



Association of College & Research Libraries

University of Puerto Rico Assisted Self-Study Report For Utuado Campus Learning Resource Center

Overview

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the University of Puerto Rico at Utuado underwent an assisted self-study using the Association of College & Research Libraries'¹ 1 (ACRL) Standards for Higher Education and the ACRL Standards for Information Literacy. ACRL Consultants Dr. Lance Query, Dean of Libraries and Academic Information Systems, Tulane University and Ms. Kathryn Deiss, Content Strategist, ACRL conducted a site visit on February 6, 2008 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 Utuado Campus).

The University of Puerto Rico at Utuado 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 Utuado LRC is its leadership which currently is very strong and supportive. Utuado's LRC strengths lie in how its well-designed new building can help staff to provide new and improved services and in the staff itself.

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

Assessment According to the ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education

The Utuado Learning Resource Center successfully meets the ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education. The new library building provides great strength and new

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

energy for accomplishing the task of teaching and learning of the students. The partnership between the Learning Resource Center and the teaching faculty is strong and can help to take the Learning Resource Center to the next level and new vision now that the building is complete.

The following assessment follows each of the ACRL Standards and provides recommendations.

Planning, Assessment, and Outcomes Assessment: ACRL Standard 1

Strengths

A strength of the LRC is that it has a Strategic Plan and has done a self-assessment. The self-assessment serves to point the LRC director and staff towards areas of strong focus and goals.

Areas for Improvement

The Utuado Campus Learning Resource Center is in a very strong position to continue the process of planning and assessment given the new building and the strong staff commitment to the students, faculty, and the Utuado community. A few areas for growth and attention are:

1. Now that the new building is successfully launched and opened it is time to build a new vision for the future of this new Center; a new vision that is based on the opportunities of growing programs and changing technologies and on the aspirations of the LRC staff and, in fact, the entire campus of this very close-knit community. The LRC's vision for the past number of years has been the new building and now that vision must be replaced by the next stretch long-term goal.
2. Recreate a new strategic plan that is "strategic" rather than operational. Many libraries have strategic plans that are more related to operational issues such as maintenance issues, tasks to be accomplished, and so on. Strategic plans differ in that they focus on issues that are critical to its growth in the next three years. While the LRC can and should have an operational plan, it still needs a strategic plan that focuses on key issues. This new strategic plan should be no longer than ten pages and should describe the 3-5 strategic directions that the LRC will use as a guide in the coming three years. An example of an effective strategic plan can be found at the University of Houston Library website:

Opportunities

The Utuado LRC has a magnificent opportunity to cast a new vision and set of strategies given the dramatic and successful new building and the cooperation and collaboration of its partners on campus.

Services – ACRL Standard 2

Strengths

The Utuado LRC exhibits a strong focus on providing services to students and faculty. There is both individual and professional commitment to learning programs and services.

Areas for Improvement

There are relatively few areas for improvement currently:

1. Now that Utuado has a significant and beautiful new physical library, there should be some time spent on renovating the Utuado LRC's website. The virtual space that students and faculty encounter should echo the modern and physical space. Fortunately, web services are becoming more and more interactive and relatively easy to change. Any changes to the website should incorporate Library 2.0 principles (such elements as RSS Feeds for new books or databases added to the collections; a location for interactive conversations between library staff and students and faculty such as a blog with comments). The UPR library system now has several Communities of Practice and one of these is related to Library 2.0 practices. Utuado staff may be able to receive help from their colleagues within this Community.
2. As part of the transition the Library administration must exercise extreme caution in not imposing policies and procedures from the past and the old building on service delivery in the new building. Typically policies grow out of challenges in local conditions. When those local conditions change the policies must be reviewed. A policy audit should be conducted. All current policies in the library that relate to services should undergo a review with the primary question being "Is this policy still required in the new building and in the current environment of higher education?"
3. The LRC administration in collaboration with the Dean of Academic Affairs should consider having the LRC stay open one hour later during the week (Monday – Thursday until 10 p.m. rather than 9 p.m.) and also consider the possibility of adding a few hours on Sundays. All constituent groups commented on the need for this but it was of primary importance to the students who finish classes at 9 p.m. and hope to get a bit of research or other assignment work done prior to leaving campus.

