

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries
Assessment Committee Report to the Executive Committee
Engineering Libraries of the 21st Century
Final Report
March 2008

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The Assessment Committee was charged with determining what a 21st Century engineering library “looks like”, and what can be done to bring the UNL Engineering Library more in line with this vision.

The Committee began with a literature search and survey of 25 engineering school libraries. The Committee then attempted to determine and examine all facets of the UNL Engineering Library in relation to its effectiveness in meeting the research needs of the UNL community. The Committee’s efforts consisted of the following:

- Analysis of the Engineering Library data including circulation statistics and gate counts in the current and previous years.
- Meetings with the Dean, Associate Deans, and Engineering faculty.
- Meetings with undergraduate and graduate students.
- Student survey.
- Discussion with Engineering Library staff.

The results of the literature search and survey are included in the December 2007 Assessment Committee Preliminary Report. This final report contains the Committee findings in regard to the 21st Century Engineering Library vision and recommendations for the Engineering Library.

The Vision:

Based upon the literature search, survey, and interaction with engineering users, the Committee believes the Engineering Library of the 21st Century will be:

- The Engineering Library is the center of community for the college and the students “home” in the college.
- The spaces in the library serve to encourage interdisciplinary discussions, work and learning and encourage group activities.
- The library is seen as an integral part of recruiting for the college with spaces that encourage students to come together to work on projects or meet with faculty and friends.
- The library is viewed as a central player in meeting the life-long learning accreditation requirements for the college, with information skills integrated into classes and projects.
- The library hosts regular presentations and displays by practitioners and scholars.
- There are numerous computers in the library that serve as a multipurpose lab, with access to information resources as well as specialized software programs needed for all disciplines in the college. The workstations are configured to accommodate groups of 2-

6 and some of the workstations have multiple screens for viewing multiple pages simultaneously.

- The lab space is equipped with rolling task chairs that number more than the computers, so groups can move the chairs where needed and cluster around workstations.
- There are small group study rooms with whiteboard walls, some of which are equipped with presentation stations for students to practice presenting projects. The rooms vary in size with some available for individual quiet study and some available for students to reserve for large projects with short deadlines where materials can be left out until the project is complete.
- There are comfortable chairs and that encourage conversation and nearby vending for snacks, drinks or coffee. There are study tables that accommodate various sized groups from 2-6 people.
- There is a small, heavily used print collection in the library with the overall focus of library materials oriented toward electronic with print materials available “just in time”.
- The library is considered a northern branch library for nearby colleges and programs and students who live in the residence halls near Nebraska Hall and provides a welcoming place for their studies.
- Small print collections are moved into the library for student use for short durations related to specific course projects.
- There is a hands-on computer classroom available which is heavily used by the library staff to offer various workshops and training programs to faculty and students, many of which are team taught with faculty and staff of the college.

Committee Findings: Status of UNL Engineering Library within this vision. The current state of the Library was discussed in the preliminary report. The following is a brief summary of the Committee’s findings:

- Online catalog searching from within the library has increased from 9,355 searches, in 2002-03, to 12,229 in 2006-07.
- There are approximately 138,000 volumes currently housed in the Engineering Library. The collection is aging and circulation is decreasing. The use of reserve materials is also decreasing.
- The majority of the Library space is occupied by the paper collection.
- The gate count remains high at 60,382 in 2006-07.

Working toward the Vision

The Committee recommends the following for

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Programs & Services:

- **Continue working closely with the Engineering Learning Community and investigate other ways to become more integrated into the college:** A member of the Engineering Library staff should serve as a member of the first year learning community as this seems to be playing a vital role in promoting library use to the students, staff and faculty related to the learning community. Continue this involvement and work with the college to identify other ways that the staff can be integrated into existing programs. Identify and develop ways that information skills can be effectively integrated into existing required classes such as the first

year seminar. Identify and develop ways that the library staff can support faculty in the development of projects that encourage effective use of information resources.

- **Identify potential partners** such as the Engineering College and IS willing to fund programs and services.
- **Investigate Printing for Students:** Students in the Engineering College are allowed to print up to 1000 pages each semester at no cost to the student. Investigate the possibility of allowing students to print using this account from the computers in the library in conjunction with Uniprint.
- **Encourage faculty to use E-Reserves:** Identify faculty who are still placing print materials on reserve at the Engineering Library. Investigate what it would take for them to move to electronic reserves and develop a plan to shift reserves from print to electronic. Publicize the availability of a staff person at Engineering Library who can help digitize or link materials for e-reserves.

Collections:

- **Undertake a major weeding of the collection at Engineering:** The collection should be downsized as much as possible and still meet the needs of the state as the comprehensive research library. The ultimate goal is to downsize the collection to fit on one level.

Facilities:

- **Evaluate load bearing capabilities of the library:** Determine whether it would support compact shelving.
- **Add whiteboards to current group study room:** Add whiteboards or whiteboard walls to the current group study space in the library.
- **Use the patent room for student presentation practice:** This room is already equipped with presentation equipment. Relocate the collection(s) in this space and replace the shelving with whiteboards or whiteboard walls.

INTERMEDIATE ACTION

Collections:

- **Print to Electronic:** Identify where significant print collections can be replaced with full content electronic versions. When electronic version is acquired withdraw the print version.

Facilities:

- **Develop an Integrated Space Plan:** Work with the engineering college to develop an integrated plan for the space in the library and on the 2nd floor of Nebraska Hall surrounding the library. Plans should improve access to the rest rooms from the library and identify intermediate and long-term locations for the print collection.
- **Improve the atmosphere of the library:** Both faculty and students described the library as “harsh” both in feel and atmosphere. Most contributed this to the lack of carpet, harsh lighting, metal shelving and hard furniture. Carpet the library and add task lighting and additional soft furniture to make it more inviting.
- **Add computer workstations:** Work with the college and IS to add workstations for student use with software specific to departmental programs. Provide the workstations on tables large enough to accommodate groups of 4-6 or vary the size of the workstation tables. Purchase task chairs on casters for the workstations.

LONG TERM ACTION

- **Move the majority of the print collection off site for delivery on demand:** Keep only a small, heavily used collection on site.
- **Add individual and group study rooms, some with presentation equipment.**
- **Integrated Space Plan phased in:** Space in the library and surrounding areas is modified according to the integrated plan developed. Access to and from the library to the surrounding areas and restrooms is improved. Spaces developed begin to represent the vision for the library.
- **As the facilities are revised and the print collection downsized, shift staffing away from maintenance of print collections and toward computer and multimedia support, integrated information literacy instruction, team teaching within the college, life-long learning activities, creation of digital tools to support activities in the college, digital collections and promotion of library activities.**

Metrics for Success:

- Increased library gate counts.
- Information literacy skills are integrated into several required classes
- Regular assessment of library users indicates facilities are meeting user needs.

Areas for Further Study:

- Service and Access issues for faculty and students on the PKI Campus in Omaha.

Conclusion

The committee strongly believes that the Engineering Library can continue to play a vital role in recruiting quality students and faculty to the college if the print collection is downsized and/or funding becomes available to move the collection off site. All but two of the top 25 engineering colleges have separate engineering libraries, and at UNL the Engineering Library is in a prime location to serve as a hub for the college community and student activity in Nebraska Hall. In addition to these facilities changes, the core skills needed by all of the staff in the Engineering Library will need to change so that staffing emphasis can move away from a focus on print collections and toward digital activities and integration into the college community.

The committee is pleased with the positive interaction with engineering faculty and students. For the most part, students and faculty were happy to participate and were genuinely interested in the assessment process.