San Jose State University Library
Self-Study 2008-2013
External Audit Report – May 2014

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Overview of the external review process

On April 20-21, 2014 the external review team comprised of Brandon Dudley, Interim Library Director, Sonoma State University and Alice Kawakami, University Librarian, California State University, Los Angeles conducted an on-site visit to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of San Jose State University to meet with key campus constituencies. The visit was supplemented by the University Library Self-Study 2008-2013, and included a tour of the library facility. A follow-up conference call with Library Dean Ruth Kifer to clarify remaining issues occurred the following week.

On-site interviews were conducted with the following groups:
- University Library Leadership Team
- Academic Affairs Leadership Team
- Collection Development
- King Library Management Team (San Jose State University Library & San Jose Public Library)
- Technical Services
- Student Assistants
- Librarians (full-time and part-time)
- University Library Board
- Information Technology (San Jose State University, San Jose Public Library & San Jose State University Library)
- Access Services
- Digital Initiatives
- Special Collections & Cultural Heritage Center

Observations

The joint partnership is alive and well

Given that the King Library has celebrated its tenth year of existence, it might be fair to assume that the joint partnership might have reached a state of stasis, even be taken for granted by participating parties. Throughout our audit, it was abundantly clear that, in fact, the partnership is an active, organic entity that is truly greater than the sum of its parts. This is perhaps due to the degree of care it receives from not only the San Jose State and San Jose Public libraries, but also the University and City administrations that “weigh decisions for good of the relationship”.

The joint Operating Agreement creates an added level of accountability between all partners, facilitating negotiations that could be bogged down by “red tape” and resource issues. Technology is an area that requires such accountability in order to harmonize the needs of the CSU system and the SJPL system – a consistent tension in the relationship. Members of the SJSU library and SJPL IT staff meet monthly to discuss technology and
technology issues, and campus IT offered during our meeting to meet with the joint IT organization monthly in order to discuss issues affecting all parties.

Discussion regarding most joint operational issues occurs naturally through organic conversations and shared values rather than imposed through memoranda. “Over time the degree to which each department is merged has varied and now runs the range of merely sharing merged space as with Technical Services, to Access Services which is probably the most merged of the units. Besides unit meetings, faculty and staff of the library serve on numerous committees, both merged and unmerged.” (2014 Self-Study, p. 16) It was felt that these conversations were “good for librarian growth and allowed for cross-pollination of ideas”. Any initiatives SJSU pursue “are done with support and understanding from SJPL”, and the relationship creates “more energy [towards initiatives] due to conversations between SJPL & SJSU librarians and the ideas shared between them”. It was felt that “even though there’s an extra layer of management due to joint operations,” librarians were “still able to keep in front of innovations.” Many offices housing SJSU and SJPL personnel are adjacent, allowing for frequent “hallway” conversations and the ability to share perspectives freely. During our conversations with SJSU staff, this point was made clear in observations such as “collaboration through discussion of goals and shared issues is as close to seamless as can be” and “personality counts towards working things out informally.” The relationship between SJSU and SJPL librarians leads to a strong joint body that is creative, reactive and agile.

During our conversations with SJSU and SJPL staff and administrators, the strength of the partnership was a reoccurring theme. The joint library puts on many public events for the SJSU and wider community, such as the SJSU Robotic Competition, engendering a diversity of library users than either body would otherwise experience. The Library’s many exhibits bring in community members, “enriching the community and engaging different constituencies.” Other services such as the Disability Resource Center and Children’s Room provide resources to users of the King Library that would otherwise be unavailable in traditional public or academic libraries. The combined collection creates a similar diversity of content that would otherwise be unavailable to students and other patrons – the impact of which is easily seen in circulation pattern analysis and through observation. During the recent economic downturn, both parties were able to “lean on one another” for help in staffing public service desks and during changes in SJPL management. While staffing inequalities currently exist at the reference desks and in the area of special collections, these areas were seen as an area for “expanded partnership” in the future.

Also mentioned during our discussions were unexpected benefits of the partnership, realized in unanticipated ways. For example, the library has received a number of small NEH grants supporting programs like the African American Baseball Experience and America’s Music series, due to the feeling that the “NEH loves the partnership” due to the King Library’s unique audience.

The joint partnership between SJSU and SJPL is alive and well, resulting in an alleviation of pressures during the recent economic downturn by “picking up the slack” when needed and providing several service advantages to their constituencies as well as strengthening
"Town/Gown" relations between the University and City of San Jose. The success of this partnership has led to "new ventures" being considered. Both libraries continue to explore what joint ventures make sense with an eye towards "what's the next life of a joint library?" It was clear during our discussions that the importance of the partnership is such that both the City and University work hard to make things happen, and continued focused attention and discussion will continue to reap rich dividends for all concerned.

