

MEDIA RESOURCE CENTER MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: NEW ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE TIMES

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ABSTRACT

Changes in the organization of learning resources including language/learning labs have occurred over the years. Surveys within higher education over the last ten years indicate less local autonomy and more centralized control, either within individual colleges or within central media or library facilities. It is not clear whether library involvement is advantageous in all institutions. Factors affecting successful integration include the age, size, and traditions of the university, training and skills of staff and director, support of the central administration, and a clear mission for the use of learning resources.

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Many institutions of higher learning are facing major decisions in the organization of their entire administrative structures. Changes in enrollment, in societal and educational needs, in economic support, and in new technologies for communication and learning are all having a significant effect upon colleges and universities. Within that there is need for change in the organization of learning resources.

Administrators have often been at a loss in dealing with the proper placement of learning resource services within the university's administrative structure. Traditionally, institutions have followed the rule of academic independence and diversity. Therefore, many resource units were founded to serve specific academic functions. Language labs were usually operated by foreign language departments, and other heavy media resource users such as

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anthropology, English, math, and speech developed separate services as needed by their programs. In addition, teaching programs in education or communications have developed their own resource units to operate their own academic programs. Sometimes these units are operated solely by the academic department, others by a college within the larger institution. Such large institutions may have as many as thirty or forty such units ranging from centrally administered library, AV, or TV resources to small departmental units.

Faced with rising costs, duplication of services, expensive equipment upkeep and replacement, as well as the arrival of revolutionary technological advances, university administrators are faced with tough decisions. Not only must they decide how best to facilitate the most effective use of existing learning resources, they must also determine how best to integrate new technologies into the university structure both academically and administratively. How should learning resources be administered? Autonomously, by those academic units who require input into the curricular content of the resources? Centrally, by a single administrative unit that can coordinate costly personnel, facilities, and equipment support aspects of complex resource technologies? Or cooperatively, by a variety of different professionals working together to bring together academic and technical aspects of learning resources?

The Push for Change in Learning Lab Administration

Learning resource directors are equally concerned with the problems of the placement of their units and themselves within the larger university structure and with their need to serve changing client needs. Changes both in economic support and in technologies have changed many resource centers in recent year. Many smaller departmental units have grown to serve other departments and added new forms of media to reflect changing curricular demands. For example, many language labs that dealt only with audio resources for language learners have now become learning centers with a variety of audio, video and sometimes computer resources for learners throughout the college. Lawrason (1977) reports on how one such language lab developed into a media resource center for the entire college.

The trend of language/learning labs away from serving foreign language departments alone has been documented in recent years. Stern (1976) notes in her study of 89 labs that 38% served beyond language learning (foreign and ESL).

To measure the current organizational status of learning labs, a preliminary survey of labs in the Northeast (Maine to Maryland) was undertaken in the fall of 1983. In this survey (Appendix A & B) 64% of the respondents reported they served up to four humanities departments plus foreign language and/or ESL. While 30% listed audio language lab as their only service, an equal number reported facilities including language lab, audiovisual services, and video as well. The answers given when it was asked what new services will be added in the next five years indicate that there will be increases in the use of video and computer-aided instruction (31% each), a 14% increase in the use of audiovisuals, and a 4% increase in the use of satellite.

Not only are language labs expanding their activities, they are also being given more authority within the administrative structure. Stern (1976) found that 37% of lab administrators in her study reported to a Dean or central administrator. Stack (1977) found an even greater separation between labs and departments with over 66% of labs in his study employing non-academic directors, and 50% of the labs reporting beyond the departmental level. In her conclusion, Stern (1976) notes that the organizational level of the lab has long been neglected as a viable factor in effective operation. She observes that the lab directors in her survey lack the authority and status to effect change in the organization of learning resources in the institution. She then cites the 1972 Carnegie Commission which recommend that resource directors should report to the chief academic officer to have the optimum effect.

Stern's suggestion seems to have been at least partially fulfilled. In the 1983 Northeast study, 76% of the respondents stated that they reported to administrators beyond the departmental level.

