

**External Review Report  
CCNY Libraries  
June, 2007**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The external review of the CCNY Libraries was conducted at the request of Provost Zeev Dagan and Assistant Dean Pamela Gillespie by a panel of three library deans representing major universities from different parts of the country: Dana Rooks, Dean of Libraries, University of Houston; Barbara Winters, Dean of Libraries, Marshall University; and Sandra Yee, Dean of the Library System at Wayne State University. A self study report was prepared by Assistant Dean Pamela Gillespie and her staff giving the context of the libraries within the university and outlining opportunities and challenges currently faced by the Libraries. During the two day visit on March 21 and 22, 2007, members of the external review panel followed a rigorous interview schedule, speaking with all school and college deans (or their designee), faculty members, students, library faculty and staff, and university administrators. (The interview schedule is included as an appendix to this report).

City College of New York (CCNY) is a member of the CUNY system. It is one of the eleven senior colleges, providing both undergraduate and graduate degrees to a largely nontraditional, mostly commuter, student population. As with many research universities today, CCNY faces significant challenges in maintaining an appropriate funding base for support of both research and teaching missions. The libraries at CCNY feel the same challenges as they strive to provide resources that support these missions. The implementation of a new funding initiative in the last fiscal year, the City University of New York (CUNY) Compact, has helped improve the budget for the CCNY Libraries along with that of the College as a whole. Although the future of the CUNY Compact seems uncertain, this year's funding provided significant enhancements for the library collections.

In 1999, an external review panel for the libraries outlined four major areas for improvement: the libraries needed to develop a strategic plan to focus their planning and provide needed direction; significant under-funding of the libraries needed to be addressed; the libraries were encouraged to participate in external fundraising; and more attention to public relations and a stronger outreach program to the libraries constituents was recommended. The current review panel notes that the libraries have developed a strategic plan, approved by the Library Faculty in February, 2007, that will take them to 2010. Other recommendations from the 1999 review, however, have not been implemented as completely, and attention to these recommendations is again encouraged.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

During the course of the site visit and through study of the report the review team made the following observations upon which recommendations are offered.

1. Assistant Dean Pamela Gillespie enjoys excellent support from her fellow Deans. However, the fact that her title is Assistant Dean, rather than Dean or even Associate Dean, puts her at some disadvantage. She is a colleague, yet not equal.

2. Pamela Gillespie is also respected by her faculty and staff. She communicates with them on a regular basis and they believe that she represents their needs and recommendations to the university administration.
3. Library staff members, on the whole, are dedicated, loyal and hardworking. Faculty and Deans expressed satisfaction with the service that staff members provide, even though there are significant physical facility challenges in several facilities. Library staff were surprised to hear how well they are regarded by their colleagues on campus.
4. Major strides have been made with regard to services since the 1999 review panel report. The libraries have undertaken two user surveys (the nationally normed LIBQUAL survey was administered in 2003 and again in 2005) and the results of those surveys have been used to enhance services paying particular attention to user stated needs.
5. Facility issues continue to create tension among staff and patrons. A continually shifting physical landscape in the Cohen Library in particular creates an uneasy environment. The latest news concerning the placement of electrical transformers on the first floor has created significant tension. The relocation of all book stacks and the relocation of 188 reading/study spaces in order to install the transformers has added to the already difficult facility issues.
6. Deans, faculty and students expressed satisfaction with the improvements in the collection that have been made possible by the addition of a variety of electronic full text resources. The \$300,000 additional funding for books and journals of all formats provided a much needed infusion of resources.
7. The development of an adequate, ongoing funding model for the libraries is yet to happen. Some external fundraising is being done but more can be done to supplement inadequate university resources.
8. Information technology in the libraries has improved dramatically over the past seven years. There is more computing hardware and processing power, thanks to the Provost's initiatives, and there is now wireless access throughout the Cohen Library.

## **IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS**

In response to the above observations the review panel suggests several areas that the CCNY administration and libraries can work together to make improvements.

