



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

### **University of Puerto Rico Assisted Self-Study Report For Mayaguez Campus Library**

#### **Overview**

The Library at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez 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 June 4-5, 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 the many interviews with key stakeholders at the Mayaguez Campus).

The University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez Library self-study reported services and programs in accordance with the ACRL Standards. These services were reviewed in a series of interviews with deans, faculty, and library staff as well as a tour of the physical facility. The external reviewers found the Library lagging behind the UPR Mayaguez senior leadership's vision for the future of the university. This gap is due, in large part, to issues pertaining to the physical facility of the Library though there were some programmatic gaps as well. These will be described in this report and observations and recommendations made.

Important to the success of the UPR Mayaguez Library is its leadership which has been in an interim status for some time.

The programs at the UPR Mayaguez Campus require a robust information literacy program from the Library and there are steps being taken to assure this program exists at the highest level within the Library. Strong efforts are being made to engage faculty in a collaboration on instruction.

UPR Mayaguez Library is in a very good position to take advantage of technological advances and seems to have the aspirations to do so. The knowledge of the campus IT department is very much in step with emerging web tools and could be a great support to the Library in its efforts to adopt these new “web 2.0” tools to improve library services. (see Appendix A for examples of the use of emerging technologies in other institutions)

### **Collections**

The Library’s collections appear to be adequate as noted in the self-study report. However, as at other campuses – and perhaps even more critical at Mayaguez due to the size and types of programs that are the jewels of this UPR campus, and indeed of UPR itself – a significant issue is the loss of ground in collections over the past few years. This loss of ground is not halting but accelerating. The budget allocated for collections does not account for the extreme rise in costs, particularly in the science journal arena. The result is that UPR Mayaguez’s Library collection dollar buys 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 Mayaguez. This potential weakness is not in the power of the Library alone to change but very greatly depends on central and campus administrations in creating materials budgets that are in keeping with the costs of research university materials.

Adding to the stress on the already insufficient collections budget are the notable academic programs that are being established at UPR Mayaguez. These programs are important and will attract students and strong faculty, however the collections currently are not able to easily support existing and newly established programs. A Library Impact Statement should be completed for each new program proposed. Reviewers were told this is the case, however funds to support the purchase of materials in the new areas do not directly reach the Library’s administration and consequent budget, according to the Library administration. Reviewers learned from the Library that new materials funding is retained by the academic departments rather than passing on to the Library. This must be addressed for the Library to support the growth of this vital research campus.

Given that each disciplinary department has its own library committee, whether active or not, the Library needs to take a stronger role in communicating the budgetary realities as well as new models for scholarly communication<sup>2</sup> to these committees and the faculty at large. In fact, the reviewers would argue, that the Library’s and librarians’ roles are significantly about sharing emerging scholarly communication practices with the teaching faculty.

Academic libraries in the United States have been recognizing the need to reallocate resources from formerly heavily staffed technical services areas (the cataloging and processing of incoming materials) to the public services area or to the highly specialized technical services areas such as metadata and text encoding (at the most sophisticated end of the spectrum). Little to no information was given regarding efficiencies gained in the

technical services area at UPRM given recent advances in shelf-ready materials and existing records. This is an area that should be reviewed and all efficiency pathways explored.

The Virtual Library is very well developed and should help compensate for some of the journal cancellations UPR has experienced. Some faculty, however, expressed to the reviewers that they see the access to electronic journals as awkward and not intuitive – in the actual words of the faculty access to electronic journals is ‘clunky.’ This is an issue that can be resolved through more effective user interfaces and that should be followed up on and discussed by the Library and the Campus Information Technology department.

### **Services**

The service program at UPR Mayaguez Library meets the ACRL Standards for services and the ACRL Information Literacy Standards.

One of the impacts that is beginning to be felt and 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 staff at UPR Mayaguez Library will be attempting the impossible in serving and teaching the many General Education sessions planned.

Consultants found the Library 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. Two fully equipped classrooms exist in the Library. The student body size could easily demand an additional classroom. One of the indicators of the strength of staff in the information literacy program at the Mayaguez campus Library is the degree of cooperation and peer relationships with academic faculty.