Integration of Library and Media Resources

Another area of change within the administration of learning resources has been in the area of integrating library and media resources. Merrill and Drob (1977) first reviewed the advantages of such an approach in their study which examined the University of California system. They list three overall benefits: (1) a savings in staff, equipment and facilities; (2) improvement of instruction; and (3) institutional coherence brought about by improved campus communication. Despite these advantages, the authors observe that there are differences in the training and skills of library and media staff. Librarians have never been involved in the design, production,

and evaluation of learning resources. Their conclusion seems to be that the benefits to a media resource unit drawing on the existing skills of library staff are limited since "specific commonalities are fewer than might be expected" (Merrill and Drob, 1977, p. 38).

Another more recent review by Lor and Welch (1983) is more positive about the benefits of integration of library and media resources. They, too, list three advantages. Integration can bring "a broad range of support services to bear on the teaching/learning process" which "will be more effective because they will be complementary and interactive." Secondly, they argue integration would allow "a smooth flow of materials from production through to utilization." They note, thirdly, that although savings can be achieved, that "they may not be substantial." The chief disadvantage Lor and Welch can cite is the difficulty in finding staff with both media and library skills. Each professional feels at a disadvantage if represented by the other, and the level of respect and trust between these two groups has never been high.

The issue of reporting lines between library and media components is perhaps the most debated issue. Merrill and Drob (1977) claim that, where media directors have reported to librarians, media services have suffered. Experiences at some institutions reflect this assessment. The University of Pittsburgh and Drexel University have reversed their unsuccessful integration efforts. Drexel determined that while the library was somewhat suited to the task of distributing equipment, it could not cope with the more academic tasks of design, development and production. Thus, an Instructional Systems Department was formed and placed under the Dean of Continuing Education. Axford (1972) described the failure of such an experiment at Florida Atlantic University.

Other institutions have been more successful. Lor and Welch (1983) cite model integrated learning resource centers at Montgomery Community College, Maryland, and Dundee College of Education. Morein (1982) reviews library and learning resources at the University of Evansville and recommends an upgrade of staff and a move into the library administration and building. Sakovich (1979) lists ten different guidelines clearly favoring integration. Despite his support of the concept, one guideline stands out. He recommends that media and library directors should be equal in status and that each report to a Dean of Learning Resources or equivalent academic officer.

The trend towards media directors reporting to library directors seems to have increased slightly over the last decade. In a recent study (Nelson, 1981), responses made to the same questionnaire sent in 1971 and again in 1981 reflect this change. In 1971, 81% of the institutions surveyed had separate library and media directors. In 1981, only 52% reported separate directors. Asked about facilities in 1971, 80% reported separate library and media facilities; in 1981,

10% fewer (70%) were still separate. Despite what appears to be a trend towards more central coordination, the majority in both 1971 and 1981 (61% in both surveys) felt that media, library, and computer resources should not be combined into a single academic support unit. One comment noted that although there were interrelationships, coordination could be handled through a committee, staff assignments, and through reporting to a common central administrator.

Another recent media center study has been conducted by AECT's Division of Educational Media Management. The DEMM Task Force has investigated how media directors perceive the overall health of their units over the last five years. Preliminary data to June 1983 have been discussed by the Task Force Chairperson. In the survey returned by 225 institutions (Albrecht, 1984), about 14% reported no centralized services. Of the remaining 188, 68% of the media directors reported their situation had improved in the last five years; only 19% reported a deterioration. When compared to budgetary strength, however, the figures are not as optimistic. In respect to budget support, 42% of the public and 30% of the private institutions indicated either budget cuts or no increase.

One important question in the DEMM study related to potential reorganization deals with reporting lines. Overall, 61% reported to other academics; those reporting to libraries were most likely in a comprehensive, liberal arts, or community college rather than a university. Preliminary data, however, contain very little evidence that there is a difference between reporting to a librarian or an academic supervisor. For example, 56% of those under libraries received budget increases with 18% receiving decreases. Under academics, 64% got increases, but 22% got decreases.

