Library Assessment - Response to CPC Questions
January 2010

Because every program is different, the CPC recognizes that one set of questions, and one organizational structure, will not work for every program review. The CPC invites programs to address thoughtfully the three major goals identified below in a way that best suits the needs of the program and/or the content of the review.

At its core, assessment of a library is essentially the same as assessment of a program. We ask the same basic questions--what are we trying to accomplish; how do we think we are doing; and why do we think that. The details of the assessment of the library, however, are by necessity different than one of a program. The following will attempt to answer the questions in the outline for assessment that CPC has created for programs.

1. Conduct an evaluation and assessment of your program vis-à-vis student success, both as an academic discipline, and as a program in a liberal arts environment. The CPC looks not just for identification of goals, but also for a description of how those goals are implemented, and evidence that these implementations are successful.
   a. What are your goals as a specific discipline
   b. What are your goals as a discipline in a liberal arts setting

The nine goals of the library which are stated in the Planning and Assessment Document for Transylvania University and responded to with evidence via the Transylvania University Library Annual Report can be focused to three basic things:
   1) to educate our students to be sure that they are information literate;
   2) to provide resources for their research and a space in which intellectual inquiry and thought can be supported; and
   3) to preserve, maintain and provide appropriate access to the unique historic materials of the college.

Addressing item 1: to educate our students to be sure that they are information literate

A successful student, in the library’s estimation, is one who is fluent in seeking information and determining if the information is appropriate and trustworthy; at the lower levels the student knows what kind of information can be found in different sorts of resources and how to access those resources; at the upper level the student knows what resources are basic to his or her field specifically and how to use them. At any level, a successful student knows how to evaluate the information that is found no matter what its format.

The librarians have had some success working with FLA classes. How this goal has been implemented and evidence that the implementation was successful or not can be found in Section 3 of the Transylvania University Library Annual Report. The committee should also examine section 9 to see additional information on our work with Special Collections.

Addressing item 2: to provide resources for their research and a space in which intellectual inquiry and thought can be supported
Because we are at the bottom of our benchmarks both in collection size and in what we are spending on our library, we have been looking at this closely. We’ve made some good strides in the past five years. We have increased online periodicals from 13,000 titles to 15,000 titles (14% increase) and online books from 20,000 titles to 77,000 titles (74% increase). The paper circulating collection has increased by 9% and the current paper periodical subscriptions have decreased.

We are no longer dead last in what we spend on the library compared to our benchmarks. Millsaps is below us. The librarians have worked with interested programs to examine and evaluate the collections to see how well they support the classes that are being taught. Both the art and the classics collections have had particular attention paid to them by their faculty and both collections are improving. The music program has also expressed interest in coming into the library to examine the collection. For the sciences we have picked up SciFinder – Chem Abstracts and the Life Sciences Collection from JSTOR which includes 160 science journals.

With the support of the administration, the library has gone from having no place to a prominent place in the Strategic Plan. Goals 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4 of the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan for Transylvania University support the strengthening of the collections. Grants are being written to seek an endowment that would permanently increase what we can spend on materials and we have a generous gift from a donor that will increase what we can acquire over the next three years.

We do still need to build resources especially for the sciences and social sciences and new areas such as art in China, Classics, and Latin American studies. One issue that we are keeping an eye on is the changes of licensing trends from vendors. This may mean that UK will need to tighten its access to online science resources due to increasingly limited licensing agreements which would mean that our students would no longer be able to use those resources. Should this happen, we would have to consider ways to make these resources available to our students.

The committee should examine sections 1, 2, 4, and 6 of the Transylvania University Library Annual Report for more information. Other sections may also have an impact on this.

Addressing item 3: to preserve, maintain and provide appropriate access to the unique historic materials of the college.

In the past five years faculty, students and staff inquiries to special collections have increased. With increased publicity, we are seeing additional requests to study and use the collections both from the Transylvania community and from the general public.

The 2009-2012 Strategic Plan of Transylvania University, goals 1.3 and 1.4, further addresses the third item. We will be examining how we can make the best use of and take better care of our unique historic items. The committee should also examine section 9 of the Transylvania University Library Annual Report for more information. Other sections may also have an impact.

Diversity:

In question 1.b, CPC asked that diversity issues be specifically addressed. The library collections reflect and support the diversity in the curriculum. One example: because FLA and other classes make heavy use of these materials, we have a large collection that supports the study and research of civil rights. Some of the fastest growing areas of the collections are in Women’s Studies and Asian Art specifically the art of China.
2. Address how your program’s structure and functioning have changed since the last review, particularly focusing on changes made (or not made) to reach goals laid out in the last review. In other words, how has your program used the findings from the last review?

