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ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award

Introduction

Founded in 1829, the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is an internationally recognized leader in professional and career-oriented education enrolling more than 15,000 students in eight colleges. It has been a pioneer in career-oriented education and a leader in cooperative education since 1912. RIT has one of the oldest and largest co-op programs in the world, with more than 1,300 employers and 3,000 students participating. RIT is a coeducational, privately endowed university, enrolling 15,200 full-and part-time undergraduate and graduate students preparing for technical and professional careers.

The RIT Libraries are comprised of Wallace Library, the Cary Library, and RIT Archives and Special Collections. RIT's Wallace Library is the primary information resource center on campus. It offers traditional collections, electronic resources, and flexible study space. Events are frequently hosted in the library's Idea Factory. Interlibrary loan services and in-house book requesting are available online. The popular Java Wally's café provides a relaxed setting for casual conversation as well as another option for meetings or studying in its After Hours Room.

Wallace Library is a multimedia resource center with a collection of more than 750,000 items. Resource materials include more than 350,000 books, 2,900 print journal subscriptions; 380,000 microforms, 3,100 audio cassettes and recordings, and 6,700 film and video titles. Our extensive web-based online collections feature over 150 research databases, 7,000+ eBooks, 16,000 electronic journal subscriptions and thousands of digital images in various collections.

Wallace Library supports a very active environment. In comparison to the 21 universities that RIT benchmarks against, the RIT Libraries are first in the number of circulation transactions and seventh in the number of reference transactions per staff member.

In response to the strategic direction that RIT undertook in 2003, the RIT Libraries enthusiastically embrace the goal of becoming a Category of One university. We believe RIT's libraries will be an important campus part. Our proposal is the vision for the future which will improve Library services, enhance information access and allow transformation of the Library a resource that will meet the future academic needs of RIT. The driving concept behind the strategic plan is to transform what has been a primarily undergraduate library into a new **Center for RIT Culture and Information Services**.

In 2004 the library staff came together to develop a library strategic plan with the following vision and mission.

Vision

With a staff committed to excellence, RIT Libraries will be essential partners to our community by being the "place to go when RIT needs to know."

Mission

As an active partner in quality education, focusing on curricular support and enrichment of the academic experience, RIT Libraries will offer quality services to meet our community's needs by:

- Providing current technologies to access onsite collections and global networks.
- Delivering innovative instruction and responsive help services.
- Maintaining a welcoming environment that is comfortable, secure and accessible for our community.

A series of Library Focus Groups and User Surveys were conducted exploring the place of the RIT Libraries and its services on campus; at the same time that the Institute was developing its ten-year Strategic Plan. An in-house task force reviewed the services offered by graduate research libraries across the country. Using the data collected in these two areas and within the context of the RIT Strategic Plan, the Library Council initiated a process to create a new five-year plan for the future of RIT Libraries.

The Library's Strategic Plan process began with the creation and training of "Container" Teams. These four teams included all Library staff and were charged with the following responsibilities: 1) Conduct (one-on-one) interviews of numerous campus constituents 2) Review and analyze reports and data previously collected and from literature reviews 3) Prepare a descriptive list of action steps (tied to RIT's Strategic Plan) recommended for implementation. Each Container Team had a specific goal, as follows: 1) Supporting RIT Faculty Scholarship 2) Supporting RIT Graduate/Doctoral Research 3) Supporting RIT Undergraduate Education/Student Success and 4) Serving the Institute as a Cultural and Information Center. The Libraries' five-year plan was derived from these recommendations.

As we move forward with the new Strategic Plan, we believe RIT's libraries will be an important campus partner in the effort to raise RIT to the "standard of comparison to which others aspire." (Albert Simone, RIT President, State of the Institute, 2005).

The RIT Libraries have, therefore, established a number of objectives:

A. Transform the library to become the Center for RIT Culture and Information Services

This transformation is characterized by the following goals:

1. Vision: Create an organizational structure that supports the initiatives and goals identified by the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan

Issue: As the goals and initiatives were identified by the "Container Teams" it became obvious that certain services and responsibilities would be better addressed within a different organizational structure. Certain initiatives drew from more than one existing department and would be better managed within a single department. Initiatives/goals were organized into like groups and compared to the existing organization. New teams based around these initiatives were needed. The existing staff had the skills required, but not necessarily in the right place.