Opportunities

The new internet tools that exist have created a significant set of opportunities for libraries. The LRC at Utuado should take advantage of these tools. They include using blogs, wikis, and RSS for both support of student and faculty services but also for use internally as work spaces for staff.

Instruction – ACRL Standard 3

Strengths

Utuado LRC has developed an information literacy instruction program. A competent and energetic staff is a strong asset at Utuado.

Areas for Improvement

As in other areas, the new building offers many opportunities for the growth and development of programs and services. In the area of instruction the recommendations of the evaluators are:

1. Increase contact and collaboration with the teaching faculty on campus. This includes having the information literacy programs become more integrated into the curriculum. While there are some instances of this, there appears to be both willingness and openness on the part of the Utuado faculty to engage in further collaboration.
2. The excellent instruction staff at Utuado LRC should continue their professional development by attending the ACRL Information Literacy Immersion Program, the LOEX Conference, and the ACRL National Conference (held biennially). These specialized conferences offer cutting edge information and skills to practicing information literacy instructors. The development of staff is critical to maintaining a strong program of instruction and information literacy.

Opportunities

The development of Information Literacy resources for academic librarians in the past five years has exploded. Books, articles, workshops, institutes, and standards all are important resources to the staff at Utuado. In particular the workshops and institutes can provide great leaps in skill and knowledge.

Resources – ACRL Standard 4

Strengths

Utuado LRC's greatest strength in the Resources area is the availability of electronic resources and databases through the consortium of UPR libraries. This allows the LRC to support student learning and faculty research. One issue raised by students in particular is the need for electronic resources in Spanish. This issue has been echoed in other UPR units and is a difficult one to meet as Spanish language electronic resources are scarce.

In spite of that issue, book and journal collections appear to be satisfying most of the student needs currently.

Areas for Improvement

1. One major area for improvement relates to the materials budget. It is well-known that journal prices have escalated over the past ten years by triple digit percentages. And monographic publications have also increased in cost. The budget for materials at UPR Utuado has been relatively flat in the face of these increases. This means that, essentially, the library has lost ground and purchasing dollar year after year. It is critical that recurring funds be made available to help mitigate these extreme economic stresses on the materials budget.
2. Another area has to do with the establishment of new academic programs on campus and the impact of these on the available budget for resources to support these new research and teaching endeavors. Currently a library impact element exists in the new academic program proposal process. However, evaluators learned that monies apportioned to the library to support new programs are

- non-recurring funds. This is a significant problem for the LRC as it can begin to support a new program with non-recurring funds but it cannot continue that support in successive years. For instance, if a new program in biology is created and the library receives non-recurring funds it can buy some monographs and even begin a subscription to a few journals however, the long-term sustaining of a new program – or any academic program – requires recurring funding for research and teaching materials.
3. The LRC should create a Collection Development Policy to help describe its decision-making process for growing the collection in the new building. The larger space and increased use, among others, are good reasons for creating a new collection development program.

Access – ACRL Standard 5

Strengths

The greatest strength of the LRC in relation to Access is, of course, the beautiful, spacious, and well-designed building. This is very much appreciated by both faculty and student groups and is considered to be the jewel in Utuado's crown with good reason.

The building is accessible and logically laid out. While some signage and equipment was still to be installed when evaluators visited it was noted that these items were coming soon.

Areas for Improvement

1. As noted in Standard 2 above, a thorough review of policies pertaining to building, equipment, and materials use by students should be conducted. This is especially important now that the new building is in place. Policies that pertain to the old building and its environment should be revised or deleted. Perhaps it will be found that some new policies are needed due to the new space, however the first step is to rid the Policies Manual of outdated and irrelevant policies.
2. While not specifically an LRC weakness, one issue arose during the evaluators' visit that must be addressed immediately. Students referred to "edited" videos that they are to watch for various classes. Some of these video tapes have been "edited" to remove "adult" content (and example was an orgy scene in a video of The Rise and Fall of Rome). When evaluators inquired about this with LRC departments they were told that teaching faculty request scene cuts in order to protect the students from exposure to "inappropriate content." This is a very big access issue as well as a possible copyright infringement issue as these video tapes are commercially created. The ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education insist on unfettered and unfiltered access to materials. This issue should be taken up at the highest levels on the Utuado campus and decided on. This issue concerns academic freedom and the right to read. These are fundamental values and concerns of both The American Library Association and the Association of College & Research Libraries.
3. Given the new building a new program should be designed to capture data about student and faculty experiences in the new environment so that decisions can be

made on the basis of data, facts, and student/faculty perceptions rather than assumptions.

