



## **Association of College & Research Libraries**

### **University of Puerto Rico Assisted Self-Study Report For Carolina Campus Jose P. Miranda Learning Resource Center**

#### **Overview**

The Jose P. Miranda Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the University of Puerto Rico at Carolina underwent an assisted self-study using the Association of College & Research Libraries'<sup>1</sup> (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 May 31, 2007 after receiving the Learning Resource Center's self-study report. This report contains the observations and recommendations from the self-study and the site visit (including information gleaned from the many interviews with key stakeholders at the Carolina Campus).

The University of Puerto Rico at Carolina Learning Resource Center has a program of services consistent with the mission of the institution and is well aligned with the vision of the campus administration.

Important to the success of the Carolina LRC is its leadership which currently is very strong and supportive. Carolina's strengths lie in its services and approach to its mission with students and faculty.

The programs at the UPR Carolina Campus require a robust information literacy program from the LRC and there are steps being taken to assure this program exists at the highest level within the Library.

Carolina LRC is in a very good position to take advantage of technological advances and seems to have the aspirations to do so.

#### **Collections**

Carolina's collections are not as strong as some of the larger campus libraries. However there is an understanding at the Carolina LRC of how to maximize these collections through the electronic resources obtained singly and through the library directors' consortium.

A significant issue at Carolina is the loss of ground in collections over the past few years. This loss of ground is not halting but accelerating. What has happened is that the budget allocated for collections does not account for the extreme rise in costs, particularly in the science journal arena. The result is that Carolina LRC's collection dollar buys much, much less today than it did just a few years ago. This is causing tremendous erosion in the strength and completeness of the collections at Carolina.

Adding to the stress on the already insufficient collections budget are the new academic programs that are being established at UPR Carolina. These programs are important and will attract students and strong faculty. However the collections currently are not able to support existing and newly established programs. An example of this cited by Carolina faculty and reinforced by the LRC staff is the Interior Design program.

Certain types of collections are almost entirely lacking and appear to be necessary to support the types of academic programs that exist at Carolina. For instance, there is a significant lack in the audio-visual collections according to the faculty and deans.

Faculty expressed an interest in acquiring Spanish language software designed to detect plagiarism. Acquisition of such software could be a candidate for UPR system-wide consortial acquisition.

Collection procurement issues related to course reserves are described below under Services

Conditions for collections will be described below under Facilities.

## **Services**

The services program at Carolina is remarkably strong and in keeping with the ACRL Standards for services and with the Information Literacy Standards. One of the outcomes of strong services is that faculty and students alike report using Carolina's LRC staff for support when they are elsewhere outside of Carolina.

One of the impacts that is beginning to be felt but will be felt much more strongly in the near future is the impact of the General Education program on campus. The degree to which library services and instruction are required to support this program means the already slim staff at Carolina LRC will be attempting the impossible in serving and teaching the many General Education sessions planned.

Consultants found the LRC staff responsible for reference and instruction up to date and very aware of the current best practices in information literacy. However the space for properly providing this critical service is lacking. One of the indicators of the strength of staff in the information literacy program is the degree of cooperation and peer relationships with academic faculty. Services such as chat reference show a currency and vitality that is important in developing relationships with the student and faculty communities.

Additional comments regarding space for services are below under Facilities.

A system-wide issue for UPR libraries and not only a problem at Carolina (though it is significant at Carolina) is that of being able to quickly purchase a required volume for the purposes of course reserves (and for general collection development purposes as well). Faculty often buy their own copies to put on reserve and these never are returned to them in good condition for obvious reasons – heavy use and student negligence. The problem appears to be a purchasing or purchase order and payment issue. Apparently vendors do not trust that UPR will pay invoices timely and so they refuse to send a book with an invoice. Instead vendors require payment through purchase order where payment must be received prior to the volume(s) being shipped and at UPR, this is a very long process often taking months. This is completely counter to the need for flexible services and student/faculty learning support which is the mission of all libraries. The procurement process at UPR in general must be addressed.

The Carolina LRC is supporting a very diverse set of academic programs and the faculty appears to be cognizant of this strength. From the consultants' perspective there is extraordinary strength and student-centered practice at the Carolina LRC. The promise for improving these services is great but will require some investments as described below under Recommendations.

Staff at Carolina are creative in marketing their services and the student groups the consultants met with corroborated this observation adding that they believe the LRC needs to do even more marketing to students.