Outcome: New "teams" were created to support the new goals. Eleven former departments: Acquisitions/Serials, Cataloging, Circulation, ILL, Reference, Marketing, Administration, E-resources, Technology, Archives, and Cary Collection (all reporting to the Director) were organized into six new teams: Technology Services, Digital Assets, Points of Service, Cultural Collections, Information & Education Services, and Administrative Operations. A new sub-department was also created: Publishing & Scholarship Support. All staff members received new job descriptions and no positions were lost.

2. Vision: Patrons asked for flexible, specialized, curriculum and non-curriculum instruction.

Issue: Based on surveys and focus groups, the library found there was a need for a variety of instructional opportunities not being met elsewhere on campus. Faculty, staff and students wanted sessions on software basics, database strategies, internet searching, citation formatting, copyright information, and how-tos on lifestyle issues. They also wanted these not to conflict with their classes.

Outcome: The Library developed two series of instructional programs to meet these needs. Personal Tech Workshops were developed to cover software basics (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc.), citation formatting (APA, MLA, NoodleBib, EndNote), copyright issues (TurnItIn), internet issues (Google, Evaluating Websites), and database searching (PapersInvited, image searching). The Practical Information Series was developed to cover lifestyle issues (car buying and leasing, starting and financing a business, self-publishing, e-theses, financial aid, and investing 101). The first series of workshops was given by Library staff while the second series involved outside speakers (faculty and community). Many sessions were held during the noon hour, late afternoon, or Fridays when fewer classes are offered. Turnouts were significant and bursting at the seams for some of the Practical sessions.

3. Vision: Collaborate with satellite campuses to create a basic instruction program for Library resources.

Issue: Faculty members teaching at the American College of Management & Technology in Croatia, an RIT partner university, identified the need for their students to learn how to utilize the Library's online resources in order to conduct a higher level of research. The Library liaison to Online Learning worked with the Croatian faculty to identify the appropriate required freshman writing class as the place to put this instruction. Using Macromedia Breeze, a live instruction session was held emphasizing online tools, resources and services.

Outcome: One Croatian faculty member already sees an increased use of RIT resources in term papers while RIT reference librarians have reported an increase in Croatian student contacts. Future Live sessions are planned for Croatia, and a contact has been made with the American University of Kosovo, another partner, to develop a similar program.

4. Vision: Create a center to support RIT scholarship and publishing.

Issue: RIT Libraries, using MIT's DSpace software, developed an institutional repository, the RIT Digital Media Library (DML) to showcase RIT scholarship. Though documents were slowly being added to the DML before the Strategic Plan was implemented, a stronger push for content was needed. At the same time Library staff members were continually being asked for assistance on issues related to scholarly citations, plagiarism and copyright. The Library was also establishing a partnership with Lulu.com to offer a print-on-demand identity on campus. The logical solution was to create both a physical space and virtual locations for these services.

Outcome: A revamping of the Reference collection created a physical space for the new Publishing and Scholarship Support Center (PSSC). Two staff positions were dedicated to the Center, with additional service desk staffing and editorial assistance coming from other departments as needed. The Center is the go-to place for all of the services mentioned above, as well as the processing center for e-theses and other documents being added to the DML. A web page was created identifying and explaining these services. The OpenBook@RIT portal to Lulu.com print-on-demand services is also housed on the PSSC web page. Since the Center's creation the repository has grown from 112 entries to 465 documents with 602 unique authors. Editorial services began in September with requests averaging 60 pages each and coming in at a rate of 2 per week.

<http://wally.rit.edu/userservices/pubschol/>

5. Vision: Create a print-on-demand entity to encourage RIT community originated publications.

Issue: RIT is experiencing a growing demand for self-publishing outside the scope of the Cary Graphic Arts Press, the publishing arm of the Cary Graphic Arts Collection and de facto university press. The Library and Lulu.com agreed to explore an alliance to promote print-on-demand at RIT.

Outcome: An alliance, the first of its kind nationally, was established between the Library and Lulu.com. A Library computer specialist worked with Lulu.com to create a portal with a landing page, a browse page and a search page. OpenBook@RIT went live in August and already 99 RIT people have signed up and 7 publications have been completed. The PSSC has a display of some current works along with a selection of helpful handouts.