### ***Strategic Planning***

The Libraries recently developed a strategic plan for 2006 – 2010. While this is a useful start more planning for services, collections and facilities can facilitate a long term roadmap for future library progress. It is also important that the Libraries' strategic plan support the university's strategic directions. A follow up document is in order to identify the library's contributions to the University's strategic directions, giving some attention to the ability to assess the libraries' progress toward its goals. Outcome measures are very important to accrediting agencies, and attention to assessment in the libraries is a worthy goal. For example, Howard University Libraries, under the leadership of Mod Mekkawi, have developed outcome measures for all yearly goals in their strategic plan. To facilitate more thinking and to develop the long term vision the review team recommends that the institution:

- create a "Library of the Future" task force with members of the library staff, faculty and students, to envision how the libraries within CCNY can meet the changing needs of today's and future library users. This task force would provide specific goals for the strategic plan that outline how the libraries can move forward. A consultant, possibly Shirley Dugdale, could convene a workshop as a launch for the task force work.
- research library trends in today's electronic information environment. Define the "library as place," investigate information seeking behavior of the net generation, and identify why information commons, as well as coffee shops, are making their way into most academic libraries. Review the recent work done by Carol Mandel and her staff at NYU on information needs of undergraduates, graduate students and faculty.
- identify, implement and assess information literacy/fluency of the CCNY students.
- plan for ongoing technology enhancements and replacements. As a part of the planning process new developments such as Web 2.0 and mobile (cell phone) computing enhancements must be researched, defined and implemented. A plan for regularized technology replacement is a goal to work toward.
- include the Libraries in the University plan for fundraising. There is support for this among the Deans and Assistant Dean Gillespie is eager to participate.

### ***Services***

CCNY Libraries have adequate services but their clients are not aware of many of them. A significant outreach program could build increased knowledge of the services while enhancing support for everything the libraries are doing. The branch libraries provide excellent, and very much appreciated, services for their specific clientele. The main library, Cohen, has a more difficult time getting its message out to faculty and students. In addition, it may be necessary to reallocate staff to provide for new services that are important to offer. The review team makes the following suggestions for service improvements:

- All librarians need to be involved with relationship building across campus. As they serve on faculty committees and participate in university activities librarians become active with faculty and build natural relationships. If not already in place, a librarian liaison program should be established, and if currently in place, it should be enhanced. This provides those academic departments not served by

branch libraries with specific librarians who specialize in instruction, collection building, and service to that department or discipline. There are excellent examples of Liaison Toolkits available on the internet, the one from the University of Connecticut

(<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/using/services/liaison/workingtools.html>) is particularly good.

- The relationship with the Center for Worker Education and Dean Lemons should be cultivated. He is a strong advocate for the Library and can help spread the word to other Deans and faculty.
- New services should be defined to replace old services and staff reallocated accordingly. Go where your clients are, including Web 2.0, gaming technology, reference IM, and the information commons. If the Hungry Mind Café is gone, make every effort to replace it! For example, at Wayne State University, a “Next Gen Librarian” position was created to be proactively looking at new technologies, testing and introducing them to the library staff. There are many examples of new types of librarian positions that are now needed. Georgia Tech has an excellent example of creating an Information Commons without building a new building and of completing it with grant funding that made the price affordable.

### ***Technology***

Improvements in technology were readily apparent and mentioned by many of the interviewees. Many of these improvements were due to the Provost’s intervention and are very much appreciated. As technology advances, and computers age, the technology will need refreshing. Because so many resources are now available only in electronic form, adequate computer stations from which to access these resources, with access to reliable printing and other means of downloading the materials will be critical. There was concern expressed by some members of the library staff about current access to adequate printing, both in terms of reliability and placement of equipment.

The review committee noted in particular that workstations in the Art & Architecture Library were scarcely able to support the types of arts and graphics programs being taught. The Libraries should consider swapping replaced user workstations in Cohen out to branch libraries, or making branch library computing the first priority for new equipment.

Again, planning needs to take place to create an information commons in Cohen. The Provost mentioned hiring consultant Shirley Dugdale to work with the Libraries staff to explore possibilities, and we strongly recommend this course of action.

### ***Collections***

Throughout the visit the review team heard constituents express how grateful they were to have access to the multitude of electronic materials now available. A good deal of our discussion with the library staff centered around collections. As we are discussing this it is important to recognize appropriate peers with which to compare the CCNY Libraries. While a variety of schools were used in the self study report for comparison it is necessary to determine which schools in the SUNY system, and which in the Great Cities program, are the best match for peer review. A careful study of this should be made. With this in mind, the review panel makes the following recommendations:

- Since funding is an obvious issue additional financial support must be sought. The CCNY Compact will hopefully be continued, giving more stability to the funding stream for resources.
- Consortial arrangements are active through the CUNY system and this significantly benefits CCNY faculty and students. The possibility of reaching beyond CUNY, into the greater NY City area, should be explored. Can the libraries participate in even broader consortial buying and approval plans for books?
- Patron initiated interlibrary lending is now available, and as with consortial purchases, should be reviewed for enlargement. Membership in organizations such as RAPID may help improve access to resources that can't be owned by the CCNY Libraries. Working with the CUNY system, other arrangements, similar to those in many other states, may be possible.
- The Libraries need to put in place an ongoing serials review process, looking at usage statistics and estimating cost per use when appropriate. The serials review process is also a useful tool for librarian liaison outreach, as the librarians bring departments and disciplines into the decision making process.
- The feasibility of off-site storage, possibly shared with other CUNY libraries, should be explored. Print volumes for which electronic access is available, can be removed from the facilities, making room for much needed client space.
- Collection endowments should be created through fundraising to supplement university resources for collections. Consider activating the Friends of the Library for the establishment and fundraising for these endowments. Partner with other Deans to develop joint fundraising strategies for collections in the disciplines.