Though there have been important efforts to market services, these must not only continue but be increased in order to reach students and faculty. In interviews with faculty, there was a lack of knowledge of the existence of CEDIBI. To be sure, there is a responsibility on the part of the teaching faculty to read the communiques from the Library and to maximize their classroom use of the Library’s services. The Library must continue, however, to push the information literacy programs available through CEDIBI out to the students and faculty. Faculty collaboration with librarians is key in the effort to equip students to be information literate.

As previously noted faculty felt that access to the databases is awkward. Reviewers note that the website for the Library is very rich in information and, thus, may be somewhat confusing for both faculty and students. The Library's website should be intuitive and user-friendly. We believe the staff in the Library and in IT have the expertise to ensure that it is.

A system-wide issue for UPR libraries and not only a problem at Mayaguez 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 is unacceptable to support information services and must be addressed.

UPR Mayaguez Library 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 strength and student-centered practice in the Library. The promise for improving these services is great but will require some investments as described below under Recommendations.

One weakness noted by reviewers is the attitude that students cannot be trusted. Efforts to create an environment of student/librarian collaboration in the learning process must be based on a sense of shared trust. Repeatedly reviewers heard from library staff rationale for restrictive policies or facilities layouts that indicated a need for control that runs counter to the current developments of modern academic libraries. This is a community building issue and can be resolved by investigating what policies are really needed and which are only satisfying librarians' need for control. We say this intending not to offend the well-meaning librarians but to point out that modern-day practice in most academic libraries – particularly in research institutions such as UPRM – is increasingly to open the facility, the services, and releasing some of the traditional controls that have been part of library practice in the past. A thorough review of all service policies is recommended.

A more comprehensive surveying of student and faculty satisfaction through a trusted and unbiased instrument such as LibQual+<sup>3</sup> ([www.libqual.org](http://www.libqual.org)) is recommended. This would allow the Library to have benchmarks for various measures of service and facility satisfaction and would be able to respond programmatically and strategically. The instrument should be repeated one to two years later to assess the impact of changes made.

### **Technology**

While the website has recently been redesigned students felt it was still not intuitive enough. The consultants feel that the use of some web 2.0 tools such as RSS feeds and

wikis may improve the use of web-based resources. The Mayaguez Library staff as well as the IT staff are capable of learning and supporting these tools. Currently the Library is working on establishing a chat reference capability - something that is a best practice among most university libraries today.

Students reportedly cut their time in the Library short or do not come into the Library at all for a very simple technological reason: there is no productivity software (e.g. Microsoft Office) on any of the many computers in the Library. This is an issue that was described to us as a financial and licensing issue and as such should have a practical solution. One-stop research (from the point of the initial research inquiry to print of the final document) is the norm at most academic research libraries and it should be at Mayaguez, as well.

The Campus IT department is very forward looking and adheres to a philosophy that is in step with ACRL Standards for Higher Education. Library staff should collaborate with IT to develop new services and solutions to existing problems. The UPRM IT department is and should be seen as a key collaborating partner for the development of innovation in the Library.

### **Facilities**

The University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez is the second largest campus of the University and commands a presence and a leadership role within the system due to the significance of its academic programs and the forward looking vision of the administration. Because of this it is absolutely critical that the Library facility be brought up to date and in line with the stature and direction of the institution.

The Library could be modernized in very interesting ways taking advantage of the architectural elements that make it unique, such as the levels and openness. The philosophy guiding such a renovation should indicate an inviting, welcoming, and usable space. Form plus function should be a guiding principle.