<http://www.lulu.com/openbookrit>

6. Vision: Put a public face to the scholarship that is being done at RIT.

Issue: RIT had developed an institutional repository for scholarship at RIT but most of the campus was not aware of the nature and scope of that scholarship. The Library decided to address these issues.

Outcome: Three initiatives were undertaken.

1. The PSSC publishes a newsletter called Scholarship@RIT and works with RIT's Colleges to create columns featuring recent research. The first issue will be published in December 2005.
2. The Library initiated two series of events to highlight RIT authors and researchers.
 - o The *Faculty Scholars* series - Three research showcases held each academic year
 - o *Meet the Authors* events – Monthly talks and discussions

Both series have been well attended so far and there are waiting lists of scholars and authors to schedule.

"I've been very pleased with the new performance spaces in the Idea Factory and Java Wally's, and thankful to the staff who help to coordinate these efforts" - RIT Student

7. Vision: Advocate for and build on the established prototype to establish a University Press.

Issue: The Cary Graphic Arts Press (CGAP) is the publication arm of the Cary Collection. Since its establishment in 2002 as a prototype for a university press at RIT, the CGAP has steadily increased its number of publications each year and will exceed its target goal of 12 titles for 2005. The CGAP has outgrown its space in the Cary Collection and additional dedicated staff was needed.

Outcome: An additional staff member was added to the Press, a physical location was identified for the Press, and a funding campaign was initiated. Plans are progressing for construction to begin in the spring.

"This is a must if RIT is to be taken seriously as a research institution. ..., the Cary Press is already turning out very handsome books, but much more can and, hopefully, will be accomplished." - RIT Faculty Member

8. Vision: Create a Multicultural Resource Area.

Issue: The Library often receives requests from international students for information related to their home countries. In addition, faculty, staff and students traveling internationally were requesting easy to locate information for their travels, i.e., language learning tools, etiquette, customs, and travel guides. Lastly, students in a variety of business and international studies courses were researching cultural information on countries. These resources were scattered throughout the collection, often hard to locate, and sometimes dated.

Outcome: The Library determined to relocate travel guides, cultural guides, international newspapers, maps, and foreign language learning tools to a common area. A new fund was established to update the collection and a person was designated to oversee the area. A physical space was identified, furnished and materials moved. Additional funding was allocated to purchase a flat-screen TV to broadcast CNN world news, and foreign language news programming. Language tools are being checked out as never before. The travel materials and guides are being well used. Some patrons have commented that they stop by at specific times to catch news broadcasts.

"This is an important enhancement to the library services and a meaningful one. It will contribute significantly to creating that sense of community i.e. a diverse community that RIT strives for." - RIT Administrator

B. Enhance Information Access

The following items were identified as opportunities to achieve this goal:

1. Vision: Expand access to the Library's collections for graduate students.

Issue: The Library needed a way to address the unique needs that graduate students have for individual study and research. During interviews with grad students and grad student advisors, the repeated request was for longer borrowing times, since graduate research did not follow the course calendar. Students also asked for more specialized databases linked to their research.

Outcome: Wallace Library extended borrowing privileges for graduate students from three to ten weeks and increased to the number of books that can be borrowed. A wish list of databases was generated from our interviewing and data collection. The Library advocated and received new funds to acquire some of these subscriptions. In July, 2005, the Global Market Information, Knovel and SPIE databases were added. These are all actively being used.

2. Vision: Expand ConnectNY consortia to increase size and scope of collection and institute changes to make that expansion possible.

Issue: RIT was one of five founding members of the ConnectNY consortia and is integral in its operations. The other founding schools were Colgate, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence and Vassar. ConnectNY is a unified catalogue of participating academic libraries in New York State designed to allow authorized users of participating libraries to borrow books from other ConnectNY libraries. Use of a commercial delivery service has guaranteed a 48-72 hour turnaround time. Several more universities and colleges in the state asked to join the consortia and ways to make this an easier endeavor were needed. (<http://www.connectny.info/screens/opacmenu.html>)

Outcome: RIT Libraries have taken on major roles in the growth and operation of this system. RIT hosts and supports the central server for the consortia. The Library's Technology Services Manager oversaw the installation of a new server with four times the speed and capacity of the old one. System software was upgraded to the latest version, and the application software, provided by Innovative Interfaces, Inc., was also upgraded, providing new functionality and security. Bard College, the United States Military Academy and Canisius College were all added in 2005. Pace and Lemoine will be added in 2006 bringing the total in the consortia to 12. The Library's Head of Circulation is the official trainer for new Colleges coming into ConnectNY. The Library's web developer created a new administrative website for internal operations, which includes a database for problem tracking.

