Evaluation of Resource Allocation for the Library at College of Marin

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For presentation on May 21, 2013

Background: The Need for Increased Library Funding

In the spring of 2012, library faculty submitted a Program Review that detailed the need to significantly increase baseline funding for the library at College of Marin. During a meeting with the Program Review Allocation Committee (PRAC), representatives from the library pointed to chronic funding shortfalls that had compromised its ability to fulfill its mission, which is to serve the information needs of our diverse learning community.

For example, the adopted budget for FY 2011-12 was $42,762.00. This amount fell far short of the actual operating budget for the library. Over the years, it had become common practice for the library to be in a perennial crisis mode, as funds were not immediately available to meet its ongoing obligations. The upshot of this was that COM developed a reputation for not paying its bills on time. Not only did this strain important relationships with our vendors, but ultimately cost the school its partnership with Dominican University’s library, with which we shared the cost of the library management system. Losing Dominican increased the cost of maintaining our catalog by almost $19,000.00 a year. Our reputation in the library community suffered.

Another result of poor funding was the deterioration of our print collection. Without proper funding, the library’s holdings were not maintained and thus the collection slowly fell out of relevance and currency. The periodicals budget declined and some subscriptions were dropped. Office supplies were not replenished.

The crisis came to a head when WASC placed our college on warning. An underlying concern regarding the viability of the IVC library had been the lack of an updated collection that met the needs of students enrolled in courses at IVC.
How the Library has Used the Financial Resources to Improve its Program

Fortunately, the meeting with PRAC in the spring 2012 resulted in a $75,000.00 increase of our baseline operating budget. This amount brought the adopted budget up to $118,027, which finally permitted the library to fully meet its projected expenses for the fiscal year. An important part of meeting its ongoing financial responsibilities is not only to pay its bills on time, but to make significant improvements in the collection. Here are the areas in which we have made improvement:

1. Books

Kentfield - The library allocated approximately $25,000.00 for beginning the redevelopment of the book collection at KTD. This is the first step in a long-range process to revitalize the collection.

One example of a very significant addition to the collections of both KTD and IVC is the entire 383 titles of the Oxford Very Short Introductions series. These books offer concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects across the humanities and social sciences. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society.

Indian Valley Campus - The library allocated over $15,000 of its budget to build the book collection of the new library at IVC. The shelves now contain materials that cover a broad range of topics in the arts, humanities, and science. Particular attention was given to books that support the workforce development programs at IVC, which include Court Reporting, Environmental Landscaping, Medical Assisting, Dental Assisting, Auto Technology, Auto Collision Repair Technology, Early Childhood Education, and Multimedia Studies. Many of these books were purchased using a local vendor, Moe’s Books in Berkeley. Moe’s provided us with a 10% discount on new and used books. Buying selected used books further stretched our purchasing power in a time when money is scarce. In the time of online purchases, Moe’s is impressed with our support
of independent used bookstores. This is an example of COM rebuilding good relationships and improving our image in the bay area community.

2. Periodicals - In addition to maintaining our previous collection of periodicals, the library was able to add 19 titles to the KTD collection and nine titles to the IVC collection.

3. Electronic Databases – With the reliable revenue stream, database invoices are now paid in a timely manner. The library has identified eleven new databases to support the research needs of our students. An overhaul of the database collection is currently underway. By fall, not only will the number of databases be increased, but a federated search engine will allow students to search across all databases.

4. Supplies – Modern libraries recognize the need to display items in the collection. For the Indian Valley Campus, a large order of display materials were purchased, so that books, signage, and handouts are now more easily presented to students. Another order is in the works for the Kentfield library. When this order is complete, over three hundred items will be displayed around the library.

Results of the Resource Allocation to the Library

The Student Learning Outcomes for the library are for students to demonstrate strategies to locate evaluate and apply information from a variety of sources - print and/or electronic. But to do so, the library must be able to provide quality resources. The infusion of financial resources has allowed the library to continue offering library orientations and one-on-one instruction that demonstrate how to find and use our valuable resources.

With the improvements made to the physical and digital collections, the college was able to successfully demonstrate improvement to library services. During the follow-up site visit of November 7th and 8th 2012, the WASC team acknowledged the commitment that College of Marin had made to the library. WASC reported that the college had met all of the recommendations to correct deficiencies. We were taken off warning.

MARINet is another success story that has resulted in our renewed financial commitment to the improvement of the library. The superintendent/president, the Library director and the librarians met
with MARINet on May 17, 2012, to begin the application process for the District to join the consortium. One of the consortium’s chief concerns was in regard to the college’s financial commitment to library services. At that meeting, the college presented the budget increase of $75,000.00 as evidence that the library was now heading in the right direction. Over the year, MARINet members observed the headway being made to the collection. In a letter dated March 7th, 2013, the MARINet board approved our membership into the consortium. The library now has the financial resources in place to build and maintain an excellent relationship with the libraries in Marin County.

This is an exciting time for the library program at COM. With this infusion of resources comes a renewed commitment from the librarians; the change is already apparent. The library faculty is now working with other their instructional colleagues to cultivate resources that better support students in all disciplines. Two new librarians are being hired to replace the retiring library faculty. With new SLO assessment tools, librarians solicit instructor feedback regarding the efficacy of information literacy workshops and then discuss those results at regular meetings. Looking forward, librarians have suggested forming a committee to develop dialogue with faculty on which research databases will best meet our student’s research needs. Students and instructors will be encouraged to make purchase suggestions via the library website. The future for the library at COM looks bright because of the investments we are now making.