Currently the spaces are oddly configured and the furnishings uninviting to students and faculty, according to those constituent groups. For instance, the open stack area which is bound by wooden card catalogs from the past and file cabinets for the purposes of attempting control over student behavior; this is conceptually at odds with the modern university library and at odds with the message the librarians told us they wish to send to the students and faculty. The single study carrels in the main reading area is antithetical to the way most students work today. There is an increasing use of group work in the curriculum and this should be reflected in the facilities available to students at the Library. Students told reviewers that tables for group work in this area would be more useful to them than single carrels. They recognized that the need for both quiet spaces and group work spaces is a challenge for the Library but essentially this reflects their needs. There are eight group study rooms in the Library and they are reportedly in great

demand. Students requested that there be blackboards or whiteboards in those rooms. These rooms should not be considered as a replacement for the work tables the students described as necessary in the large reading room.

The reviewers understand the enormity of undertaking this project however it is our belief that this will maximize the use of the precious resources and the significant strengths – both material and human – that exist at the Library.

Related to collections, as with other UPR campuses, mold is a problem. Every effort should be made to improve the environmental conditions in the UPRM Library. These should include state of the art humidity controls, window and door gaskets for air-tightness, and frequent fumigation or other treatment to prevent these detrimental conditions from beginning. The establishment of a preservation department or a locus for these responsibilities is a must for all academic libraries of this size and importance. While the Library has a book binding department, preservation in research institutions is quite a different program. A fully developed preservation program goes beyond the care and repair of books. It should address all issues related to the preservation of information including the treatment of materials being digitized, rare book handling (which the bindery currently takes care of), conservation, and policy related to use, lending, and rescue of all materials. Most research institutions in the United States are currently also working on plans for the preservation of born digital content and Mayaguez certainly could be a part of this emerging conversation and practice. Universities to look to with model Preservation Programs are the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the University of Kansas, and Harvard University. The Library is to be commended for having a disaster preparedness plan that is regularly updated.

The Library should be brought into Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance when and if the building is renovated. Currently staff assist where there is no access but it would be preferable to have a compliant building and the reviewers believe this is not out of the realm of possibility for Mayaguez. Stairs and mezzanine levels are obvious reasons for the lack of ADA compliance. The Self-Study correctly identifies the Alavez-Nazario and the Music collections as inaccessible to people with disabilities.

The Mezzanine level wing areas near the front entrance formerly were used for student quiet reading and respite. Currently they are underutilized and with a new plan for the facility, these should be recovered as student/faculty spaces.

### **Personnel/Organization**

UPR Mayaguez is relatively well staffed when compared with academic research libraries of similar mission and serving similarly sized students and faculty. The challenge for academic libraries is matching the number of positions and professional expertise to the areas of greatest need. We believe that such is the challenge for Mayaguez. We also recommend that if positions are reallocated, that special attention be

given to instruction, liaison, and web development needs. Therefore, we do not recommend more positions; we recommend reallocation of existing ones.

ACRL Standards are clearest in the area of professional certification. The Standards are that librarians must have Masters degrees from ALA-accredited library and information science programs. Given that the non-accredited degrees are a fact, it is therefore recommended that all efforts be made in the future to hire only librarians with MLS from accredited library and information science graduate schools and to coach the non-accredited MLS librarians in professional librarianship at the level expected by accredited institutions. The reviewers understand that Mayaguez stopped hiring non-ALA accredited professionally degreed personnel six years ago and those without an accredited degree have had opportunities to develop their skilld through professional development opportunities and engagement in the field. The Library is to be commended for this practice.

It must be pointed out that, with very few exceptions, the Masters degree is considered a terminal degree for academic and research institution librarians. The PhD degree is sometimes requested for candidates for library deanships or directorships but even in those cases it is the managerial and leadership experience that are more highly prized.

Continuing to invest in professional development is important for both seasoned and new librarians. This obtains for both the specialized knowledge areas such as metadata, scholarly communication, copyright, information literacy, and other functional arenas and for the leadership/management arena. There is a particular need for leadership development and for the stimulus of ideas from outside the system. This need can be met through sending librarians to workshops, conferences, and by bringing speakers in to the Library for symposia and other learning discussions.

Leadership development and mentoring programs are crucial given the “aging of the profession.” In the next three to five years a very large proportion of academic librarians will retire leaving an enormous need for people ready to assume the vacated roles. Attending to this future and critical situation in the present is the most valuable thing the administration can do. This means carefully thinking about recruitment, thinking about how to market the library to prospective hires, and reviewing position descriptions with a view to changing them as positions are vacated.