One problem in interpreting the DEMM data was that it was not always evident if the respondent was a library or media director. The responses were also subjective, and few professionals might be expected to admit their true position since such an admission might be seen as a lack of personal or professional success.

In summary, the major advantages and disadvantages of library and media integration might be as follows:

Advantages

1. Cost savings
2. Improved communication with staff and faculty.
3. Improved learning.
4. More effective use of new technologies.

Disadvantages

1. Cost savings elusive.
2. Little cross-professional training.
3. Different staff service philosophies and training.
4. Competition for funds between groups.
5. Reporting line conflicts.
6. Loss of initiative in larger "bureaucracy."

Determinants or Successful Integration of Library and Media Services

One fact about the potential and viability for reorganization of learning resources continues to surface throughout all these reports. Higher education is made up of a variety of different types and sizes of institutions with different histories, traditions, missions and physical layouts. It soon becomes evident that no single organizational pattern will fit the individual environments of all colleges or universities. Similarly, no single pattern of organization should be imposed on learning resources within the institution.

Lor and Welch (1983) list eight different determinants of success and failure in considering the integration of learning resources at their institution. These eight guidelines should be of value to any institution considering integrating resources.

- 1. The older the history of the institution, the more chance there is that vested interests of independent units will resist change.
- 2. The larger the enrollment and geographic area of the institution, the greater the need is for geographically decentralized resource units.
- 3. The more established the teaching traditions, the less likely an integrated resource approach will be accepted and used.
- 4. The fewer staff with both library and media skills, the more difficult the task of integrating staff and services will be.
- 5. The management expertise and personality of the director (whether library or media) is an essential success factor.
- 6. A participative management style with time and effort spent on consultation is also important.
- 7. The institution must support the integrated resource concept, and not only to achieve savings.
- 8. The institution must have formulated a clear mission statement for the new center against which the activities of the center should be periodically measured.

Administrative Solutions to Learning Resources Organization

If an institution wishes to solve its learning resources organization problems, it must not neglect the task of formulating an overall policy statement in respect to the provision of learning resources and their relationship to the overall mission of the institution. The need for such a mission statement outlined by Lor and Welch is evident in other reports as well. Merrill and Drob (1977) and Sakovich (1979) stress the need for an institution to be able to articulate its teaching mission along with a master plan for the use of learning resources. Such a plan requires input from faculty, administrators, staff, and students.

It is also most evident that traditional hierarchial patterns of single administrator chains of command cannot adequately solve the dilemma of knowledgeable decision-making in higher education, and particularly within learning resource administration. The complexity surrounding what we know about the learning task itself, as well as the rapidly evolving technologies for assisting that learning, make it almost impossible for any single individual to make all decisions. Decision-making requires sharing and discussion of information among a variety of educational professionals in a wide range of functional units which often cross administrative and disciplinary lines. Unfortunately, most traditional organizational structures impede such interaction and support segregation, distrust, and lack of respect between various academic and professional groups on campus.

Given the complex and diverse nature of any academic community within higher education, it is not reasonable to expect that learning resources should be totally centralized in one administrative organization where all decisions are made. While total centralization of services would seem a worthwhile ideal, it may not allow for needed input from academic areas on needs and priorities. It would seem, therefore, more productive to examine alternatives to an unnecessarily regimented and inflexible approach which might have the potential to antagonize and separate individual professionals rather than bring them together to work on common problems.

Learning Resource Administration Case Studies

Little research or literature beyond that reviewed above tackles the realities of coordinating various types of learning resource units within higher education. Few of the theoretical texts on media administration tackle the political realities of campus politics, power bases, and the rich and valued diversity common to all university communities. In an effort to gain more insight into some of the issues and problems involved in the administration of learning resources within such a complex and volatile environment, we will examine the learning resource organization within three large northeastern urban universities. None of these three institutions have resolved their learning resource administration problems; however, the issues raised and the means that each is employing to resolve them might be useful to others faced with similar administrative problems.

