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Branch Libraries and Technology: Impact of a New Main Library
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[ABSTRACT]

The UNLV Libraries consists of a main library and three branches. All facilities are connected by one network, and served by one systems department. This has many advantages, including equipment and software upgraded on a regular schedule. It also presents some challenges, such as implementing or adapting policies developed to address needs and concerns of the main library. The general context is illustrated by descriptions of the situations in each of the three branches.

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[KEYWORDS]

centralized systems departments; branch libraries; branch – main library relationships; architecture libraries; music libraries; curriculum materials centers; technology in branches

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Introduction

The UNLV Libraries consists of Lied Library and three branch library facilities: the Curriculum Materials Library [CML], the Architecture Studies Library [ASL], and the Music Library. The

CML, the oldest of the branches, is located within the College of Education and is scheduled for renovation. The ASL opened in the fall of 1997, and the Music Library, slightly newer than Lied Library, opened in the fall of 2001. Each branch is dependent upon the Libraries Systems staff, housed in the main library, for major technology-related functions.

The Libraries Systems Department set up the network such that, as they put it, "branches are just another floor of Lied Library." This translates into more than just unified functionality. The Libraries Administration committed to a standard technology level and standard computer setup at all points of service. This has meant that equipment is replaced and software upgraded on the same schedule as the main library, which has been a major advantage for the branch libraries. Computers in Lied were new in 2001, and replaced in 2003. The equipment in the ASL, new in 1997, was replaced in 2001 and again in 2003. CML and Music Library also received new computers in 2001 and 2003.

Connections to the Libraries' computer network are fundamental to the ability to provide basic services to branch patrons. For instance, the integrated library system, Innovative Interfaces' Millenium, serves all branches as well as Lied Library with one standardized system, while allowing for individual branch libraries to customize some functions, such as production of overdue notices. The Uniprint pay-for-print system is also unified: patrons need not learn new procedures because they use multiple library locations. All patrons use a card that is encoded with cash and that is accepted campus-wide to pay for and retrieve their computer print-outs. From the patron perspective, using a library computer means that they encounter the same computer hardware, the same screens and procedures for logging onto the network, and the same computer software in any of the UNLV Libraries. In addition, all library staff have the option of saving electronic documents to the shared network staff server, whether in the main library or in the branches.

Being part of one network also means enforced adherence to policies and procedures that are developed to respond to challenges in the main library. One example is the limitation of the use of library computers only to UNLV staff and students during midterms and finals. This policy was created to respond to the heavy use during those periods and the perception that public borrowers were preventing student access to needed resources. For branch libraries, many patrons officially classified as "public borrowers" are in fact part of our primary clientele, such as local architects and public school teachers. Although it is preferable not to deny these patrons access, the policy and the programming to implement the policy applies to all library computers. In cases such as these, branch library staff must make exceptions on an as-needed as-requested basis.

A disadvantage of being part of the Libraries' network is that standardization often means loss of the ability to customize the branch computer environment. Although the standardization of hardware and software has been determined to be a higher goal, it sacrifices convenience for the patron and more transparent access to subject-specific software and information most likely to be needed and used in a branch library environment. For example, branch library home pages are unable to be set as the default screen on computers in the branch libraries.

In some cases, the needs of patrons that use the branch libraries are not met because of geographic location. Students use the campus one-card debit feature to pay for various things on campus, including making copies and paying for printouts from the libraries' networked printers. The campus decided, however, that the machines that produce these cards and encode them with money would only be available at central locations, such as the student union and Lied Library.

The branches have some networking and systems support issues in common, but each also has unique needs. Differences are variously accounted for by the branch's infrastructure, by the needs of the patrons being served, and by the service philosophy of the branch librarian. The three branches have much in common in their basic attitudes toward patron services, though at times those attitudes play out in different ways. All three, for instance, see the power of the Internet for communicating with their specific clientele and envision web pages that can change quickly when appropriate. While this attitude is shared by some staff in the main library, it is more difficult to implement new projects or timely changes to the Libraries' main website, perhaps due to the large number of people that must be coordinated in decisions concerning it. Fortunately, each branch library has one staff member who is proficient in web design and maintenance in addition to their other responsibilities. On the other hand, each branch has made an individual decision on the inclusion of self-checkout service in the branch, for a variety of reasons.