### ***Facilities***

A constant theme emerged from nearly all those interviewed regarding the library facilities—they are inadequate. Of particular note, however, was the feeling that the libraries' spaces were constantly under siege, and were being repurposed with very little input from the librarians or Assistant Dean. The Cohen Library has seen and is currently seeing, major space shifts from library space to other purposes. The move to reduce space for Technical Services and provide more space for the reference collection is applauded. However, according to the self study report, several of the enhancements to the library space have been reversed over the past three years with the inclusion of the Rudin Academic Resource Center, Disabled Student Services, and the Dominican Studies Institute. All of these, as well as the notification that the electric transformers would be installed on the first floor of the library, have resulted in moving substantial amounts of the collection as well as services and staff. While these moves may be absolutely necessary for the university to undertake, communication with library personnel is critical. The review team makes the following recommendations:

- Off site storage, removal of nonessential print collections, and the possible purchase of compact shelving all need to be investigated immediately. Space for the libraries, including some of the branches, is at a critical juncture.
- Communicate with the library staff openly about the electrical transformer installation (this may have already happened). Bring the university safety officer

to a meeting with the staff so that they understand any safety ramifications of the installation.

- Evaluate the seating in both the Cohen Library and the Science Library. Determine if an information commons concept can be implemented in Cohen using existing space, computers and seating. Determine the future of the Hungry Mind Café.
- Enhance the Science Library's rather dismal space with some attention to the lighting, giving it a brighter look.

## **CONCLUSION**

Provost Dagan is providing excellent support for the CCNY Libraries through his commitment to technology and through his support of the Assistant Dean and her staff. This support has been a critical component of some of the major improvements that have been made since the last review. The Libraries staff are committed and hard working but need to incorporate more positive self-talk into their work. They have excellent support from the CCNY community even though they have not fully recognized this support.

Truly moving the libraries into the future will require more study, discussion, outreach to their constituents, and continued support from the campus administration. Pamela Gillespie is an able leader who must be encouraged to work with her staff to create a significant client-centered vision for future library services incorporating the suggestions that are made in this report.

  
**Itinerary for External Review Team Visit**

March 21<sup>st</sup>

- 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Welcome Breakfast with Library Faculty & Staff, Cohen Library, R 5/337
- 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. Meeting with Provost Zeev Dagan, Administration 218
- 9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. Tour of Facilities
- 12:00 – 1:15 p.m. Lunch with the Library Executive Committee, Laurich, Stewart, DeLeon  
North Academic Center, Faculty Dining Room
- 1:15 – 2:15 p.m. Meeting with Dean Maria Tamargo (Science) and Dean Daniel Lemons (Center for Worker Education), Cohen Library, R 5/337
- 2:15 – 3:15 p.m. Meeting with VP for Finance & Administration Richard Metz and Acting VP  
for Facilities Robert Santos, Administration 305
- 3:15 – 4:15 p.m. Meeting with Dean Joseph Barba (Engineering) and Dean Brett Silverstein (Social Sciences), R 5/337
- 4:15 – 5:15 p.m. Meeting with College faculty, Cohen Library, R 5/337

March 22<sup>nd</sup>

- 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Team working breakfast, Cohen Library R 5/335
- 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Meeting with Library Collection Development Group, Cohen Library, R 5/337
- 10 – 11 a.m. Meeting with Dean Alfred Posamentier (Education) and Dean Fred Reynolds (Humanities & Arts), R 5/337
- 11 – 12 a.m. Meeting with Dean Stanford Roman (Biomed), R 5/337
- 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. Team working lunch, Cohen Library R 5/335
- 1:00 – 2:15 p.m. Meeting with students, Cohen Library R 5/337
- 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Meeting with Library Faculty & Staff, Cohen Library R 5/337

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Meeting with Asst. Dean Pamela Gillespie, North Academic Center, R 5/334

4:30 p.m. Exit meeting with Provost Zeev Dagan, Administration 218

Team Work Area: North Academic Center, Cohen Library R 5/335