Staff – ACRL Standard 6

Strengths

Aside from the obvious strength of the new building, the single most impressive asset of the LRC is its dedicated, energetic, and hard working staff. We learned from constituent groups that they notice and appreciate the personal service and attention they receive from the LRC staff and librarians.

Another strength is the apparent ability of Utuado to recruit good librarians and staff even though it is a smaller campus in the UPR system and it is in the countryside. This recruiting ability has to do with the culture on the Utuado campus.

Areas for Improvement

1. A critical need is for more resources for staff and professional development. Utuado should maintain its edge by allocating resources for the continuing development of librarians and staff alike.
2. Possible reallocation of staff if increased evening hours are added.

Facilities – ACRL Standard 7

Strengths

The new building appears to accommodate very well the needs of students and faculty. Classrooms, group study spaces, and attractive areas for working and studying are heavily used.

Areas for Improvement

1. The LRC should begin to plan for more group study space as this trend in teaching and learning is increasing world-wide. Professors are assigning more and more team assignments where students need to accomplish work together. This will be a challenge to all libraries and their facilities in the future. The Utuado LRC has an advantage in the new building but should definitely begin to look at possible solutions to the demand for group study space. Students consultants spoke with confirmed that this trend is present on the Utuado campus.
2. Establish a learning or information commons in the library. Information/learning commons are areas that have both computing resources, information resources, access to librarians, and work spaces in an integrated environment. Utuado has the new open space that could house the learning commons. This could be one of the answers to the group-study space issue as well, although some
3. Consider creating a café and internet space in the outer lobby. This is an ideal space for this use. Internet cafes have had great success on many campuses across the United States. On a campus that draws from the local community for student body and which is close-knit already, an internet café in the library could establish a new learning community. It could be a location where library staff could both advertise services and be a part of the learning community in an active and proactive manner. On some U.S. college campuses the internet cafes have even

yielded new funds. Utuado as a campus has the advantage of having a student body that is essentially transient – students are looking for places to be between classes and after classes. The LRC is the ideal place. Food and drink are not only necessary throughout the day but can be an enormous attraction to a place.

Opportunities

As mentioned above, the Utuado LRC is blessed with a wonderful new building that can continue to support the growth of library services and programs and support the development of the curriculum on campus. Many colleges and universities have already worked through establishing some of the recommendations named above – a learning commons and an internet café – and so there is a fair amount of information in the library literature about how to do these things successfully including what issues to avoid.

Communication and Cooperation – ACRL Standard 8

Strengths

Utuado as a campus and within the LRC has some of the best collaboration and cooperation the consultants have seen in their visits across the UPR system. This is helped by the relative size of Utuado but it is also a result of the commitment of the staff and of the harmony of values present everywhere at Utuado. This was a very strong impression of the consultants.

Areas for Improvement

- While there is not enormous need for improvement there are some suggestions.
1. Utuado LRC should consider more collaborative project work with other UPR recintos. This could lead to possible new service development for several campuses thereby maximizing talents and costs.
 2. Utuado LRC should join some of the library communities of practice that have emerged in the past year.
 3. LRC could potentially engage in collaborative work with the local high schools and public library as an outreach program. Many academic libraries have outreach programs and librarians. This could even become a modest funding source should the LRC provide services off campus in the schools and public libraries.
 4. The LRC should be involved (with teaching faculty) in the remediation and counseling of under-prepared students.

Opportunities

While not specifically an opportunity, the LRC in conjunction with the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Chancellor must take care in reviewing the budget implications of serving the broader community of Utuado. This can be viewed as an opportunity but it definitely has very strong budget implications and the LRC is very under-resourced for providing services to the larger community.

In addition, there will be increased demand for services from the LRC on campus as the Chancellor achieves some of his far-reaching goals. This demand has budget implications as well.

These issues have to do with collaboration and the costs and benefits of collaboration. A very thoughtful review of these should be engaged in.