The unique situation of each branch library is described below, including observations on the relationship of each branch to the Lied Library.

Architecture Studies Library

The Architecture Studies Library [ASL] was occupied in fall 1997. At that time it was the first new library facility on the UNLV campus in at least 15 years. At 16,000 net square feet it is relatively large for a branch. When it opened it boasted new personal computers, and a computer lab with the latest instruction technology, including an overhead projector and student computer monitor control software. For the brief period between 1997 and Lied Library's opening in January 2001, the ASL was the most technologically up-to-date library facility on campus.

A few ASL facts:

Staffed by two staff, one librarian, and five students

Open 77 hours per week during fall and spring; 48 hours per week during summer

Computer lab of 18 student stations and one instructor's station

Two multimedia workstations with scanners, Adobe suite, and Macromedia suite [both of which are ADA accessible]

Two express workstations allowing access to the Libraries web pages and licensed offsite databases

Nine additional workstations

Collection of over 22,000 print and media materials

Serving the 583 undergraduate and graduate students of the School of Architecture [headcount report for Fall 2003]

Gate count for 2003-2004: 83,372

[INSERT PHOTO HERE]
Caption: The Architecture Studies Library instructional classroom/ computer lab

The goal of the ASL is to offer services that are equivalent to those in Lied Library whenever possible. The initial building block to accomplish this goal was the networking configuration. The advantages of being part of the Libraries' network have been mentioned in the introduction above.

The disadvantages of being on the Libraries' network do not overweigh the advantages, yet they do exist. One disadvantage is that the Architecture Studies Library is not connected to the School of Architecture network. School of Architecture students cannot save work done in the library onto their space on the architecture network. There is campus computer lab file space available to students; however, most architecture students do not use the campus space. The ASL is in the process of exploring possibilities for connecting to the architecture network without requiring a substantial investment.

Another disadvantage of the network situation has been enforced standardization. As mentioned above, the branch has no control over the default screen image. Formerly systems staff set up separate default images for each branch so that a person in the ASL, upon logging into the computer, would open the web page for the Architecture Studies Library. However, the computer image has become standardized and controlled centrally. There must be a compelling reason to request a different screen image, such as accommodating a scanning station rather than a station without an attached scanner. This has been particularly disappointing for the ASL since it brought to an end the ability to use the screen for marketing services, which the ASL had done with some success. On the plus side, with the new re-design of the Libraries' home page, the branch web pages are much more evident than they were previously.

[INSERT PHOTOS HERE]
Caption: UNLV Libraries redesigned home page, implemented June 2004
Caption: UNLV Libraries home page prior to 2004 redesign

The standardization approach works to the ASL's advantage in the equipment area. Systems argues successfully that standardized hardware helps foster efficiency and lessen confusion. From a support standpoint, when a production PC or printer fails, the Libraries have identical spare equipment which can easily and quickly replace the failed unit. This perspective provided a compelling rationale that resulted in branch computers being replaced along with those of the main library.

Thanks to Lied's successful program of laptop checkout, and based on the philosophy that all patrons should have equal service no matter the location, the ASL obtained network drops at several carrels and in group study rooms, to allow the ASL to check out laptops for in-house use. Interestingly, School of Architecture patrons do not seem as taken with this service as do Lied patrons, probably because they have conveniently located computer labs in the same building.

Wireless technology has been implemented in the ASL before Lied, at least in terms of the extent of implementation. Although Lied has installed wireless access points in the extended study area next to the coffee shop, the ASL has access throughout the branch. This is part of a campus experiment with the School of Architecture and several other locations on campus. This trial commenced in fall 2004.