The library is always changing and the library is always stable. As we listen to students and faculty and as we observe the services and actions of other libraries, as technology and new resources develop, we add and change services. We also make changes to services based on the data that we collect: dropping a little used database, knowing what areas of the collection should grow based on circulation and use data, etc. But the basic structure and functioning have not changed much from the last review. We still work to make our students information literate and we still provide resources to support the research needs of our students.

One potential structural change is that we have had a librarian retire. We plan that the new librarian will refocus our efforts in instruction and reference. We hope that new emphasis, ideas and energy will come with new personnel and that some of the ideas mentioned regarding instruction in the last review may be pursued. So that the Public Services Librarian can focus on the improvement of reference and instruction, we are putting more responsibility on the shoulders of Phil and Stephen to manage the circulation and ILL operations. They have taken this up with admirable ability.

In the last review we stated that we wanted to improve students’ information literacy. We have slowly been increasing the number of classes that we work with (see section 3.1 of the Annual Review). In 04-05 we worked with one FLA class in the Fall semester and 16 of 18 sections in the Winter. In 08-09 we worked with seven of the 20 sections in the Fall and 19 of the 20 sections in the Winter.

To improve information literacy of our students, the whole college must agree that it is important. Like the writing program, information literacy does not happen only within the boundaries of the library walls. This knowledge is integral to the work being done in the classrooms. All faculty participate in the students’ acquisition of this knowledge.

In the last review we stated that, as a part of the overall goal of information literacy, we wanted to be able to touch each of the University 1111 classes. We now have this in place as reported in section 3.1 of the library’s Annual Report.

In the last review we stated that we wanted to improve the collections. Through goals adopted by the college in the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan of Transylvania University and through grants and gift monies to create endowed funds we are beginning to move toward this. We still need to obtain additional grants and gifts to make some of these changes permanent.

We have also improved collections by working with programs, when they have been willing, to review their collections. Art and Classics are two programs that have examined the strengths and weaknesses of the collection with their own curriculum in mind.

3. Address goals and plans for future changes. Given the current review, discuss plans for changes in your program, making sure to include a discussion of timelines and next steps, and/or anticipated obstacles and difficulties.
The basic goals will remain the same as they have been: to increase efforts with regards to instruction making certain that our students recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information; and to expand our collections and increase access to resources especially databases in sciences, history, and economics so that the course work and research of our students is supported. The improvement of the collection is addressed in goal 1.1 and 1.2 of the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan for Transylvania University.

An additional goal is to improve our care for and use of the historic collections of the college including both Special Collections and the Moosnick Collection. We see huge potential for these historic collections to place Transylvania in a unique position both in terms of educational opportunities for our students and in the ability of the college to promote itself. Additional information about these goals can be seen in the 2009-2012 Strategic Plan for Transylvania University, goals 1.3 and 1.4.

The improvement of information literacy of Transylvania’s students is partially addressed in the university’s strategic plan. This is a difficult area to address in this review at this time since our new librarian will have major responsibility for this. We hope to create a plan to address the education of our students in this area noting what they are exposed to and when. We need to work more with the upper classes to reinforce and build upon what they learn in FLA. We hope to create a situation where librarians are automatically allowed access to the Moodle course sites. We hope to eventually put assessment of student learning in place.

On a practical level, we would like to increase the number of group study rooms in the library. We added one in 2004 but see several places where group study rooms could be added. This is consistently one of the things that we hear from the students is needed. Depending on how this is done, at the same time, we might also be able to add a few faculty carrels for faculty who are on sabbatical. We would also like to add group study space on the porch of the library.

For most of our ideas the only obstacle is the same as for all improvements to the college – money and staffing, which actually is also an issue of money. In order to make any big changes to what we do, we will need an influx of capital. To accomplish our goals, we anticipate that we will need to spend more time seeking and writing grants and fundraising in other ways. We are not yet sure what we will stop doing so that we can take this on.

At this point in time, we feel that we could add one person who would be able to work toward both the reference and instruction goals and the special collection goals. This would give us an additional person to focus on the educational and research needs of our students. The individual would work with the Public Services librarian to advance the information literacy goals that we stated above. Currently all librarians have responsibility for reference and instruction. If this were strengthened by an additional librarian, current librarians could focus on and expand efforts in their primary areas of responsibility. For instance, the library director could spend time seeking and writing grants and fundraising. The Special Collections librarian could spend more time helping students and researchers with information about and access to the collection. Adding a librarian could help the college process, catalog and work toward digitizing the special collections of the library making bringing hidden treasures into the light.

Please see the Transylvania University Library Annual 2008-2009 for statistics regarding the library, especially for benchmark institution comparison data.