Administration – ACRL Standard 9

Strengths

The Utuado LRC has excellent leadership at the top of the organization as well as within the LRC departments. This is the perception also of faculty and students that met with consultants.

Areas for Improvement

Again, given the new building there are needs that require attention in a different way than in the old building.

1. There is a definite need for supporting staff in the development of new skills and abilities as the campus and LRC grow. Increasing funding for staff development is very important at this new stage in the history of the LRC and the campus.
2. Specifically, an increase in leadership development is important at this juncture in the LRC evolution. There are many new practices and new thinking about library leadership that would help in this area. Many leadership programs exist for both top level leaders and for middle managers. Among these opportunities are: the ACRL Harvard Leadership Institute; the Minnesota Program for Academic Librarians from Underrepresented Groups; the Frye Institute; and many opportunities afforded by organizations such as Solinet and ACURIL (Association of Caribbean University, Research, and Institutional Libraries). Participation in the programs of these organizations is important to the development of leadership within the LRC. This involvement and attendance should be supported as much as possible.
3. The LRC should consider possible new organizational design given the new building. The much bigger modern building means there may be a need for new teams, departments, and general structure. Placing an organizational structure from the past into a new environment/building does not always yield the best results. It is highly recommended that a new organizational structure be designed after or in conjunction with the development of a new strategic plan and vision.

Opportunities

Given the new building, there may be new relationships that need to be built with others on campus. The LRC could be an integral support of the new research center if LRC staff were involved from the outset. It is very important that the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Chancellor insist on the LRC involvement in this major campus development.

Budget – ACRL Standard 10

Strengths

One of the significant strengths that the Utuado LRC can claim is its ability to attract highly capable staff. It is considered to be competitive with other much larger campuses and this is attributable not only to the environment and highly collaborative

culture at Utuado but to the ability to pay competitive salaries, particularly for professional librarian positions.

That said the budget is the single greatest area of concern to the consultants. There are a number of recommendations for improvement and change in this area.

Areas for Improvement

1. As stated elsewhere in this report, significantly higher levels of support for staff development must be made available for the Utuado LRC to remain competitive in recruitment and retention of high quality staff and also for the development of new skills needed in the emerging more technologically advanced environment of higher education.
2. A maintenance budget must be created for the new building. The consultants have seen wonderful new buildings deteriorate quickly and badly due to the lack of a continuous maintenance budget. There should additionally be a rolling plan of building assessment and upgrades so that the LRC does not find itself facing an enormous cost for fixing things at a much later date.
3. The collections budget, as elsewhere in the UPR library system, is of great concern. The flat budget over time is not simply static but is, in fact, reducing every year due to inflation, the cost of materials, and the weak dollar. The budget must be enhanced to at least keep up with inflation of materials costs.
4. Additionally, any new academic programs that are begun must carry a portion of *recurring* monies to support those new areas. One-time money does not help and may even damage the program.
5. There should be a multi-year plan created for cyclical equipment replacement. Computers and other types of technological equipment must be kept upgraded as long as possible but then must be replaced. It is understood that there is not the financial support for full replacement so there needs to be a plan for cyclical replacement over time. Currently, of course, there is no problem as most of the equipment is new. However, there will come a time when this new equipment will begin to lose power and effectiveness. At this point it must be replaced. Priorities for replacement must be clear to all staff and administrators.

Suggested Plan of Action

1. Develop a new strategic plan and vision
2. Consider the best possible organizational structure for the new environment
3. Create a learning commons
4. Conduct a policy audit to weed out needless or outdated policies
5. Add to the collections budget to maintain pace with inflation at a minimum
6. Add funds to the budget for staff and leadership development
7. Create a continuous maintenance plan for the new building
8. Play a strong role in the development of the new research center

Conclusion

The Learning Resource Center at the Utuado Campus of the University of Puerto Rico is in an excellent position to create new and dynamic services, programs, and relationships for and with students and faculty on campus. The very nice modern new building carries with it much promise to students, faculty, and staff. The LRC should invest in considering how to maximize this promise.

The extraordinary level of collaboration and cooperation on the Utuado Campus was inspiring and is the single most important indicator that future successes will be very possible on this campus and in this Learning Resource Center.

Report submitted on May 8, 2008

By

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