Case Study One:

The first institution is a large state-related institution made up of ten academic colleges with programs on six different campus locations. Media organization currently involves two central units (AV and TV) as well as various college, campus, and departmental units. Library organization involves a central main campus library controlling most branch campus libraries with the exception of three or four separate collegial libraries.

Media staff at the university have met in a voluntary 'ad hoc' Council of Media Organizations (COMO) to discuss common issues and problems, undertaken common tasks such as joint purchase of supplies, and to help set overall media policy and procedures. The group includes several librarians who have responsibilities for non-print materials in their branch collections. Most COMO members have had input to planning a more coordinated learning resource service unit for the university, but full consensus has never been reached. Moreover, COMO has no official sanctions, and directors report to various administrators including Deans and the Library.

A faculty senate committee also urged change with the appointment of a central media director to spearhead both media resources and instructional development. All such efforts have failed for lack of strong central understanding of the issues, or commitment to the concept of an integrated learning resources approach. The only real change has been the loss of 30% of the media staff through attrition or dismissals.

The Director of the Library, who had media responsibilities in a previous position, was given the task of supervising AV and TV services, and the charge to investigate further media reorganization. After two years of planning, meetings and numerous reports by media staff interested in the concept, plans came to a halt when the Library Director failed to pursue them, then resigned to take a new position. The two media units were next assigned to report to the Vice President for University Relations and removed from the Provost's jurisdiction.

Another factor that has complicated reorganization of learning resources at this institution concerns new demands for expanded telecommunications potential. This time it is the top administrators that are calling for this increased service. The President, the Provost, and the Administrative Vice President all recognize the economic and academic potential of the new telecommunications technologies for improved current programs and for reaching new non-traditional students. These officers have appointed independent consultants to examine issues and to make specific recommendations. While existing media staff have been given an opportunity for input, it is not altogether clear what their role will be in this new drive from the top for increased technology.

On the one hand the university seems committed to cutting costs and thinks that a reorganized learning resource unit could achieve savings. However, so many staff have been cut in recent years that any merger would falter from lack of staff to fill all needed positions. Those college units who now have full media staffs would lose control and service within their own areas in order to better serve the larger central unit.

On the other hand, the university appears to be interested in expanding its telecommunications commitment. Satellite transmission, teleconferencing, and either one-or-two-way video communication between different campuses would require a sizeable outlay not only in capital equipment, but also in operating expenses and staff.

Case Study Two:

The second institution is a large Ivy League university with no existing central media services. One recent study has recommended a more central learning resources approach, but colleges with existing media services are resisting such change because of the "complex issues of autonomy and geographical separation." The School of Arts and Sciences, however, has recommended that its several media units be centralized within the College and that this unit set up formal cooperative links with other university media groups to explore benefits of ventures such as joint purchasing, shared repair services, and personnel training programs.

A look into the progress the institution is making in this direction shows that the establishment of a new Director of Media position has proven advantageous. Some budgetary complications arose when funds and projects in support of centralization of resources were suspended upon the hiring of a new Dean for the College. Normal fluctuations accompanying administrative reshuffling notwithstanding, what has clearly emerged is the general acceptance that existing operational procedures can't be changed simply by mandating it from the top down. The "every tub sits on its own bottom" theory simply won't allow for it.

Some areas of service which are being targeted for streamlining are the use and installation of media facilities. It is to be hoped that a computer specialist will be added to the CAS Media Department to handle classroom applications of new computer installations. When faculty wish to use computer display in their classrooms, for example, their requests will be sent directly to the Media Department rather than through their individual teaching departments.

Another centralization project is designed to promote greater access to the wealth of film holdings on the campus: the centralization housing of films which have been purchased by a variety of departments. The intended result of this effort is to bring these pockets of film resources together, at least for the purpose of cataloguing them and making them available to any member of the

academic community. This move has been met with tremendous resistance from certain quarters; apparently some departments feel that as original purchasers of the films they should retain proprietary rights. The resistance to change was, in the words of one staff member, "unbelievable." Rather than trying to initiate total reorganization of the procedures relating to film/video holdings, a few Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education is depositing new purchases of visual media with the Media Department for cataloguing and centralized distribution.