3. Vision: Build an Entrepreneurial Collection which will support users across disciplines and departments on campus.

Issue: Our data collection had shown a budding business community looking for resources, guides and models. These interests were also evident

from the growing number of entrepreneurship minors coming from all Colleges on campus. However, heavily requested business information was scattered throughout the collection and in many formats. Print material was being underutilized in favor of electronic resources.

Outcome: The Business and Entrepreneurship Research Area was created to gather recently published Reference and circulating resources into one area. It was given prominent space on the first floor of Wallace Library. A computer terminal was included to tie in access to electronic databases and web resources. The subjects identified for the collection were accounting, marketing, ethics, business strategy, personal finance, organizational behavior, venture capital, finance, international business, management and leadership, business communication, business plans, entrepreneurship, and company biographies. The Business Librarian has had numerous student consultations within the area. The result has been an increase in in-house usage of the material and circulation statistics. Student awareness of the variety of materials available and how these materials relate to one another has risen significantly.

4. Vision: Provide alumni access to Library databases.

Issue: Due to licensing restrictions, alumni were unable to remotely access the library's research databases. Alumni often requested this service, particularly those who did not have access to this information at their place of work or local public library.

Outcome: Negotiations between Proquest, the RIT Alumni Office and the Library resulted in a license that allowed alumni access to Proquest databases. Alumni are authenticated electronically and access the databases through the alumni website. Alumni, who had previously been making trips to campus, can now connect remotely.

5. Vision: Create a database-driven library website to make searching for information more user-friendly.

Issue: The Library wanted to redesign and overhaul the appearance and components of its current website. A database-driven web site with new and enhanced functionalities was desired. It is hoped the result will be more intuitive for the patron and easier to maintain for the staff.

Outcome: A team of library staff was formed in late 2004 to investigate both open source and commercial content management systems. The team established a set of library requirements for the system, completed a web review of available systems, and compiled a short list of desired systems for further investigation. Additional library staff participated in this investigation by attending vendor demonstrations of the commercial RedDot and Vignette systems, participating in a sandbox test for RedDot, and attending the Institute Web Advisory Committee meetings. In early July, RIT's Information & Technology Services Department announced the decision to purchase the RedDot commercial CMS for the entire campus. Library team members agreed that RedDot was a workable solution for the library as well and decided to drop its investigation for an independent CMS implementation. RedDot will provide a comprehensive method for organizing and presenting information, providing for easy updating by library staff. Campus implementation is in progress and the Library is preparing for conversion.

6. Vision: Create an electronic resource management system to accommodate our growing electronic collection.

Issue: The Library needed a new way to manage the growing number of electronic materials in the library's holdings. Tracking them was a labor-intensive and often challenging process.

Outcome: During spring quarter the library evaluated and approved the purchase of Innovative's ERM module to facilitate the management of electronic resources. Following the purchase, an implementation team was formed to design and implement the system for integration into the library catalog. Several phases of the implementation have been completed including the definition of data dictionaries for all record formats, creation of subject heading and format lists, initial input and testing of resource and license records, the installation of special scripts to accommodate data loads from SFX and the initial testing of coverage loads. Also, as part of the ERM implementation, responsibility for the management of all electronic resources, including evaluation, licensing, implementation, SFX integration and trouble-shooting, was fully transferred to the Digital Assets Team.

