

Management Portfolio:
Minor Library, DeVries College

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The College and the Library

De Vries College is a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest.¹ De Vries has an undergraduate population of 2,000 and 160 faculty. De Vries offers majors and minors in traditional disciplinary departments in the humanities, the fine arts, foreign languages, social sciences, and natural sciences, and several “concentrations” that cut across the traditional disciplines. Students in all programs receive a broad liberal arts education, and the College values study abroad, internships, student research opportunities, and experiential learning programs as part of its mission.

The College is served by the Minor Library. This document is the record of a strategic assessment and planning process for the library beginning in Fall 2005 and reaching a final strategic plan in Spring of 2006. The Environmental Scan and other planning meetings that began the process were initiated by library staff, but the Dean of Libraries and Information Services eventually requested that a strategic planning process occur for the entire Division of Information Services.

¹De Vries College is fictional, and based on a composite of information about several similar real-world institutions.

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Chapter 1

Environmental Scan

This environmental scan examines the role of the Minor Library in the De Vries College community in Winter 2006. The first section, *The State of the Library*, compiles data from internal assessments and reports and planning conversations among library staff.

The second section, *Perceptions of the Library*, looks at information obtained from faculty, students, and staff pertaining to their use (or non-use) and perceptions of the Library.

1.1 The State of the Library

1.1.1 The Building

The Minor Library, named after generous benefactor and local industrialist Edwin M. Minor, has served the De Vries College community since 1877. From the College's founding in 1833 until that time, the library was housed in a building that also contained classrooms and the student commons. Minor gave the College a gift in 1875 to construct a new library building, which was completed in 1877. This library building was heavily damaged by a structural fire in 1926, but most of the materials were salvaged and a new building was erected in 1927. An expansion was added in 1979 to accommodate the expanding collection and also added offices and a handful of classrooms. The library also gained storage space in a renovated classroom building across the street in 1985, which houses less-used materials.

1.1.2 The Collection

The Library's general collection contains approximately 500,000 volumes, including books and serial backfiles. There are also approximately 200,000 government documents, 150,000 microforms, and 50,000 audiovisual materials. The library has 1,800 current serials subscriptions and added 8,500 monographs last year. The Library also houses the College Archives and several rare book collections donated by alumni, trustees, and friends.

The storage facility contains approximately 75,000 volumes, which were transferred to allow for additional office space in the early 1990s. The storage facility has room for 25,000 additional volumes. The library shelves are filled to their workable capacity and annual acquisitions require weeding and sending volumes to storage to make space.

1.1.3 The Staff

Since 1995, the library has been part of the Division of Information Services (IS), which is headed by the Dean of Libraries and Information Services, who reports directly to the College President. IS also contains computing support and media services personnel.

The Division of Information Services is currently divided into the following departments:

- **Systems and Networking**—server and database administration, computer hardware, and help desk
- **Media Services**—equipment and facilities reservations, graphic design, and desktop publishing
- **Library Public Services**—reference and instruction
- **Library Technical Services**—collection development, circulation, acquisitions, serials, and cataloging

There is an Associate Dean of Libraries, who coordinates the efforts of the personnel in the Library Public Services and Library Technical Services departments.

The staff totals 45.5 full-time equivalents, in addition to 25 full-time equivalent student workers. Eight of these are professional librarians; the rest include computing professionals, graphic designers and other media professionals, and a number of technicians and support staff.

It should also be noted that Don McKellan, Associate Dean of Libraries and Cataloging Librarian, has announced his intention to retire in the fall of 2007.

1.1.4 The Users

The Minor Library primarily serves two populations: the College's undergraduate students and its faculty, for their course curricula and scholarly research. As a liberal arts college, the primary responsibility of the faculty is teaching, but all faculty are also involved in the academic discourse of their disciplines and conduct original research. In this capacity, there are a number grant-supported postdoctoral researchers and others on campus who constitute an informal "research faculty," although the College is not a research institution *per se*. Additionally, students complete a substantial research thesis in their senior year as part of their matriculation requirements, under the advisement of a member of the College faculty and often with supervision in an outside institution.

Each term, a number of visiting faculty are brought in to teach special courses and to fill the courseload of permanent faculty on leave or sabbatical. Some of the visiting faculty come from the community and return to teach one or two courses each year, while others are visiting from other institutions or hired in a temporary position to teach a full courseload for one or more terms.

Teaching faculty fall into the following divisions:

- **Division of Humanities**—English, philosophy, religion, and classics (28 FTE)
- **Division of Fine Arts**—art, art history, theater, and music (19 FTE)
- **Division of Foreign Languages and Literatures**—linguistics, English as a second language, and Asian, German, French, and Hispanic languages and literatures (23 FTE)
- **Division of Social Sciences**—sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, and the education program (34 FTE)
- **Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics**—biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, computer science, and the health sciences program (40 FTE)

1.1.5 The Services

The Library averages 50-60 circulation transactions per student annually (including reserves and renewals). In a typical week, the gate count is approximately 3,000 and the number of reference transactions (including email and chat reference) is approximately 100.

Bibliographic instruction is incorporated into the writing seminars required of all first-year students (30 sessions each fall), and is available to faculty in upper-level courses (approximately 10 sessions annually).