As in most Ivy League schools, departmental autonomy is cherished. The new Media Director has started changing how and whom people ask for service; as the system works and people get the service they require, so does it continue. Thus, successfully, are new lines of communication drawn and incorporated.

In addition to the new College unit headed by the Media Director, the report recommends that the College begin to formulate a comprehensive, extended plan for all media services. CAS Media staff are continuing in their efforts to obtain new funds for expanded media services and for new space.

Case Study Three:

The third institution is a large, private university with a centralized media center on its main campus. University Media Services (UMS) serves the university's thirteen colleges, a variety of institutes and centers, and handles the media needs of the administrative staff. UMS is directed by a fulltime media professional who reports to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The University Librarian reports to the Provost and shares no administrative link with the UMS Director. Plans have been laid for shared cataloguing on the library's proposed on-line cataloguing system, but there is no intention of merging media facilities with the university library.

UMS got its start from within the School of Education; a 1952-53 bulletin lists several "library" facilities within the school: Educational Resources, Test Resources, Audiovisual Resources, and the Film Libraries. In 1966 the Vice President for Academic Affairs formally approved the organization and staffing of a university-wide instructional materials service "for the improvement of instruction and the support of faculty interested in using a variety of teaching materials." Thus was created University Media Services, although it was not until 1972 that the unit was given full budgetary control and was established as a separate entity from the School of Education.

While the scope of its services is extensive, UMS does not cover all media needs of the main campus. Factors contributing to this situation are the specialized media needs of certain user groups and the size and geographical spread of the institution.

Groups with specialized needs include the various schools for health professionals, the Athletic Center, the audio component of the ESL program, a portion of the Communications School's Broadcasting and Film division, and Liberal Arts' Department of Foreign Languages. Media facilities serving these groups were either established before UMS was set up in its present form or were created separately in consultation with the Director of UMS.

The UMS organization has remained flexible over the past eighteen years. Beyond the first stage of aggressive centralization and steady expansion, UMS has eased toward decentralization of certain services-in particular, for faculty access to audiovisual equipment. This development is directly linked to the problem of service at a large institution. As users of the equipment become more widespread and enthusiastic, it is critical to maintain a high level of accessibility. Otherwise, users are discouraged by the red tape involved in checking out a simple piece of equipment. The UMS Director confirmed that more equipment depots are being established throughout the campus. At these new locations, advance reservations are not required and faculty are served on a walk-in basis.

The UMS staff is available to tackle a full range of media problems. Service problems coming through smaller campus media facilities, such as the language lab, are worked out on a case-by-case basis. No formal committee or procedure seems necessary at this level.

Decisions about large-scale equipment purchases, space renovations, and media policies of wider impact are referred upward to the central administration of the university. At this level, distance between the decision makers and the people who use and handle the equipment widens. With no clear avenues of action, lower-level administrators and faculty are sometimes frustrated in their efforts to seek resolution to problems affecting their activities. There is a general understanding that not everyone can be involved at all levels, of course, but, the lack of two-way communication is nonetheless bedeviling. Into this gap, however, flows a stream of exciting new possibilities in media management and communications. The university is active in its determination to use video, cable, microwave and teleconferencing networks to deliver its academic programs and faculty resources beyond the limits of the campus. Outreach to suburban businesses and continuing education programs for professionals in the community are being developed.

Questions on how to proceed in these new endeavors were first investigated in a series of Task Committees made up of media users and specialists from all levels of the university community. Basic concerns were identified and researched: interest and perceived market, technological options for production of programs, administrative and academic policies, and action plans. The Task

Committees were combined into a single group which now formulates policy and initiates the necessary steps toward implementation. An Assistant Vice President who is heavily involved in this area noted that the university is keeping a somewhat conservative profile in these new ventures and weighs carefully all its options.