C. Improve Library Service

The following items were identified as opportunities to achieve this goal:

1. Vision: Establish courseware integration with Library resources.

Issue: During the 2003-04 fall and winter quarters, the Online Learning Department evaluated several courseware products to replace Prometheus, the software behind RIT's MyCourses. Several library staff members participated in this evaluation. Desire2Learn was selected for implementation in the spring 2004 quarter. As part of the implementation, the Library's Digital Assets department identified several potential problems with integrating the Library's resources and materials into the new product. Unlike Prometheus, no separate electronic reserve module was available and no library integration tools were included with the product. Also, administrative access to Desire2Learn was limited.

Outcome: Working with the Library Liaisons, the Library's Digital Assets team immediately began work on finding a solution. Using its creativity and design skills, the team quickly developed a solution using Cold Fusion pages that not only addressed the lack of a reserves module, but also integrated library resources to a much greater degree than had been possible within Prometheus. A MyLibrary button was developed and added to the main navigation bar of MyCourses. This button leads to a web page that lists course-specific reserve material (both traditional and electronic) and program-specific library resources, including librarian contact information, databases, web sites and more. The pages are customized based on the course number and faculty/student status of the user. Work was completed on this project during spring quarter and the MyLibrary feature was implemented with the spring quarter release of Desire2Learn. Not only does this project successfully address the issue of reserve support within Desire2Learn and allow for the listing of both traditional and electronic reserves, it also fully integrates library resources into the product. This solution was so inventive and useful that the group has had over 40 other colleges using Desire2Learn request information or presentations.

2. Vision: Extend lending periods for laptop computers.

Issue: Students identified a need for longer laptop sign-outs that exceeded the original two hour loan period. Also, students temporarily needed mobile computers for use in class presentations where the classroom was not so equipped. There was nowhere else on campus could students obtain a laptop.

Outcome: The original loan period was set so that the laptops could run on battery power only. By loaning power cords as well, it was possible to increase the time period to four hours. Also, the Library began loaning older laptop models to students for a two day period and allowed them to be removed from the Library to be used for presentations and projects. The laptops are in constant circulation within the library (over 1,400 checkouts per month) and there is often a waiting list for those that can be taken outside the library.

"I'm thrilled to hear the library will be continuing to support students using loaned laptops. Many RIT students need this service and it's nice, as a faculty member, to be able to tell students who are considering PowerPoint and other media presentations for class work that such a service is available at the library." -RIT Faculty Member

3. Vision: Create satellite offices for Library-College liaisons.

Issue: The Library liaisons have scheduled office hours in the Library and open door policies for other times they are in their offices, but wanted to increase their visibility among students and faculty within the Colleges themselves.

Outcome: Library liaisons sought locations in their respective colleges to set up temporary shop. If no computer set-up is available in the assigned location, a departmental laptop is signed out by the Liaison. Advertising was done within the Colleges to encourage drop-bys and to schedule appointments. This is a growing service as more students and faculty become aware of their presence.

4. Vision: Improve virtual access to Library liaisons.

Issue: Library liaisons are currently available via phone, email and IM when they are in their offices, but not when they are away from their offices.

Outcome: A Pocket PC equipped with a wireless receiver was obtained for each of the Library liaisons. The entire RIT campus has high-speed wireless accessibility, so the liaisons are now available via IM and email wherever they are on campus. This also gives them access to their files, calendars and the Library network during meetings outside of the Library.

5. Vision: Provide better interpretative services at the Reference Desk for working with deaf and hard-of-hearing students and staff.

Issue: While there are some staff members fluent in sign language, many staff members only have a very basic knowledge of ASL. RIT serves a large deaf and hard-of-hearing population since one of its colleges is the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) which includes approximately 1,100 students.

Outcome: The NTID Library liaison investigated Interprettype @ machines as an option. These were installed at the Reference and Circulation Desks to improve communication between hearing and non-hearing members of the RIT community. The units allow parties to communicate via typing on connected keyboards and displays. Results have been very positive, improving patron satisfaction and reducing the time per transaction. Many departments that maintain service points throughout campus sent representatives to the Library to try out the machines. They now appear all over campus.

6. Vision: Create a Tools Technologist position to focus on evaluation and support of Library software.

Issue: RIT seeks to be at the forefront in providing the best in Library service and this includes being aware of new information technologies. Library liaisons often did not have the time to monitor and evaluate new or existing products in this area, and there was a need for ongoing support of tools not supported elsewhere.