While the website has recently been redesigned students felt it was still not intuitive enough and, according to some, even “boring”. The consultants believe that the use of some web 2.0 tools such as RSS feeds and wikis may improve the use of web-based resources. The Carolina LRC staff, as well as the IT staff, are capable of learning and supporting these tools. The LRC is already utilizing chat for reference and that tool is consonant with other web 2.0 tools. While student opinion may only be their perception it is important to follow up on feedback received from students and faculty to investigate why their perceptions exist. See Appendix A for examples of institutions using RSS feeds, wikis, and other web 2.0 tools to reach their students and faculty.

In 2001 it was recommended that electronic reserves be offered to the students. That popular and now common service has not been achieved. Students expressed considerable interest in this service. We believe that it would alleviate commonly described problems: serious deterioration and mutilation of the reserve materials and their lack of availability due to their being checked out to another student.

## **Facilities**

While the Carolina LRC space seems large and adequate, it is, in fact, not adequate for the collections or the services. A new learning resource center more centrally located

would be the ideal. However, barring that possibility there are improvements that could be made to existing space.

Key among these is the establishment of one or two more instruction classrooms. Given the General Education program demands as well as the need for increased instruction related to other coursework, it is crucial that additional space be found and furnished with laptops (for flexibility), internet access, and projections systems.

Related to collections, as with other UPR campuses, mold is a problem. Every effort should be made to improve the environmental conditions in the LRC including humidity controls, window and door gaskets for air-tightness, and frequent fumigation or other treatment to prevent these detrimental conditions from beginning.

More user seating for group study work would also be an important addition. Perhaps maximizing the space through reconfiguring the workstation area and the current open seating area on the second floor would be a place to begin. Students increasingly require group study space and Carolina LRC does have the potential to create more such spaces.

There is a need to look at the printer capacity relative to the number of workstations on the second floor.

The front door and bathrooms on the third floor need to be brought into Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance as soon as possible. Access to library services is a key standard and the front door must be accessible. All new labs, classrooms, and group study areas should be ADA compatible.

### **Personnel/Organization**

UPR Carolina has excellent leadership at the top but also at the department head level. The team of the director and instructional services librarian is especially impressive.

Though Carolina LRC has a very strong staff for instruction the need for additional staff in this area is critical in the face of expanding programs and the General Education program and other instruction needs.

Coordinators and department head level personnel need to be more adequately compensated for taking leadership roles.

Increasing staffing to cover evening hours is crucial to the sensible operation of the library.

Relationships between the LRC and the IT staff on campus are very good, better than at some other campuses. LRC should take maximum advantage of that relationship to ensure that its web presence, e-reserves, and other enhancements are implemented.

The Carolina campus does not have an advisory committee for LRC. Such committees, which include students and faculty, are common and serve as a resource for a library administration in determining quality of collections and services and identifying areas needing improvement.

Continuing to invest in staff development for this relatively young and creative staff is crucial to the success of the LRC. Conferences, workshops, one on one coaching as well as team building activities are all helpful in making certain that the personnel maintains its innovative edge.

Carolina LRC is the most creative libraries of the five visited by the consultants in May/June 2007. Supporting the innovative spirit and the productive and future-oriented program staff at Carolina LRC is one of the most important things the chancellor and dean of academic affairs can do to ensure services of the highest quality at Carolina.

### **Observations and Questions**

As the consultants visited the entire campus of Carolina it became apparent that the LRC is at the furthest end of the campus thereby making maximum use of the LRC less likely. Building a new LRC closer to the campus entry-way would be the best solution. This would also allow for the design of user-oriented spaces and conditions adequate for collections and services unique to libraries.

If a new library building is not an option care should be taken that the space on the third floor, originally designed for library use, is not taken over by the growing hospitality program. While added space for this program is understandable, we think it would be counterproductive to the academic program of the campus to cannibalize badly needed library space in order to achieve it. Alternative solutions should be explored.

The consultant visit to UPR Carolina revealed some system-wide UPR issues that were corroborated at subsequent campuses. Issues such as the need for fast and flexible procurement, collections budgets commensurate with academic program growth, inflation, and rising scholarly journal costs.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made with an understanding of the constraints of the UPR financial situation but with the hope that these can be acted upon as quickly as is possible.

