

A Vision for Libraries

The goal of the efforts to transform the libraries is to preserve the quality of the library system at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Since the draft consolidation report was written, we've received valuable comments and input from campus stakeholders. Several questions consistently emerged from those campus discussions.

- What does the budget look like with consolidation? Where is the cost savings?
- What do improved library services look like?
- What is the vision and the timeline for library consolidation?

Although resistance to change is to be expected, these are certainly valid questions to address.

Financials: The UW-Madison Libraries have traditionally been in the top quartile of the CIC for collection funding. Today, UW-Madison Libraries ranks near the very bottom of the CIC. Although significantly reduced of late, staffing comparisons remain relatively high at Madison. Campus reinvestment in the libraries is needed but the Library must also actively co-invest through cost savings. Recent budget reductions have indeed lowered the overall FTE rate through attrition.

The recommendations in the report will cost money. Consolidation of print resources, the reduction of service points and the renovation of library spaces requires added resources with potential staff savings into the future. Estimates for campus re-investment needed to support consolidation efforts include:

\$1M p/yr for 5 years for electronic content

\$3M to expand library storage facilities

\$10-\$15M for space renovation for campus use

Improved services: The re-envisioning of the new Chemistry Library is a good example of improved services. We've focused our efforts so as to direct more dollars to purchase electronic resources. There was an intentional and inclusive effort to transition the focus and the resources from the management of print resources to the management of electronic resources and information management. The innovative design principles employed to re-purpose the learning spaces will directly benefit students and faculty. Other examples for re-thinking library spaces and services are beginning to emerge on campus.

These transitions will be painful for some people, and there will be losses in accustomed convenience, but there are gains. Not everyone is ready, so we'll start with those who are prepared to begin to make changes.

Vision and timeline: The recommendations described in the report are a trajectory for progress. These efforts will take time to implement. Discussions with individual academic departments must occur first. Through interviews, data gathering and analysis, the working group created a schema based on feasibility and readiness that positions the libraries for consolidation over a 3-5 year period of time:

Group 1 – Most ready

Group 2 -- Could be ready

Group 3 – Not yet ready

Based on subsequent campus discussions a possible scenario emerged that clusters libraries, concentrates active print collections, and centers staffing around providing support for academic disciplines:

- Humanities and Social Sciences,
- Agriculture and Life Sciences,
- Business,
- Interdisciplinary,
- Art,
- Physical & Mathematical Sciences,
- Education,
- Law,
- Health Sciences.

The upcoming work with Facilities Planning & Management for the Campus Libraries Facilities Master Plan at UW-Madison will provide more of these details and options for the future.

Libraries matter! Libraries are highly valued on this campus. Library staff provides valuable information management expertise. The learning spaces are critical to the success of students and faculty alike and the breadth of the content (both print and electronic) is needed to support research, teaching and learning.

We must move forward and we must work to transform the libraries on this campus. The consolidation report serves as that path forward.

Ed Van Gemert, November 30, 2015