The web is another technological arena. Here the branches have some advantages. Like Lied, the ASL has staff with expertise in web work. The ASL relies on the web in more depth, however. The branch environment allows for a closer view of patron needs. This in turn enables a specific web response to specific resource and information needs. For instance, architectural history students needed scholarly articles for their papers. The ASL was able to quickly create a link to JStor with its access to the Society of Architectural Historians Journal online to address this need.

Web services are a primary focus for the ASL. This may seem contradictory – why rely on the web when the patron is often physically present. However this approach is seen as another mode of service and one filling the convenience needs of 24-hour patrons. Convenience has also been a major motivator in the implementation of electronic reserves. The main library was the first to implement, and indeed endured the rigors of testing and refining the system, but implementation for the ASL was only one semester behind. This has been a major service for ASL patrons, as it has for Lied patrons as well.

Digital projects is an area not yet explored by the ASL, although not through lack of interest. This is an area like the web, where the potential of using databases to respond to patron needs is a powerful impetus toward implementation. However, unlike the situation with web pages, the expertise to create databases does not exist among branch staff. The Libraries' Web and Digitization Services Department was formed in July 2003. One of this department's initial tasks was to meet with each library department to understand and begin to prioritize their needs as related to web and digital projects. Although it is not yet clear how priorities will be set, the database expert in the department is working with the ASL to set up a database structure for a substantial file on Las Vegas architects and buildings. This will allow ASL staff to start transferring information from the current Word file into a basic database, although it may be some time before complete functionality is established, depending on how other projects are prioritized.

In a few areas, Lied makes use of technologically-based services that the ASL does not choose to implement. One of these is the self-checkout service. ASL traffic is not heavy enough that patrons find themselves faced with delays that might be remedied through self-checkout. In addition, contact with patrons at the combined circulation / reference desk is an effective mode

of gathering information about the patrons' use of the library. Checking out a book is also an opportunity for a teachable moment. Staff use the interaction to touch base with the patron: how are they doing, did they find what they needed, etc.

Music Library

The Music Library, located in the Beam Music Center, was opened in August 2001, just seven months after Lied Library.   The Music Library is just under 4,000 square feet, and upon opening we were already facing a tight space.   Space was cut throughout the building due to funding, or lack thereof, but there are plans in the future, as funding comes available, for expansion. Because of the space issue, it was decided that only music media and scores (or, the performing materials most needed by music students and faculty), as well as a small music reference collection, would be moved to the new facility.   Books and journals would remain in Lied. Once an expansion takes place, books and journals will move to the Music Library. Some general facts about the Music Library:

> • Open 67 hours per week during fall and spring semesters.
> • Serves 234 undergraduate music majors, 67 masters level music majors, and 10 doctoral students (found in the UNLV Office of Institutional Analysis and Planning, *Selected Institutional Characteristics,* 2003/04).
> • Staffed by one Music Librarian, 2 classified staff members, and five student workers.
> • 2002-2003 gate count was 41,680.

As a new branch library, the initial challenge in 2001 was to market services and collections while being overshadowed by the afterglow of opening a new main library.   Lied Library had been open only seven months, and in August, it was the first fall semester.   Riding on Lied Library's coattails, however, had its definite advantages in the area of equipment needs.   When new computers were purchased for Lied Library, they were also purchased for the Music Library in anticipation of its opening. By the time the computers were installed in the Music Library, dust had settled in Lied Library, glitches were identified, and problems were solved.

A centralized systems department can be an advantage when it comes to having equipment replaced in a timely manner.   Each time the main library has a computer upgrade, so do the branches. Nevertheless, there are some drawbacks.   The UNLV Libraries are a PC outfit, and Macs are not supported.   Music students and faculty alike are heavy Mac users, and would love to see Macs in the Music Library.   There is no support, however, from our Systems Department for Macs, either for troubleshooting existing Macs or keeping current. The decision was made, based at least partially on this issue to not have laptops available for checkout in the Music Library.   Many music students who have laptops have Macs; those who do not would only want to check out Macs.   Students are able to plug Mac laptops into the Libraries' network, just as they can a PC-based laptop, once the laptop has been authenticated.   There are advantages in the standardization of computing hardware/operating system platforms. Systems staff can focus its efforts on one system without becoming segmented.

