocated within typical LIS annual operating budgets at Wheaton routinely lags behind those of our peer institutions. The library's materials budget has not increased for over a decade. The college has not determined a way to afford a formal technology replacement plan. And our Media Services operations is chronically underfunded and understaffed when compared to documented demand. The effects of this funding pattern also extend to personnel. Based on information available from the annual Oberlin Group and EDUCAUSE Core Data Service surveys, Wheaton relies more heavily on student labor to sustain library and IT operations than do nearly any of our peer institutions.

The LIS also plans to provide leadership toward incorporating technology literacy goals into its educational programs. Wheaton measures the effectiveness of information or technology literacy efforts on some courses, but this type of assessment has not been systematically integrated into the curriculum. We are attempting to address the issue of basic technology literacy by piloting a program with LIS student employees, as described earlier. If the pilot program proves successful, we hope we could expand it and integrate it formally into other student learning opportunities.

In 1999-2000, Wheaton made incremental improvements to library physical spaces to enhance information discovery, access, and use. Despite these changes, the library lacks a formally adopted position in an overall campus master plan. LIS staff began work in 2005-2006 to identify proposed programmatic modifications and renovations that better align with what we know about how the library is or is not meeting the college's long-term needs. For example, the library currently shelves nearly all of its print collections in open shelving. However, as collections have grown since 1979-1980, this shelving has become nearly saturated. Ideally, the college should be migrating to a compact shelving arrangement if it cannot commit to growing the library's space footprint. This will allow modest growth of the print collection and provide more space for learning.

Projections

The Library and Information Services, working with the Educational Policy Committee and the departments should initiate steps toward evaluating the effectiveness with which the campus community uses the library, other information resources, and technology. Assessment of formal learning outcomes is a logical next step in further developing an information literacy/technology fluency program at Wheaton. Several models of assessing these outcomes are being used at other liberal arts colleges. One model is the First Year Information Literacy in the Liberal Arts Assessment (FYILLAA) project, a web-based survey of incoming first-year students. Appropriate faculty leaders and administrators should investigate FYILLAA and similar assessment tools if a more formalized information literacy/technology fluency program is to take root.

The college should complete a formal assessment of the library's physical facilities and use this assessment to better align the library's physical spaces with its current and future program needs. Faculty and library staff together should achieve a common understanding of the library's collection development policy and, if desired, modify it to ensure that these guidelines align well with the curriculum over the next decade.

The college should affirm whether the current level of LIS services corresponds with the strategic plan and mission. Undoubtedly, information resources and services, as well as skilled staff to support them, will remain in high demand at Wheaton during the next decade. Nevertheless, the increasingly more austere economic climate requires that the college consider carefully what enhancements in LIS resources, services, and staffing it can make—or even sustain—at current levels. Wheaton should carefully estimate a “return on investment” for future, significant investments in library and technology resources and services, and consider how staff skill levels will maintain that investment over time.