**The King Library exemplifies Spartan and community pride**

The Library is an obvious point of pride for students, faculty and for the greater community. The Library is committed to instilling "Spartan Pride" in the SJSU student body and serves as the "Face of the University" to the greater community. One staff member expressed during our discussions that the library should “show children what higher education looked like in order to inspire them.” The facility itself is funded separately from other campus buildings, resulting in greater attention in terms of building maintenance, and the extra care shows.

In alignment with the campus strategic goal of “Spartan Pride”, the SJSU library has expanded their outreach program, increased involvement in campus events, partnered with the Provost on various lecture series, and spotlighted faculty scholarship through inclusion of publications in ScholarWorks, their institutional repository, as well as recognition of faculty book publications. As part of San José State University's efforts to promote Spartan Pride to the campus community, the university library participates in Spartan Pride Thursdays, and decorates the library with SJSU signs and logos in the library. (2014 Self-Study, p. 44) The King Library provides opportunities for students to display their works through exhibits and other programs. The King Library hosted over 1500 activities over the past 5 years, including approximately 386 events (including tours, orientations and resource fairs) reaching nearly 15,000 students, faculty and community members. (2014 Self-Study, p. 37)

The Library’s impact on both students and community was measured during the California Library Association’s California Library Snapshot Day held in 2010. Campus and city community members gave testimonials that gave voice to “how the library impacts your life” and the building served over 1,900 individuals on that day alone. (2014 Self-Study, p. 43)

**SJSU library staff model best practices for change around a “digital future”**

The King Library has embraced the opportunities the "digital future" will provide through strategic planning, reallocating resources and empowering staff to act as change agents both within and without the library. Departments within the Library have responded to the changing landscape positively, adapting themselves to new roles and workflows demanded by new electronic formats.

As expressed by a member of the staff, Technical Services has particularly embraced these changes by seeing no difference in cataloging and processing print or electronic materials –
they “demand the same skills”. They have adapted old acquisitions processes to handle new electronic formats such as ebooks, repurposing positions and training staff to ensuring high levels of availability and accuracy in electronic holdings and dedicated themselves to ensuring that “anything purchased is available in the catalog” as quickly and efficiently as possible. Such adaptation to existing processes allows them to better manage e-resource lifecycles. The Technical Services department has been recognized by library vendors such as Innovative Interfaces as a development partner around electronic workflow system improvements, and staff members have been “invited to give presentations about eBooks and electronic resource management throughout California and at national library conferences.” (2014 Self-Study, p. 54)

In general, the organization has repurposed resources in departments made available through changes in print circulation and space reclamation towards supporting the increasing digital nature of the collection. Open staff positions have been used to increase resources used to support important digital initiatives such as ScholarWorks and existing staff have been retrained to work with digital resources and computing in all areas of the Library.

**Student computing services is a well-managed, student focused service with high usage and great impact upon student learning experience**

As mentioned in the self-study, the existing Student Computing Services was relocated to the 4th floor in 2012, giving it “higher visibility” and “more convenience” to students. Management of the operation is split, with “back-office” operations continuing to be managed by IT and the “front-of-the-house” managed by Access Services, thus allowing the strengths of both departments to efficient use and create the best service experience for student users. Post-relocation, “the monthly circulation nearly doubled” and the reconstituted operation “now serves nearly 6,000 students on a monthly basis during the academic year.” (2014 Self-Study, p. 35) Laptop lending thrives at King Library, with demand far outstripping the supply of 165 PC and 72 Mac laptops and 101 iPad tablets. Campus funding will support laptop refresh over time, but the funding model is set at a fixed price that “may have effect on ability to refresh MacBooks” due to their higher unit cost. It is hoped that cost benefit analysis based on laptop usage and choice of systems may help guide future expansion in this area.

Targeted student needs assessment performed by King Library resulted in the hiring of a student technology trainer in 2013. The Student Technology Training Center will offer workshops on use of software such as SPSS, Google apps and Microsoft Office to small groups (6-10) of students and individuals. This is a forward-thinking, high-impact service with the potential to address many student technological deficiencies with commonly used software through focused training.

**Space reallocation efforts have reaped dividends operationally and for patrons of the Library**
During our conversations with SJSU administration, the topic of space use or reuse was mentioned several times, both philosophically and as a result of external pressures. As mentioned in the 2014 Self-Study, “numerous facility renovations have taken place, including the opening of a 4,577 square foot student-only learning and research commons on the mezzanine” and new study space on the second and fourth floors. (p. 33) The omnipresent need for space by campuses, changing study patterns of college students and the CSU LOFT (Libraries Of The Future) initiative reinforce the necessity for constant evaluation of space use as has been occurring in King Library.