As the Music Library handles all music media, a distribution system for listening and viewing was necessary.   The Safari System was installed in the main library.   Safari is an audio-video

distribution system allowing Media to send audio and video to work stations as well as classrooms. This system, while adequate for the needs of the main library, was not sufficient in some of its technology for the Music Library. For example, when students listen to vinyl LP recordings, there was no mechanism for them to control what they were listening to in a hands-off environment. They could not listen, for example, to the same track multiple times without several trips to the service desk. Within the Music Library, a custom system designed by Audio Video Solutions was installed in September, 2003. This system better met the needs of the music student, with capabilities to handle LPs, as well as the ability of the Music Library staff to edit audio clips and prepare listening tests and examples for assignments ahead of time. However centralized the Systems department may be, they are not involved in troubleshooting or upgrades of the Music Library distribution system. The next step with this system will involve Systems; and involves audio streaming to classrooms within the Music Department, as well as to Lied Library. Much of this is dependent on the upgrade of the campus network backbone.

Related to audio is the upcoming service of e-sound reserves. Beginning in the Fall 2004 semester, the Music Library will be providing e-sound reserves via Real Media audio-streaming and the E-Res software already available for print materials. Outside of software support that Systems takes care of, the workload for converting the native wave format audio files (.wav) into a streaming audio format (.rm) and mounting them onto the ERes system falls directly on the Music Library staff.

RFID and self-checkout were technologies embraced by Lied Library and by CML. A decision was made not to utilize RFID tags in our scores or media, and self-checkout will not be used. This decision was based primarily on the fact that a large part of the collection is scores with parts. RFID tags may be able to indicate how many parts may be included in a pocket with a given score, but with self-checkout, there is no staff monitoring how many parts were actually in the piece when checked out to ensure that they all come back. Theft has not been a problem since the Music Library opened in August 2001. If a switch occurred to the use of RFID technology, there would no longer have assurances that all items would come back. No self-checkout, however, gives staff the opportunity to check for parts, as well as making vital one-to-one personal contact with the Music Library patron. In addition, RFID technology would not be helpful in inventory of the collection. Approximately half of the approximately 22,000 scores have parts in pockets. RFID tags on items would not be able to detect if all parts are actually present in the pockets unless a tag was attached to each part, and this isn't economically feasible, nor is it possible in many cases without covering up part of the needed print material. Inventory is done for the music collection instead by scanning each barcode individually in the collection, and as this is being done, physically taking each score off of the shelf and checking for the number of parts.

Just as with the other branches, web design is an issue in the Music Library. The three campus branch libraries are indeed diverse, and needs of music students are quite different than those in other disciplines. Yet, with a standard image on computers and limited flexibility in website design, we are not able to adequately promote those web pages that may be of greatest interest to the Music Library patron base. Consistency may be important in some areas (for example, links to important overall resources such as *Oxford English Dictionary* or *Worldcat*), but the flexibility to design pages to meet patron needs suffers.

Curriculum Materials Library (CML)

With the roots of its collection beginning in 1967, the Curriculum Materials Library moved into its current space in the William D. Carlson Education Building in 1972, occupying approximately 4200 square feet on the first floor of the three-story building. The CML provides a unique service point for future and current teachers; it primarily serves the 1600-plus undergraduate and 800-plus graduate students in the Departments of Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education by providing materials that support and enhance their course work, preparing them for their classroom teaching experience or providing further professional development once they are in the field. The CML is also a resource for students and faculty in other programs in the College of Education, including Educational Leadership and Educational Psychology, as well as for teachers in the Clark County School District, which is now the fifth largest school district in the United States.