1. Create 1-2 additional instruction classrooms with maximum flexibility of equipment, technologies, and furnishings. This is important to support an already strong information literacy program.
2. Develop a stronger collections budget vis a vis the key programs at Carolina.
3. Implement an LRC Advisory Committee from faculty and student populations.
4. Add instruction staff either through reallocation or through attrition.
5. Implement an electronic reserves system using digitized content; this will both meet the needs of students and will help to reduce the damaged reserve materials

- problem. (Update 30 October, 2007: E-reserves service was begun in the first quarter term of the 2007-2008 academic term.)
6. Develop a more complete assessment program; consider using LibQual+<sup>2</sup> to measure user satisfaction with library service quality.
  7. Reconfigure space to afford more group study space. (Update 30 October, 2007: a third group study space has been made available and plans exist to double group study space from two rooms to four.)
  8. Adequately resolve the environmental issues within the LRC space; find ways of controlling the environment for collections; assign collection preservation responsibilities and support with continuing education on the issues of preservation and conservation.
  9. Compensate coordinator and department head level staff appropriately.
  10. Invest learning, time, and energy in “Library 2.0” tools such as RSS, blogs, and wikis to maximize communication and resource use. Carolina Campus is ready for this and the IT group would be able to support these in terms of knowledge base.

Final report submitted on December 14, 2007

By

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

## APPENDIX A – Examples of web 2.0 tools in academic libraries

The LRC at Carolina might find it useful to look at some of the following examples of uses of web 2.0 tools such as RSS feeds, wikis, and blogs for the purposes of pushing content to students and faculty, engaging the community, and helping the staff be more productive.

### **Chat reference and assistance:**

George Washington University, Gelman Library (Washington D.C.)

<http://www.gwu.edu/gelman/>

University of Alberta Library (Alberta, Canada)

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/askus/>

### **RSS Feeds:**

University of Alberta Library (Alberta, Canada)

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/rss/index.cfm>

Note: see new book RSS feeds at:

<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/newbooks/index.cfm>

University of Arizona (Tucson, AZ)

<http://aquarius.library.arizona.edu/>

North Carolina State University (Raleigh, NC)

<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/news/newsblogs.html>

### **Podcasting:**

Georgia Perimeter College, (Decatur, GA)

<http://gpclibraryradio.blogspot.com/2005/12/listen-up-11.html>

Note: literary interviews and other types of “human interest” podcasts

University of California at Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz, CA)

<http://library.ucsc.edu/pod/>

Southern Oregon University (Ashland, OR)

[http://hannonlibrary.libsyn.com/index.php?post\\_category=podcasts](http://hannonlibrary.libsyn.com/index.php?post_category=podcasts)

Note: the library makes short MP3 podcasts about how to use library resources

### **Blogs:**

MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, MA)

<http://news-libraries.mit.edu/blog/>

Note: use of images is strong and attractive; speaking with an informal voice to the students

Polytechnic University (Brooklyn, NY)

<http://www.poly.edu/library/blog/>

Slippery Rock State College (Slippery Rock, PA)

<http://baileylibrary.blogspot.com/>

University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill, NC)

[http://www.lib.unc.edu/house/ul\\_blog.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/house/ul_blog.html)

Note: this is the Undergraduate Library blog

The Johns Hopkins University Sheridan Libraries (Baltimore, MD)

<http://blogs.library.jhu.edu/wordpress/>

McMaster University (Hamilton Ontario, Canada)

<http://ulatmac.wordpress.com/>

Note: blog by the university library director

**Flickr** (media sharing)

Arizona State University

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/asulibraries/sets/72157601621243043/>

## **Wikis**

University of Minnesota (Minneapolis, MN)

<https://wiki.lib.umn.edu/>

Note: this is a wiki for staff

Ohio University (Athens, OH)

[http://www.library.ohiou.edu/subjects/bizwiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.library.ohiou.edu/subjects/bizwiki/index.php/Main_Page)

Note: this is a wiki for business researchers

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<sup>1</sup> The Association of College & Research Libraries is a division of The American Library Association.

<sup>2</sup> LibQual+ is an assessment tool specifically created for academic libraries by the Association of Research Libraries ([www.arl.org](http://www.arl.org)), a private consortium of academic and research libraries based in Washington D.C. The LibQual+ tool is available to all libraries for a fee.