These drivers have necessitated workflow changes for Access Services and Technical Services that have been embraced by staff and resulted in many resulting efficiencies. Due to the loss of “pre-shelving” stacks in order to make space for more study areas, Access Services has developed a new workflow which results in print materials making their way back onto the circulation shelves in much faster times than previous. Further shelving reductions have necessitated new deselection workflows that clear the shelves more quickly while providing campus faculty time to examine candidates for withdrawal according to campus policy.

**Creative thinking regarding staffing opens new doors**

As already noted, SJSU administration has made several decisions in the past five years in hiring staff in non-traditional library roles and using existing staff to offer new services to the campus. The Self-Study notes three of these recent hires: The recently created staff position of Project Manager has become integral to the operations of the library and the numerous special projects needed to adopt new software platforms, to launch the deselection of print materials and the re-purposing of the resulting spaces. Two other new positions were created as a result of recent staff vacancies, an Institutional Repository Specialist and a Student Technology Trainer. (2014 Self-Study, p. 19) Also notable was using librarian resources to provide personal researcher service to University leadership, which has procured rewards both direct (money to fund materials acquisition in support of faculty scholarship) and indirect (continued good will and recognition of library contributions).

**CHALLENGES**

**SJPL and SJSU management and operations partnership**

The recent turnover in SJPL leadership is a concern mentioned in the group interviews and in the Self-Study. (2014 Self-Study, p 68-69) This change is seen both as a possible negative and a possible positive factor for the Library. Each change brings uncertainty as to the interest, energy, and commitment brought to the partnership by the new administration. It may also be that the new leadership will be open to more joint initiatives, jointly and purposefully evaluate space use, and invigorate the interaction between the city and the University.
Adding to this complexity are the separate purchasing channels for SJSU and SJPL which create challenges for pursuit of joint initiatives, especially those relating to technology. Technology change will continue to provide challenges in a joint operating environment which must consider the branch system operations of the public library in addition to the University library needs. One critical example in particular is the CSU Consortium Unified Library Management System proposal that is in development and near completion. A unified library management system will allow for more efficient resource sharing among the 23 campus libraries, but may be a complex issue for SJSU. Currently SJSU and SJPL share a common library management system. However, if the recommendation for the new system is not the one that SJSU and SJPL currently share, this will necessitate multi-faceted consideration of the needs and desires of both entities. (2014 Self-Study, p. 75-76)

**Student interactions in a public/academic environment**

Students in the interview session noted that they are able to focus on study more keenly after the Library is closed to the public. There was agreement that during the public hours there are distractions from those patrons who do not have a scholarly intent. The societal issues common to public libraries, such as individuals who are homeless or have mental disorders, affect the students’ ability to study in the building uninterrupted. Maintaining an ideal student study environment while serving a diverse community population is a challenge underscored in this unique city/university library collaboration.

**Student assistant workforce reduction**

The student workforce reduction has had an impact at several levels of the organization “The decrease in student employees has been a result of a number of factors. These include year over year cuts to the library budget, an increase to the local minimum wage by two dollars per hour, a strategic decision to allocate greater resources to digital collections, technology and facilities, and a reduced need for student shelvers due to the decreased circulation of print collections.” (2014 Self-Study, p. 19) The reduction in student assistants was mentioned in a number of interviews and its impact on individual areas described e.g. the staffing of equipment checkout at access services desks, course reserves and document delivery operations. Although the reduction is lamented as it provided student learning and advancement opportunities, there was acknowledgement that technology has changed the nature of work and that student assistance is needed in other areas as well.

**Academic Senate policy on Library collection management**

It was noted that the academic senate de-acquisition policy in effect since the joint partnership was developed ten years ago, is unnecessarily restrictive and severely hampers the Library’s ability to respond to changes in the academic landscape ([http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S03-5.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S03-5.pdf)). There may have been concern at the beginning of the partnership that academic material would not be given due consideration. However, the criteria used by liaisons include proactive interaction with discipline faculty.
Section 7: Evaluation of print collection 7.2.3 is not characteristic of academic libraries and seems to de-value the information specialist and collection development expertise of librarians. Print material candidates for discard await response from department chairs and faculty for an initial four-week period, which is followed by an additional four-week period in which all faculty may review and respond to the discard list. The lengthy period needed for faculty review in the regular semester necessitates careful planning of the timeline in the King Library. For academic libraries in general, these collection maintenance projects are planned for the summer intersession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review communication flow

Some (Librarians in particular) expressed that they are not involved in decision-making and are isolated from discussions surrounding changes in the library. It should be reemphasized that all input is advisory to the Dean, who is the decision-maker. It would be beneficial if the decision-making loop included gathering input from all parties (recognizing academic expertise when appropriate), making decisions in appropriate channels with updates to constituents along the way, announcing the decision, and then sharing the decision-making thought process with all parties in order to achieve buy-in and greater understanding.

