Summary Report to the University Assessment Panel

University Libraries

1. History

The Northern Illinois University Libraries have been an integral part of the University since its establishment. In 1899 Jacob Haish donated money to the Northern Illinois State Normal School to create a library which opened in two rooms on the second floor of Altgeld Hall in 1900 with a collection of over 5,000 volumes. In 1952 the Swen Parsons library was opened and 83,000 volumes were relocated to Swen Parsons from the Haish library. By 1955 over 100,000 volumes were located in the Parsons library. In 1977 Founders Memorial Library opened and became the main library on the DeKalb campus. By 2004 over 2 million volumes were located in the library. Currently the library has physical paper collections of monographs and serials, government publications, maps and manuscripts as well as access to electronic publications and digital objects. There is Founders Memorial Library, the main library, as well as two branch libraries on the DeKalb campus and a branch at Hoffman Estates, Naperville and Rockford.

2. Mission, Goals and Objectives

Mission: The primary responsibility of the University Libraries is to develop and maintain a research library that provides access to scholarly information and literature in support of undergraduate study, graduate study, professional education, and research. We are committed to a consultative approach in everything we undertake. The areas of activity are: A) Provide a well-planned collection of print, digital and other formats of sufficient size and scope to support the university’s research and instructional needs; B) Offer services that promote and facilitate use of recorded information, e.g. reference and information services, specialized assistance, bibliographic instruction, liaison activities, grant support, teaching improvement, and access to recorded information locally and globally; C) Regularly assess programs, collections and services to meet user satisfaction; D) Maintain records of the libraries’ collections that are complete, consistent and in conformity with national bibliographic standards and requirements; E) Assure maximum access to the libraries’ collections for all clientele; F) Take an active role in University planning and shared governance; G) Lead in the exploration of and adoption of new and emerging technologies to acquire, organize and distribute information resources and services; H) Contribute to professional knowledge; I) Engage in library development activities.

Goals and objectives: Assessment is a major objective in the mission of the University Libraries. Assessment objectives in libraries include two areas of emphasis, both of which affect student outcomes. The two areas are resources and use.

Measurable Objectives and Targets:

Resources: The University Libraries has as its mission support of undergraduate study, professional education and research. To accomplish this, the University Libraries strive to have a well-planned and balanced collection of print, digital and other formats of sufficient size and scope to support the university’s research and instruction needs.
Use: The University Libraries offers services that promote and facilitate use of the resources provided to students, faculty and staff.

Student Outcomes: Currently there is no standard for assessment of student outcomes related to libraries although there is research being conducted in library literature.

3. Methods

Resource:

Statistics on Collection Size and Age: Using reports generated from our online integrated library system, the University Libraries examines the collections by subject, age, uniqueness, overlap with peer institutions and benchmarking statistics. Previously, the Coalition of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) provided access for CARLI members for use of OCLC’s collection assessment tool. Funding for that has ended so our last OCLC collection assessment has been a few years ago.

Statistics on Expenditures: Utilizing reports from financial systems and from our online library system, the University Libraries compiles a variety of reports, many of them used for reporting to the Department of Education and Illinois state agencies. These state and national agencies have resources that allow the libraries to compare our expenditures with peer institutions.

Use:

Statistics on use of library materials: These statistics are generated through the reporting system of our integrated library system, from reports by electronic journal vendors and through SFX, our link resolver.

Interlibrary Loan Statistics: Statistics on the use of interlibrary loan, both borrowing from other institutions and lending to other institutions are automatically generated through our interlibrary loan system.

Focus Groups, Usability Studies, and Surveys: At intervals, the University Libraries do specific studies that provide us information on specific areas of the library. Recent surveys have focused on services, hours, usability, and work satisfaction.

4. Use of Results

Program Reviews: Each department in the University is assessed every seven years. Both resource and use information form important parts of the libraries’ assessment of the various departments.

Accreditation Visits: The libraries’ are a regular part of accreditation visits and assessment data from the library on resources and use is provided to the accrediting agency.

Resource Development: Data on Interlibrary loan and what we have in our collections helps determine what types and subject of materials we should be collecting for the University’s teaching and research. Use statistics let us know if we are putting our financial resources to the best use for the University.

Focus Groups: Information gathered in this way has been used in the Libraries Strategic Planning process for location of study areas and service points and what services should be offered.
5. **Further Information Needed**

We need to monitor library research literature to identify a means to measure the impact of the libraries and its programs on student outcomes. Also, as programs shift and departments change research and teaching focuses, we need to assure that we are still providing the resources that are needed when these occur.