When asked the same questions about media management and centralization, a higher-ranking administrator spoke mostly of budgetary concerns, coordination of corporate gifts and securing of federal funding. He also addressed the question of linkage between schools, to tie programs together such as science and engineering. The new effect would be to promote communication between programs which might otherwise drift apart as they each expand.

Recent efforts to centralize certain aspects of media services within the largest college (Liberal Arts) of the University have been enthusiastically received at the grassroots level, i.e., by those most directly involved with the use and development of instructional media programming. The language center, which has served primarily as a language lab for the study of foreign languages, has steadily increased the scope of its services over the past eight years. In response to demands from a variety of liberal arts academic departments frustrated by the bureaucracy of the centralized University Media Services, the language center has worked toward the creation of a Learning Resource Center (LRC). The proposed LRC would serve Liberal Arts students and faculty through greater access to specialized instructional media programming, focusing on "low tech" program resources which traditionally have been too costly to have produced through the income-dependent UMS. While there is measurable support for this expansion from the College administration, lack of space to actually initiate the plan is a major, though hopefully temporary, roadblock.

The extent to which there is coordination between units providing media service, support from college as well as university administrations, enthusiasm from the teaching faculty, and responsiveness from the media professionals involved will determine how effectively the question of media management will be addressed.

The Coordination of Library and Media Learning Resources

Centralization or integration of all library and media or learning resources may not be either a practical or a political solution for many institutions. Yet there remains the need for more uniform policies and for savings on costs such as supplies, repairs, and information services. Coordination of selected library and media functions and sharing of programs and costs might achieve some of

these objectives without sacrificing the necessary academic, geographic, and/or political support bases of various learning resource units. For those institutions wishing to achieve a more coordinated rather than a centralized learning resources approach, the following recommendations would be useful.

1. Establish a Faculty Learning Resources Committee.

A high-level faculty committee to set policy and academic priorities must be established by the Provost or the chief academic officer. Without faculty concern and commitment, learning resource services cannot remain a critical issue. Such a committee then can provide the needed linkage between the overall teaching mission of the university and the development and integration of learning resources needed within teaching programs.

The Faculty Committee should be composed of faculty knowledgeable about use and development of learning resources. Politically, it would be both fair and wise to have representation on the Committee reflect the commitment of those departments and colleges who have existing learning resource facilities and budgets allocated, or who have academic programs dependent upon support of learning resources. By so doing one is better able to assure fair treatment of those units most likely to fear loss of services through sharing of resources.

Such a committee would serve as advocate for improved teaching and learning techniques, and could provide increased incentives for all university faculty to utilize new technologies to reach new learners. The Committee would serve in an advising capacity for the Provost. In addition, it would interact regularly with various university learning resource directors to exchange information on academic priorities and to learn about new technologies available to achieve institutional goals.

2. Establish a Learning Resource Organizations Council.

In those institutions that have a variety of different levels and types of learning resource units, it is useful to organize a council of learning resource directors to work on common problems. Often such a group, even as an "ad hoc" volunteer group is able to achieve worthwhile joint projects and develop useful common policies and procedures.

For example, a Council of Media Organizations (COMO) at one university in the study has met since 1976 to discuss common problems and to work on uniform learning resource policies and projects. One such successful project has been a joint computer catalog of non-print resources. Another has been the joint purchase of media supplies, which as substantially lowered costs for all units. COMO members, however, still report to various supervisors, including the Provost, the Librarian and various College Deans.

Because of this split in loyalties or reporting lines, it has been most difficult for this ad hoc group to achieve any real clout as a policy-making group. While all serve the common good of the university community, the real or imaginary conflict of split reporting lines has prevented the group from reaching consensus or achieving meaningful change in the underlying learning resource service problems.

New management techniques need to be applied to this situation. The Media Council must have formal recognition and procedures for making decisions. Secondly, clear lines of communication must be established, not only with the clients each unit serves, but also with the chief academic officer.