While the facility was adequate 30 years ago, it now hampers the ability to adapt to the changing nature of intellectual work and is unable to fully accommodate the needs of the rapidly growing College of Education programs at UNLV, including space for collections and study areas for library users. In addition, the space presents the typical challenges of older buildings for expansion of technology infrastructure, such as concrete floors and a lack of power and data outlets. In 2003, the CML acquired an additional 1600 square feet of space in rooms adjacent to its present location. Although fire code currently prohibits demolition of walls in the building, planning and energy has been put into a reconfiguration of the library that will present opportunities for services that had not been possible before.

CML facts:
    Staffed by one librarian, three staff, and five to seven student employees
    Open 63 hours per week, year round
    Computer classroom of 12 (to be expanded to 18) public stations and one instructor's
        station
    One ADA-accessible workstation with scanner
    Two express workstations allowing access to the Libraries web pages and licensed offsite
        databases
    Four additional computer workstations (to be expanded to 7)
    Collection of over 40,000 print and multimedia items
    Serving the 3000+ undergraduate and graduate students of the College of Education
    Gate count for 2003-2004: 71,444

In the "Guidelines for Curriculum Materials Centers," which were approved by the Association of College and Research Libraries and the American Library Association in January 2003 (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/guidelinescurriculum.htm), technology standards for these types of libraries are addressed in the following ways:

- Library collections should include materials in a variety of formats including both traditional and emerging technologies.

- The facility should have its own classroom equipped with technology appropriate for demonstration (and if possible, hands-on practice) of electronic and media resources.
- Instruction in the use of curriculum-related resources should include instructional technology.
- Equipment provided for access to non-print resources and materials should be provided in sufficient numbers to meet user needs.
- Equipment should be regularly maintained with a budget and technical support to ensure this.
- Equipment should be regularly updated to meet the needs of new technologies.
- Equipment provided for production of instructional materials should include both traditional and emerging technologies.
- Staff should have access to continuing education opportunities so that the CMC reflects current trends in curriculum materials and technology.

As mentioned in the previous profiles of the Architecture and Music Libraries, the CML has benefited greatly in the area of computer hardware and software upgrades with the opening of Lied Library in 2001. At that time, in addition to staff and patron computer replacements, the CML was able to add four additional data drops to expand its "computer area." This allowed a reconfiguration of the space into a classroom set-up, including three rows of four computers each, an instructor's station, a ceiling-mounted projector, and an interactive white board (SMART Board). Although the classroom is not in an enclosed space, it was a vast improvement in being able to provide library instruction to College of Education classes and also doubles as a computer lab, providing increased access to a growing number of electronic library resources for patrons when not scheduled for class use. Library Systems staff worked closely with CML staff to ensure that the technology met patron needs.

[INSERT PHOTO HERE]
Caption: The Curriculum Materials Library instructional classroom/ computer lab

Likewise, with an impending renovation of the CML, Library Systems staff has been heavily involved in planning and implementing the expansion of the technology infrastructure by discussing possibilities, inventorying and testing existing data connections, and scheduling and coordinating network expansion. When the renovation is complete, the CML will have expanded by 9 computer workstations, a group study room with access to the Safari Media Distribution System, and will have extra data drops to allow for patrons to connect their laptops to the Libraries network. The CML will also begin to check out laptops, a service that is currently inhibited by a lack of available data drops.

The Libraries' electronic reserves system, Docutek's ERes, was also implemented at CML after a pilot project and testing period at Lied Library and has been a wildly successful service. For convenience, all College of Education faculty members are instructed to bring their materials to the CML for scanning into the system. Originally, branch library staff members were expected to scan the materials at Lied Library; however, after the first semester of implementation at CML, the number of articles scanned was high enough to justify the transfer of Lied's second high-speed scanner to the branch. College of Education administrators have marketed the service to faculty as a way to reduce copying costs, and this factor, coupled with the physical

convenience of submitting materials in the building where their offices are located, has been a main contributor to the success of the service.