The 2008/2009 External Reviewers’ report recommended that the Library “evaluate current communication processes in the organization to ascertain whether information and interpretation is flowing successfully between all organization units”. The Library response notes that input is solicited from conversations with individuals, in departmental meetings, and in all-staff meetings for programmatic and strategic direction. (2014 Self-Study, p. 67)

Also in regards to communication, updating the Academic Affairs leadership team regularly on matters such as how the SJPL/SJSU relationship is evolving, Library of the Future (LOFT) activities, and how the Library compares to other CSU libraries would be of interest to the leadership team.

2. Assess Library organizational structure

The team organizational structure that has been in place since 2010 should be assessed for effectiveness, accountability and impact on communication. This is in alignment with the Self-Study recommendation. (2014 Self-Study, p. 67) The communication flow issue expressed in the recommendation above may be impacted by the team structure in that information may not be disseminated within the team as effectively as envisaged in the Library Faculty Organizational Model Task Force document (2014 Self-Study, p. 167-168).

As the current structure has not been assessed since its implementation, it would be most
appropriate that the entire Library organizational structure be evaluated to determine if it is accomplishing the goals intended when put into place.

3. **Expand information literacy instruction to diverse populations**

Consider addressing research skill needs of distinct populations using multiple approaches to ensure that parties such as transfer and graduate student populations are reached. Concern was expressed that the information literacy efforts may focus on reaching freshmen, but that transfer students and graduate students may also lack needed research skills. A mandatory research skills course or drop-in sessions are examples of such outreach to these populations.

Information literacy instruction across disciplines is uneven with some disciplines receiving little or no research skill instruction. Students, faculty and department chairs in these areas could use a training session, refresher, or introduction to new databases and resources to bring them up to date.

The WASC focus on information literacy is imbedded in University Learning Goals under intellectual skills and in General Education requirements. (2014 Self-Study, p. 29) This timely aegis could be leveraged to prompt the expansion of information literacy instruction across the campus.

4. **Modify the Senate materials de-acquisition policy**

Modify the non-library faculty participation in the de-acquisition policy to a more advisory role. The 2003 Senate policy on the evaluation of the print collection currently in effect does not well serve the goals of the Library ([http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S03-5.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S03-5.pdf)). The University Library Board is supportive of the Library and would play a pivotal role as per Section 9.1 which states that “It shall be the charge of the University Library Board* to recommend revisions and expansions of this policy as are appropriate to the Senate.”

The wording of the current Senate policy apparently put into effect at the beginning of the partnership as a safeguard, does not acknowledge that the de-selection criteria employed by the liaisons are based not only circulation, but other factors such as the availability of digital research materials, and include discussion with discipline faculty. The de-selection goals differ by discipline and liaisons add their own criteria dependent upon the discipline. Additional input is provided through the Affordable Learning Solutions project activities.

5. **Begin campus conversation on Learning Commons services in the Library**

The definition of the Learning Commons concept as stated by the Chancellor’s Office and LOFT group is bringing together student support services such as the Tutorial Center, Writing Center, Advisement, Office of Student’s with Disabilities, and faculty development, resources and teaching with the academic resources and programs of the library. A recommendation to begin a campus conversation on which services would logically be
based in the Library is in alignment with the Library’s LOFT recommendation. (2014 Self-Study, p. 74)

Student success, faculty success, and institutional success are components of the vision strategy of the Library and the CSU. Strategies the Library could use to further faculty scholarship through the establishment of an "instructor commons" or other such services should be part of the campus conversation as a way of developing new synergies.

6. **Explore the idea of student assistant "ambassador" for outreach and marketing to students**

It was apparent from the student group interview feedback that word-of-mouth was the most effective way to make students aware of the Library's resources and services. The student assistants had positive feelings towards the Library and felt that they were in-the-know about most Library activities. They suggested that more outreach was needed, that professors should publicize research services to their classes, that the website should highlight "What’s New", and that the student newspaper was a vehicle for information. Yet hearing from a peer was considered the most important means of communicating information about the Library.

The Library should capitalize on student assistant willingness to spread the word and explore the concept of having a student assistant role as an ambassador for the Library. This would develop student assistant knowledge and growth as well as benefiting the Library.