3. Develop a "matrix management" approach to organization.

In organizational theory, much has been written about the "matrix" style of organization (Szilazyi and Wallace, 1980). In this model, individuals from different functional units may confer and interact on a one to one basis rather than through their direct supervisor. In Figure 1, a traditional organizational structure is portrayed with various learning resource units each reporting to a supervisor and all supervisors reporting to the Director. In most business operations, communication between units must only occur between supervisors or even through top management alone. Such a rigid structure is often necessary when tasks are discreet mechanical tasks done in sequence or with little relation to each other. It is not a successful management model for learning resource centers.

Learning resource producers, for example, must be able to consult with faculty, production specialists such as artists and photographers, equipment managers, and technical engineers to complete their products. Learning resource organizations, therefore, need this kind of flexibility to get resources designed, produced, and implemented within academic programs. Figure 2 illustrates another type of organization, with separate units, but with two lines of communication. The solid lines represent the formal reporting lines of supervisors over staff. The dotted lines represent the more informal communication that must occur between staff when solving a problem or working on a team development project. When conflicts or problems develop at this colleague level, then it remains for supervisors to take over their traditional role to resolve them.

On another level of matrix management, supervisors may report to more than one administrator depending upon the issue. Here, for example, a branch campus librarian may report officially to the University Librarian, but also take local direction from the Dean of the branch campus. Again the dotted lines in Figure 2 demonstrate this communication line between different individuals and groups such as a Faculty or Learning Resource Managers Committee.

Matrix management requires a more ambiguous reporting structure than traditional patterns, but may better serve a coordinated approach to the integration of learning resources on a diverse university campus. Unlike traditional approaches, however, it requires participation and commitment from all levels in the university community. It would require an active and committed Faculty Learning Resource Committee and also a strong Council of Learning Resource Units. Both faculty and learning resource staff must also be able to be flexible in order to go beyond representing their own interests in order to assure that all university learning resource needs are addressed fairly with the most appropriate resources available.

4. Development policy of selecting workable tasks and problems.

In developing a coordinated approach, participants from various units should begin by selecting several specific problems to address. Often time spent on development of one "macro solution" to the entire learning resource organization question is wasted when inevitable political or practical roadblocks intervene. First, find individuals who share common interests and concerns and build alliances between units based on these issues. Then select specific problems that are within the group's power to solve. Through these early bridges built by solving specific problems, groups can then have the basis on which to move on to solve some of the larger and thornier issues.

5. Use a functional approach to consideration of learning resource services.

Learning resources generally divide into several specific functions, as demonstrated in the units identified in Figures 1 and 2. They include the inventory, distribution and service of equipment, the production of materials, including graphics, photography and television, the acquisition, cataloguing and distribution of learning resource software, consultation on resource utilization, and instructional design and development. Often some of these services can be shared by various campus learning resource units and duplication of all services are not always necessary. When reviewed in the context of function, it is easier to determine where responsibilities between units might be better shared than done alone.

Geographical separation is a factor, however, that must be considered along with functions. If a campus or building is far removed from other facilities, and a learning resource function is heavily used there, then duplication of that service may be a necessity. Every effort must be made to coordinate these activities as much as possible, and to avoid duplication when time and geographic proximity are not crucial factors in providing the function.

6. Share learning resource functions.

In an institution with strong autonomous units which have historically been responsible for specific learning resource services, a shared functional approach may then be advisable. For example, most language/learning labs have excellent audio recording facilities and wish to continue control of them. However, audio use may not be high enough to keep these facilities busy at all times. Similarly, the lab might have photo and graphic facilities, but not be able to continue to operate them at the same level of commitment as audio services. Other units may be unable to commit costs to audio, yet have good facilities for these other production functions.

One solution to achieve savings but retain autonomy might be for various campus units to specialize in those functions that they can best serve. The language lab, for example, could take over all audio recording and dubbing for the university. In exchange, other learning resource units could take over photo or graphics or video production services depending upon their facilities. Each unit would, therefore, specialize in the area it is best equipped to serve.