In 1999, the CML began the first international beta test of 3M^{TM} Library Systems' Digital Materials Flow Management (radio frequency identification or RFID) products, which involved the conversion of the collection from barcode to RFID technology and testing and implementing self checkout and other equipment (see the article "UNLV Libraries and the Digital Identification Frontier" also in this issue). This is one case where the CML was the leader and testing field for technology that was later implemented in Lied Library. While the Music and Architecture Studies Libraries have made conscious decisions not to request RFID equipment, and specifically, self checkout equipment, the unique situation of beta testing the equipment forced a decision for CML in this area. CML self checkout statistics have hovered around 54% of total checkout numbers for the past three years. Although there is an initial period of patron education in the use of the equipment, giving patrons a choice between the self-service option and coming to the desk to have staff check out their materials has worked out remarkably well, especially because the CML has clearly identified peak-use times, usually immediately prior to class-start times, when lines can accumulate at the circulation desk. While Systems staff may sometimes become involved in troubleshooting the equipment, it is ultimately maintained through a service agreement with 3M^{TM}, and CML staff members originate all communications regarding service calls on the equipment.

As addressed in the profiles of the other two branch libraries, there are limitations presented by a centralized Library Systems Department when it comes to customization of services to fit some of the specific needs of CML users. These include:

- Maintenance of equipment that will accommodate access to "outdated" formats. While the UNLV Libraries are at the cutting edge of technology hardware and operating systems, this is sometimes in opposition to the environment of K-12 schools, where audio cassette players, VCRs, and Windows 98 or even 95 are still the norm. The 2003 computer upgrade to a Windows XP operating system rendered many of the CML's CD-ROM software titles obsolete for internal use and preview.
- Maintenance of the Macintosh platform. As with patrons of the Music Library, many College of Education patrons use and prefer Macs over PCs, and the Library Systems Department currently will not support Macs on the Libraries network. This can be problematic, especially when there are College of Education faculty member or student requests for the CML to provide applications that cannot be duplicated on the PC platform. Loyal Macintosh users will argue that the platform has been designed specifically for education and will cite a long history of Macintosh's collaboration with K-12 education. Since there is still a mix of platforms represented in school districts, the overall philosophy in the College of Education is to offer students options in providing exposure to and a balance between the two platforms. Although the CML cannot currently offer both platforms, there are two additional computer labs in the College of Education building that offer access to Macintosh computers.
- Ability to provide and maintain all services available at Lied. While the "Guidelines for Curriculum Materials Centers," referenced above include the encouragement to provide "emerging technologies" for production of instructional materials, it is simply not yet

feasible in terms of financial and staff resources to implement a service such as digital video editing in a branch library when it is already being provided at Lied Library.

Despite the inability to tailor certain aspects of technology in the CML, library patrons still benefit from some of the technology decisions made in the College of Education. For example, although the UNLV Libraries have decided to wait until campus wireless network standards are in place before implementing wireless, the College of Education made the decision to go ahead with providing wireless access. In April 2004, the wireless network became operational. As a consequence, patrons are able to bring their own laptops equipped with wireless network cards into the CML and log on to the Internet. Because the wireless network is associated with an on-campus IP address, they are also able to get access to library web-based resources, such as electronic indexes and databases just as a faculty member would get from his/her office. This is a service that the CML will begin to market to patrons, even though it is not provided though the UNLV Libraries.

Conclusion

Although this article points out several areas where more flexibility to mold branch computing environments to meet the needs of branch patrons would be desirable, service by a centralized Systems Department has many advantages. Advantages include specialized computing staff with expertise beyond what could be expected of branch staff, equipment replacement on a regular schedule, systems security set in place, and being included in long-range equipment and software planning. With Lied Library seen as a leader in the technology area, including branches in the standardized equipment and software configurations used at Lied puts branches in a very solid place in terms of resources. In addition, the support supplied by the Libraries Systems Department is informed and timely, and critical in reaching the goal to provide computing services to patrons which are equal – as far as possible – with those of the renowned main library. The Libraries, Lied and the three branches, share the same common goal of ultimate service to the patron.