Response to the Library External Review
which was conducted April 2005
October 2005

As the reviewer states, there is good will for the library on campus. Faculty and students perceive it as important to the academic work they do. That this review was conducted shows that the college cares about the library and desires to have an exemplary one.

I. Physical Facilities

The reviewer notes that the library building looks good. It does. The college takes excellent care of its library building as it does the entire campus. The library looks clean, neat and professional.

Keeping up with the maintenance of a building heavily used will always be an ongoing task for the college. Much of the “sprucing up” that the reviewer mentions is done in the late spring (May) and summer since this is when the building is less heavily used and when budget becomes available. The reviewer visited us just prior to this time.

The reviewer notes the excellent location of our reference desk. It is in a wonderful location and we would like to make it even more accessible. In the next several years we will present a proposal to revamp the desk so that is friendlier, better looking and more workable.

The reviewer mentions that several of the reports talk about the desire for additional group study space. The addition of a study room in the summer of 2004 was a welcome one. Students use the study rooms heavily for group work and study sessions and they especially like the white boards in the rooms which help them to illustrate points to each other. Because they are so popular, we anticipate adding whiteboards over the next several years to rooms that do not yet have them.

It is agreed that if we wish to grow the collection, there must be additional space for it. The building was designed to accommodate approximately 130,000 volumes which is about where we hover. Using the lower level of the new bookstore would be a good way to provide additional space. Depending on the schedule the college wishes to pursue, in the 05-06 school year we can have vendors provide estimates on costs, shelf-feet gained, and lay-outs of different options including traditional and compact shelving with the idea that the shelving might be installed in the summer of 2006 or 2007 or later if the budget demands.

We feel that more attention can always be given to PR or how we promote our services to the faculty and students. It is a job that is never done. The coffee that the library offers in the evenings of finals and sometimes through the school year is always commented on. Students appreciate it. We are looking forward to having coffee available for students in the new Forum. One of the requests that I get regularly from students is for tables in
front of the library. Perhaps with the addition of tables on the porch of the bookstore we will be able to extend that to the front of the library also. We often have students sitting on the pavement in front of the library or balancing their laptops on their knees to work outside on nice days.

II. Services

As the reviewer mentions, we continue to make the library and information literacy (the ability to identify sources and to find and evaluate information) integral to the academic mission of the college.

The library does a good job working with first-year students but there are still many ways to improve. We are still not getting to all of the University 1111 classes. We gave introductory tours to 14 of 25 or 56% of University 1111 classes in Fall 04-05. We would like to see a physical tour of the library be a requirement of University 1111.

As the reviewer notes, we are much more successful with FLA. Working closely with the FLA faculty, as we have been doing, and integrating the information literacy skills into the coursework is the ideal. We worked with one section of FLA in the Fall of 04-05 and 16 of 18 sections of FLA in the Winter of 04-05. These numbers are good given what is being taught in the different semesters. It is during the Winter Semester that we should be working most closely with the FLA classes since this is when they do their large research paper. We have a good relationship with the FLA faculty and our work with them is important to the goals of the college.

We worry about the upper classes. Upper class students come to the reference desk saying they have not used the library or don’t know how to find a book. Even if they have been touched in FLA, students need to be reminded; resources change from year to year; and there are different resources that a junior political science major should be familiar with than the general first-year student. We continue to work with faculty on ways to reach these students.

III. Staff

We agree with the reviewer that our staff is good. However, in order for the services to grow we need to consider adding another librarian. During the school year and especially during the Winter Semester we run at a frantic pace. Because they are heavy users, our focus is FLA and we really must think about how we expand our services to the upper level classes. Given an additional librarian, we would assign him or her to public services working in reference and instruction. This would allow us to reach out to more classes and students. We would be better able to aid them with their research and to help them develop a better understanding of the important resources in their fields. This would also allow current staff additional time to develop better services such as increased and improved ILL, faster development of online reserves, ability to work with additional
classes, and improved access to Special Collections, all of which benefits students and faculty.

We agree with the reviewer that attendance at professional meetings is very important for our staff. This is how we keep up with changes in the field and build professional relationships with other librarians. Being professionally involved benefits our students and faculty by expanding our network of available resources and knowledge as well as allowing Transylvania to become better known among the professionals at other institutions.

IV. Collection

The college’s desire and goal is to have an excellent small college library collection. University of Kentucky libraries should be an additional, but not necessary, resource for our students.

We are moving toward this. When considering comments by faculty and students about their use of the UK libraries, it is important to separate perceived need of the UK libraries and actual need. Through conversations with students and faculty we have been working to identify what subject areas and what types of resources need to be improved. We plan to survey them more formally about the strengths and weaknesses of the collection and how and when they use the UK libraries including their use of the library shuttle.

