Association of College & Research Libraries

University of Puerto Rico
Assisted Self-Study Report
For
Aguadilla Campus Library

Overview

The Library at the University of Puerto Rico at Aguadilla underwent an assisted self-study using the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Standards for Higher Education and the ACRL Standards for Information Literacy. ACRL Consultants Dr. Lance Query, Dean of Libraries, Tulane University and Ms. Kathryn Deiss, Content Strategist, ACRL conducted a site visit on June 6, 2007 after receiving the Library's self-study report. This report contains the observations and recommendations from the self-study and the site visit (including information gleaned from interviews with key stakeholders at the Aguadilla Campus).

The Aguadilla campus Library complies with most of the ACRL Standards minimally. Through little fault of the library's leadership, the limitations presented by this Library must be taken into account when reviewing it according to Standards essentially created assuming a certain level of resources. This level does not exist entirely at Aguadilla though there is certainly a great spirit and desire for it to exist at this campus and we believe that, once the new Library is opened, the level of compliance with ACRL Standards will increase considerably.

This Library is currently doing all it can with what it has.

Collections

Collections at the Aguadilla campus library are minimally meeting the growing needs of the institution. Reviewers found, upon discussions with faculty and with the library director and other staff, that the addition of bachelor programs has put a stress on the Library collections budget. One of the significant problems in terms of the addition of new programs at the campus level is that a certain level of funding may be made available to the Library to buy books and other materials in the new subject area however these funds are not recurring funds. Since much study and research is done through journals and these require recurring funds and since new monographs in all subject areas are published every year, recurring library funding for any new subject area should be a norm. In fact, in many universities non-recurring library funds can stop a program from being established.
The budget figures shared with us were from two different fiscal years and were not entirely in accordance with data described in the Self-Study. We understand that this is due to a change in group membership relative to the authoring of the self-study but urge the Library to sort through the data and develop a clearer way to describe changes in the budget from year to year.

Aguadilla campus Library is in extremely tight quarters (more on the facilities below) and hence has little space for adding significant numbers of materials. The uses of online databases appear to alleviate some of the limitations on materials acquisition but reviewers question the usefulness of the more sophisticated databases for the purposes of the average Aguadilla undergraduate student.

Space could be found in the Library through the identification and disposal of the backfiles of journals and common magazines which are also represented in full-text in the online databases. We spotted several of these immediately upon entering the journal stack area. An example is Time Magazine. Clearly useful but not the most important item for undergraduate research papers, paper copies of Time are not necessary given the full-text availability of this magazine. And this is just one example. There were also quite dated magazines that will not serve the students in modern undergraduate research. Reviewers encountered some resistance to such proposed weeding of this part of the collection. We believe that such resistance should be overcome. The large backlog of print periodicals issues takes up much space. Some of that valuable space could be used for expansion of the children's literature collection (which supports an important part of the curriculum); this collection currently is located right next to the periodicals in the stacks.

A review should be conducted of the need to bind soft cover books. This seems an unnecessary expenditure.

Librarians appear not to have a strong hand in collection development and this is something which should be discussed and perhaps made part of every librarian’s position description and expectation. Along with collection development responsibilities, departmental liaison work would go hand in hand.

Aguadilla is creative in side-stepping the aggravating problem of the slowness of vendor payment and thus the slowness of acquiring materials. They have found the ability to order online and move materials quickly into the library.

**Services and Technology**

Reviewers met with faculty and students to discuss collections, services, and the facility. In discussing services, students (albeit they were mostly library student workers so not perhaps the most representative) identified a great need for more computer terminals and described the great demand for the online resources that they observe and experience themselves. There are computer laboratories in some departments however there was some confusion regarding how late these are open. The Computing Center lab is open until 9 p.m. Students pointed to a need for later hours of computer availability.
In addition there is not enough group study space. Group study has become a learning norm in modern higher education.

Similar to other campuses, productivity software (such as Microsoft Office) is missing from workstations. This is particularly critical at a campus such as Aguadilla where not all students have their own computers and yet the educational environment demands that they use standard productivity software for the production of research papers and presentations. One-stop research (from the initial research inquiry to printing the final document) is the norm in most academic libraries and it should be so at Aguadilla, as well.

Students cited not enough photocopiers as another issue considering many of them cannot stay and use the materials in the Library but must copy them to take home to work on.

Modern functionalities in most universities at this point include the allowance of “chat” programs on the workstations. We understand from the students that “chat” is not allowed and understand further from staff that this is because of the time students might spend at workstations (which returns us to the need for more workstations). However, the librarians themselves could be using chat to communicate with students and faculty and make the reference service much more accessible to those students who are not always on campus.