Outcome: As part of the Libraries' new organizational structure, one Library liaison was designated the Tools Technologist and given responsibility for scanning the literature. Sometimes this meant looking for solutions relating to existing software limitations, sometimes looking for solutions to a problem, and sometimes exploring what is new. The Tools Technologist is responsible for the initial data gathering and review of a product or group of products. Currently several technologies are being investigated.

7. Vision: Provide customized LDAP authentication for E-Reserves.

Issue: The Information Delivery Services Department was using a home-grown authentication process for electronic reserves. Students were assigned a distinct password for each course that required e-reserves in order to limit access to members of that class. This was time consuming to set up and required the patron to remember separate passwords for each class.

Outcome: The RIT Library implemented LDAP authentication, allowing patrons to use their computer account user name and password. The authentication eliminated hours of staff clerical time, made material available to the students faster and required no additional password accounts for students to memorize.

8. Vision: Create an online study room booking system.

Issue: The RIT Library has 28 study rooms available for temporary faculty, staff and student use. They are in high demand most of the school year. They must be reserved in order to be used. The system required patrons to come to the Circulation Desk and write their reservations in a log book. Many did not sign up because it required making an extra trip to the Library, electing to take their chances on the day they desired. However, there was often confusion over who had rights to the rooms.

Outcome: An online booking system was developed, allowing students to reserve rooms online from anywhere, using their computer account. The Library could eliminate the paper log book, and students could review a list of room sizes and amenities before deciding which room to reserve. (<http://wally.rit.edu/map/all/studyrooms/>)

9. Vision: Improve the awareness of First Year Enrichment (FYE) students regarding the location and services of the Library.

Issue: The First Year Enrichment (FYE) program is a campus-wide effort to introduce freshmen to the RIT community and inform them of the services available across campus. The Library conducts roughly 100 tours a year as part of this program and wanted to measure the effectiveness of

these tours in educating students about the Library and its services.

Outcome: An electronic awareness survey was developed and introduced into the last stop on the Library FYE tour. Students were offered a prize drawing as an incentive to fill out the survey, which also registered them with the Library. The survey tested their knowledge and understanding of various Library services. These same students were contacted at the end of their freshman year and asked to take the survey again. The results have helped the Library to know what services to promote and what services are not understood.

10. Vision: Provide a tool for library instruction evaluation to supplement faculty and student feedback.

Issue: Librarian instruction evaluation consisted of a combination of solicited faculty and student feedback and use of worksheets in selected classes. This manner of evaluating the quality of the sessions was inadequate. There was no clear indication that students were learning what was taught.

Outcome: A task force was charged to survey the literature and other libraries to see what else was being done. The task force performed a literature search, contacted local college and benchmark university libraries, and queried several instruction listservs. The most useful process seemed to be online surveys offered at various levels throughout a comprehensive instruction program. The Library did not have such a program in place, due to the changes across campus resulting from RIT's new Strategic Plan. However, a new tool was being tested by the Online Learning Center, which appeared as though it might serve the Library's needs. "Clickers" were being tested in classrooms to monitor student understanding of concepts. Audience response could be instantly quantified and the instructor could immediately adjust the lecture to reemphasize difficult concepts. The Library asked to become part of this test. Librarians have completed training. Winter and spring quarters will see the clickers tested in the Library environment.

11. Vision: Provide a customized assignment calculator for student use.

Issue: Students often end up rushed to produce an assignment because of poor planning. This stress can lead to conflict, frustration, or incomplete assignments. The Library had created a Research Tree to assist students in knowing how to do research, but wanted to do more. Open source code for an assignment calculator was available from the University of Minnesota but would need to be tailored to RIT.

Outcome: The assignment calculator (<http://library.rit.edu/researchguides/calculator/>) was adapted and tailored to fit RIT. It helps students manage their research projects and assignments. Several other colleges in the US have requested copies of the Library's code, which has been shared. The Library is now in the process of developing a dissertation calculator to assist graduate and doctoral students with their theses.

Conclusion

RIT Libraries strive to be the place to go when RIT needs to know. To accomplish this, Library staff members work as a team, constantly re-evaluating everything that they do. At any given time several specialized teams or task forces are investigating or implementing some new service or information resource. The Libraries continue to align closely with RIT's mission to become a global leader in student success.

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