It makes good sense to develop a plan to add specific identified resources over the next several years based on the feedback we receive. It is also important to recognize that collection development is an organic process which changes as the curriculum and faculty change and as new resources are developed. Any plan will need to be monitored and adjusted.

Having a larger book collection of good quality would strengthen us; it would better support our students’ research; and it would bring us to closer comparability with our peers. If we are similar to Centre College and Hanover College, our library should be similar in size and quality to theirs. Centre holds approximately 40,000 more volumes than we do and spends $239 (30%) more per student on their library than we do. According to NCES data, Centre spends about $723 per student and Transylvania spends approximately $484. Hanover spends about $997 per student.

We do plan to increase the size of the book collection as we add space. We currently add about 2000 titles per year. Increasing the book budget would mean the size of the collection would grow more quickly.

Having a better collection also means increasing access to online databases. Faculty have told us that they send students to UK to use resources such as economics and science databases. With work, these can be specifically identified and obtained for use here where our faculty and librarians can more easily guide students through their research.
And best of all we can increase access exponentially with no need for additional physical space in the building.

We have a good professional working arrangement between the University of Kentucky and Transylvania libraries. The suggestion the reviewer makes, that Transylvania require students to come to the Transylvania library before using the UK library, is good in theory but impossible to implement. It would involve UK employees identifying Transylvania students as they walk through the doors and turning them away. UK does not monitor their doors this closely. They are a state supported institution and as such allow everyone to walk through their doors. A less clean but more appropriate way to accomplish our goal may be to put more thought into doing better what we’ve been doing. That is to encourage faculty and students, through discussions and personal contact, to save themselves time by checking with the Transylvania librarians before they go. In essence, doing what the reviewer has suggested but without the formal arrangement of getting a piece of paper signed. Succeeding in getting Transylvania students to check here first may also involve increasing materials at the Transylvania library so that the rumor that “Transy doesn’t have it” dies. If more students have a successful research experience at Transylvania then word will spread to other students.

V. Automation

The reviewer expresses concern over the fact that the library computer system is managed by two people. The integrated library system is our Sun server and the Endeavor software which provides the library’s catalog and acquisitions systems. We are not currently worried about this. We have two excellent people who know how to manage the system. If something should happen to both of them, there are others with some comfort with technology who would be able to keep the system operational until another person was hired. We also have excellent relationships with the people in academic computing here on campus and other librarians in the state who do similar work. If needed, we could call on those relationships for emergency help.

While the array of online resources we offer is good it could certainly be much better. The Kentucky Virtual Library is a wonderful resource and has allowed us access to a great array of materials. However, all libraries in Kentucky offer those same materials so this does not give us a competitive edge. We need to identify and acquire access to those databases that all good small college libraries have. We will examine what our peer institutions have access to and what students and faculty seek to use at the UK libraries.

We have begun working with online reserves. We are doing research to identify software that will allow us to provide online reserves easily and efficiently. In the past year, we have manually made them available for some faculty who are high volume users. We have also helped faculty scan materials so that they can add them to their Blackboard class space.
We agree with the reviewer that an electronic classroom should be on the needs-list. Currently we use the computer lab for instruction. This involves requesting that students who are not in the class leave the lab to work elsewhere while we teach. Two options could be examined. One would be to add a multimedia projector to the current computer lab. This would be relatively low cost and would allow us to demonstrate to the classes we teach. But it would not solve the problem of requesting that other students find someplace else to work. Another option would be to add a cart of laptops for use in the Media Viewing Room. Because that room is used by classes for multiple purposes including watching movies, we would not want to have desktop computers but 15-20 laptops stored in a cart which could be set up for a class and run off the wireless network. This room could be reserved both by librarians and by faculty for special use.

VI. Special Collections.

We agree with the reviewer’s comments on special collections. Cataloging special collections would allow the collection to be more accessible and it would involve hiring a rare book cataloger. We will assemble a proposal for the college to consider.

VII. Miscellaneous

It is agreed that it would be useful for the college to consider the impact on the collections that new courses and new majors have. This involves changing the forms that faculty use to propose new courses. The proposal will be made to the Committee for Program and Curriculum this year.

An inventory of the collection involves comparing the books on the shelf to the online catalog to identify what is no longer on the shelves. This was done approximately 4 years ago. It will be taken on again in a few years. We shelf-read the collection every summer to be certain that the collection is in proper order. As we do this we identify books that need preservation/rebinding work.