The success of such a shared administrative approach would require cooperation, flexibility, and support not only from the units involved but also from both faculty and administration. While college or departmental units would lose some local authority, there could be substantial savings achieved without the sacrifice of all local or academic control of resources.

Conclusion

Whether administered from a central or local authority, the important issue for a learning resource center is to retain flexibility. A center must be able to adjust to changes in the needs of its faculty and student clients and in the technology available for educational use. A broad-based center able to serve a variety of needs is not only politically expedient for survival but also prudent use of both human and technological resources.

Flexibility is also essential in dealing with other resource professionals within the same institution. A center must define its own objectives to serve its own clients, but at the same time it must be willing to coordinate services and mutually beneficial projects with other campus media centers.

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APPENDIX A.

Learning Lab Organization Survey

1. What departments and colleges do you serve?
2. To whom do you report?
3. What media services does your lab provide?
4. What new services do you anticipate adding in the next 5 years?
5. What changes have occurred in your budget support over the last 5 years?
6. What changes do you anticipate in budget support in the next 5 years?
7. What changes in organization/reporting lines have occurred in the last 5 years?

8. What additional changes do you anticipate in the next 5 years?
(By way of equipment, services, facilities, reorganizations, etc.)
9. What additional media service organizations exist on your campus?
10. What is your relationship and/or organizational liaison with them?

Lab name: _____ Institution: _____

Size of institution: _____ % of student served: _____

Contact person: _____ Telephone () _____

RETURN DATE -- NOVEMBER 18

Bruce Parkhurst
Geddes Language Center-CLA
Boston University
725 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215

APPENDIX B.

1983 Preliminary survey of 33 institutions in the East

NB: 26 of the respondents were language lab directors, the remaining 7 were media center administrators.

1. What departments and colleges do you serve?
 - 64% Foreign language and/or...ESL programs, plus...Up to four humanities departments
 - 24% All or most of college
 - 12% All of university
2. To whom do you report?
 - 65% Provost, Vice-President, or Dean
 - 20% Department Chair
 - 15% Librarian
3. What media services does your lab provide?
 - NB: LL=language lab AV=audio-visuals
 - TV=television/video CAI=computer-aided instruction
 - 30% LL + AV + TV
 - 30% LL only
 - 18% LL + AV
 - 9% LL + AV + TV + CAI
 - 9% All media service (including production)

4. What new services do you anticipate adding in the next five years?
 - 31% increase in use of TV
 - 31% increase in use of CAI
 - 20% no changes anticipated
 - 14% increase in use of AV
 - 4% increase in use of satellite
5. What changes have occurred in your budget support in the past five years?
 - 33% no changes in support
 - 24% gain: one-shot budget supplements for replacement of major equipment
 - 18% lost
 - 15% gain: cost of living and slight operational increases
 - 9% substantial increase in budget support
6. What changes do you anticipate in budget support in the next five years?
 - 42% no changes anticipated
 - 27% gain: expected
 - 27% gain: "hoped for"
 - 3% loss anticipated
7. What changes in organization/reporting lines have occurred in the last five years?
 - 58% no changes
 - 21% increase in status or in size of facilities
 - 12% administrative reorganization from department to library
 - 6% decentralized
 - 3% centralized
8. What additional changes do you anticipate in the next five years (By way of equipment, services, facilities, reorganizations, etc.)?
 - 45% no changes
 - 27% no response
 - 18% centralization under discussion
 - 6% expand service audience
 - 3% centralization certain
9. What other media service organizations exist on your campus?
 - 64% there is a central media facility
 - 21% there are other service units in colleges/departments
 - 15% none (we're it)
10. What is your relationship and/or organizational liaison with them?
 - 24% linkage on a cooperative basis only
 - 21% dependence for some services
 - 21% no liaison
 - 15% we are the main center
 - 12% direct line of reporting or budget control
 - 6% infrequent contact



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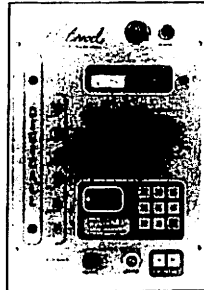
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