### **Observations and Questions**

The Library at Mayaguez is unusual in that it owns its own Integrated Library System. The ILS should be treated as an asset. It may be a costly asset, however. Running an ILS apart from the central UPR library system involves additional costs than cannot be shared with the other campuses. We recommend that a rigorous cost-benefit analysis be conducted re: the ILS to determine whether this avenue of library automation

is paying its way. (Indeed, this same rigorous cost-benefit study should be applied to the UPR Horizon system used by the other UPR libraries as well.) Security of the space in which the ILS server and other servers reside needs to be made a high priority. To be perfectly clear: the reviewers are not recommended the removal of the stand alone ILS at Mayaguez but a considered investigation of its costs and benefits as well as the costs and benefits of the ILS used by other UPR system libraries. It is clear that, given Mayaguez's pioneering role in adopting an ILS, there may be considerable knowledge that could be shared with the other UPR libraries.

The consultant visit to UPR Mayaguez revealed some system-wide UPR issues that were corroborated at subsequent campuses. Issues such as fast and flexible procurement, collections budgets commensurate with academic program growth, inflation, and rising scholarly journal costs. Plagiarism is also a concern across the visited campuses. Finally, practice and the development of skills regarding planning and outcomes-based assessment are also notable needs across the UPR library system. The latter is not surprising given the same situation at many institutions in the United States. This is the beginning of a learning program related to assessment and outcomes-based analysis and the Library did a fine job in describing the current state.

### **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. Renovate the Central Library to bring it into focus with the assertive vision of the university campus directions. More effectively utilize the generous space within the Library building.
2. Develop an attractive, visible, and consistent signage program should be part of any renovation or sooner if the renovation cannot take place in the coming year.
3. Make the CEDIBI Program a more central and key program for the fostering of information literacy within the curriculum across all disciplines. Support this program by adding a classroom and by considering reallocation of staff to the work of information literacy.
4. Invest learning, time, and energy in "Library 2.0" tools such as RSS, blogs, and wikis to maximize communication and resource use by students and faculty and to create a more significant capacity to engage with the community of key stakeholders.
5. Review all position descriptions with a view toward future needs – 3-5 years away in order to prepare for change, retirement, and recruitment.

6. Reallocate positions to the critical work of instruction, liaison work, and web development.
7. Develop a new strategic plan that is strategic rather than operational and tactical. This should involve some very serious analysis of the environment and trends that offer opportunities for UPR Mayaguez.
8. Conduct a cost-benefit study of the current stand-alone integrated library system (Sirsi-Dynix)
9. Secure a permanent library director as soon as possible; leadership is critical to the development of library programs, collections, and services.

Final report submitted on December 14, 2007

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On behalf of The Association of College & Research Libraries

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

UPR Mayaguez Library 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:**

Ohio University

<http://www.library.ohiou.edu/find/>

Note: please note the chat and find a librarian navigation area at the top right hand part of the main web page. Ohio University is a leader in the uses and incorporation of emerging technologies.

Univeristy of Calgary (Calgary, Alberta Canada)

<http://library.ucalgary.ca/>

Note: The University of Calgary Libraries has recently incorporated chat into the online catalog making it possible for students to receive assistance at the point of search results,

a very interesting application. See the Meebo chat widget in the far right hand column in the following example:

<http://thoth.lib.ucalgary.ca/uhtbin/cgiirsi/NLBK0ADjhH/UCALGARY/13930043/88>

Note also on the front page at the top “Click to ask a librarian.”

University of Alberta Library (Alberta, Canada)

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

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

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

### **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

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

<sup>2</sup> See excellent models for open scholarly communication and changes in scholarly publishing at the SPARC website: [www.arl.org/sparc/](http://www.arl.org/sparc/)

<sup>3</sup> LibQual+ is an assessment instrument utilized by over 500 academic libraries worldwide. This instrument measures user satisfaction with library service quality. For more information see: [www.libqual.org](http://www.libqual.org)