In fact, there appears to be a rather limited way of viewing what is appropriate in the way of services and what is not. See “chat” above. This Library would benefit from an interchange with another library using new Library 2.0 tools such as chat, blogs, and wikis.

The wireless network was cited as very slow and frequently crashing. This is largely a factor of the nature of the building in which the Library exists.

A significant strength for Aguadilla is that it seems to enjoy 24 hour turnaround time on interlibrary loan requests from other UPR libraries. This is not the case for many of the other libraries we visited and causes us to think this could be an example of a shared best practice and a model for the rest of the system. Certainly the 24 hour turn-around time on loans is crucial to a campus as limited as Aguadilla in terms of resources.

An additional strength is the presence of electronic reserves services. The Aguadilla campus library was among the first in the UPR system to adopt e-reserves for faculty and students.

Finally Aguadilla campus Library is to be commended for excellent service programs such as the laptop lending program. This is in direct relation to the environment and demographic of the student body and shows that creative approaches have been engaged in to reach decisions about offering new services. This addresses the ACRL Standard for Higher Education related to Services.
Facilities

Probably the most poignant element in all the visits we made to the five UPR campuses visited, was the explanation of the Aguadilla campus coat of arms which displays in one section, an image of the “new library” – the “new library” as yet unfinished. The library building is, indeed, the main issue for this campus. For eleven years the “new library” has been under construction. For a variety of reasons, not the fault of anyone on the Aguadilla campus, this construction has been interrupted and delayed. It is time for this building to be finished and moved into! We strongly recommend to the University of Puerto Rico central administration that arrangements and concessions be made to enable this important construction to be completed. Regardless of UPR policy, the conditions surrounding this project are such that everything possible should be done to complete it.

To be sure, the completion of this building will bring to the fore the necessary changes in the Aguadilla collections and personnel budgets as well as an increase in maintenance and other physical plant costs, however this is of the utmost importance to the future of successful education at the UPR Aguadilla campus.

We know the Chancellor and Dean of Academic Affairs are supportive of this construction being completed and that they feel as hamstrung as the Library director and staff do. So it is at the feet of the UPR administration that this serious problem rests and must be resolved.

Personnel/Organization

If we could sum up the personnel situation at Aguadilla it would be: not enough librarians and too many clerks/paraprofessionals. However, it is important for the Library to step back from the “way things have always been” to review very analytically their staffing needs. Surely two secretaries in an administrative office are not necessary. There is a great need for professional work at this Library. And it is a Library that could take great advantage of outsourcing cataloging by buying shelf-ready materials and accepting standard OCLC records, etc. It is a Library that needs “all hands on deck” for the undergraduate student. This means more information literacy experts and more reference assistance.

Important to the future of the Library is the need for recruitment and succession planning. The Director will not always be there and so the administration and the library must plan for how to recruit the next generation of leaders to the Aguadilla campus.

A key problem is the need for evening and Saturday staffing. Currently library staff work excessive hours to cover these times and another solution must be arrived at if these professionals are to be retained in their positions. We recommend an expansion of the student worker body and training of the best of these to be night and weekend supervisors. This is a model that has been used in other academic libraries with which we are familiar.
Another way to capture professional staff time is to use highly skilled and trained paraprofessionals at the reference desk to free librarians up to do instruction and information literacy work.

**Recommendations**

We commend Aguadilla Library leadership for the persistence and creativity it has shown in the face of paralysis on the building.

Aguadilla is seriously deficient in one significant standard and that is the Standard for Facilities. When looking at the ACRL Standards for Higher Education we used the Standard on Facilities to assess the library. The Standard asks the question “Does the library provide a well-planned, secure, and sufficient space to meet the perceived needs of the staff and users?” We could not answer this key question in the affirmative. Hence our main recommendation in this report relates to the one area where the Aguadilla campus library clearly did not meet the ACRL Standards for Higher Education: the “new” library must be completed as soon as possible. It is a critical resource for the future of this campus and all haste must be made to get it to be a reality.

Other recommendations are connected to the new building:

- Evaluate and weed the collection to prepare for the move to the new building
- Evaluate all policies and ask “why are we restricting users?” Weed all policies that exist only to make the library staff more comfortable
- Explore models for maximizing professional and paraprofessional staff
- Create a plan for the next five years driven by a vision of the future library
- Develop stronger collection development responsibilities among librarians
- Reallocate staff lines or funds to important information literacy work

The Aguadilla Campus Library is doing the best that it can given the limited space. Once the new building is completed and the staff has established the new services and methodologies there, a new self-study would be very useful to this Library. We recommend doing a follow-up self-study two years after moving into the new building.

Final Report submitted 12/14/07

By
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On behalf of The Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)

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1 The Association of College & Research Libraries is a division of The American Library Association.