Users can access the library collections via a web-based catalog. Electronic journals (900 titles) and indexing services (indexing over 10,000 titles) are available on-campus

The College is located near the campus of a state land-grant university, which has a large library (the Hodge-Jameson Memorial Library). Through a reciprocity agreement, Minor Library cardholders are able to use HJML, check out materials in its circulating collection, and use its electronic resources (but only when physically present at the library). HJML has a broad collection that is especially strong in engineering, agriculture, education, and veterinary medicine.

The Library also houses the Computing Help Desk, part of the Systems and Networking group, staffed by technicians and students who assist students, faculty, and staff with computing issues, including network connections, software and hardware troubleshooting in certain scopes, and the campus telephone system. They answer questions in-person and by telephone, as well as visit other buildings on campus for troubleshooting. Staff on the reference desk often refer library users to the Help Desk when the question is more appropriate for them.

1.1.6 The Budget

The annual IS operating budget totals approximately \$4.5 million. This includes compensation, materials, and operating expenses, but does not include some expenses for building maintenance, nor does it include capital investments in computing hardware or software licensing for the other divisions of the college. Of this, approximately \$1 million is for materials acquisition, \$3 million for compensation, and the remainder goes to software, equipment, and consumable materials. The budget comes from the College's endowment income and from tuition revenues. Additionally, directed endowments fully support the College Archives and rare books collections.

1.1.7 The Context of the College

Several College initiatives also have bearing on the future of the Minor Library.

The College is currently involved in a large fundraising effort to bolster the endowment and expand the faculty and several other programs. In addition, this fundraising effort may result in funds for a new or substantially renovated library building and facilities within the next five years. The possibility of a major facility upgrade must be considered in our upcoming plans.

Second, the President has charged the Dean of Libraries and Information Services with assessing and overhauling the current enterprise software of the College, including the implementation of a courseware system and broadening and upgrading the electronic resources and services available through the libraries. The Dean has taken this opportunity to convene a group of staff from the Division of Information Services, including the library, to conceive a strategic plan for prioritizing the improvements to be implemented and moving forward with this initiative.

The planning effort will be carried through the spring of 2006, and will deliver a broad strategic plan and an outline of goals and objectives for the next three to five years.

1.2 Perceptions of the Library

We conducted two surveys, a large survey of library staff consisting of mostly open-ended questions, and a much shorter survey of users with multiple choice questions as well as a few open-ended responses.

1.2.1 Staff Perceptions

66% of library staff responded to the survey. These indicated that we have many current successes (85% said the library was an “excellent” place to work). Several areas for improvement did emerge, however. These themes became evident as the central ones:

- The physical space of the library is inadequate, outdated, and poorly arranged. Specifically mentioned were the third-floor classrooms, the library offices, and the archives and rare book room.
- There is an organizational gulf between the Library and the other parts of Information Services. Cross-pollination of ideas and projects

between the library and especially Systems and Networking is thought to be a fertile area. “The Help Desk and the Reference Desk should be together!”

- On a related note, we are lagging behind other libraries and the expectations of our users in electronic resources and services. We should make a concerted effort to put services online and invest in electronic resources.

1.2.2 User Perceptions

The user survey was available online or in paper form, and was distributed not only at the library, but also the cafeteria, at faculty senate meetings, and at various other locations and events around campus to ensure wide coverage. We are especially interested in people who are *not* coming to the library, or not satisfied with it, and their reasons—it is a well-known fact that students often make jokes about the “Minor” Library. We had a number of ideas about what these things might be that were asked about (see the attached survey) but also provided open-ended options for respondents to expand on comments or suggestions.

In all, 234 students (12%) and 75 faculty (47%) responded.

When asked to list their primary dissatisfaction with the library, 54% said the library building; 35% said the online services, resources, or website; 6% said print resources; and only 4% said the staff. (For more on building amenities, see below.) Those dissatisfied with online services and resources cited the lack of electronic indexes and journals, inability to conduct much basic library business online (such as placing holds and requesting interlibrary loan), and the inadequacy of current virtual reference tools. “Why don’t you just use IM?”

A number of questions confirmed that many students do regularly use the library, but most often because of course materials on reserve or because they have a class that meets in the library, and much less often to do research for classes or even for the senior thesis project. Many students said they found their research material “online”, although that appears to be more often through the Web and Google than through the library’s electronic resources. Students indicated that the spaces they used most often to work on coursework or research were dorm rooms or other residences (35%), classroom building lounges (26%), or computer labs (22%), and other campus communal spaces (17%) (including QuadRange, an on-campus eatery with a cafe-like atmosphere, and the Writing Center and Math Center, where

students can get help from peers). When asked what would make the library more appealing as a study space, they called for comfortable seating, a coffee shop, more enclosed group study spaces, and more computers.

Students responded mostly positively to their freshman library instruction sessions, although many upperclassmen said they really didn't remember anything from the sessions. Some suggested that it would have been far more useful to have library instruction sessions as a junior, before embarking on the senior thesis.

Both students and faculty lamented the opacity of library procedures, whom to ask for what, and the confusing signage. It is pretty clear that the users of the Library don't understand how our services work or where to go to get the right service (this harkens back to the staff comment: "The Help Desk and the Reference Desk should be together!").

1.3 Conclusions

The Dean has called for the staff of the Library to join with the rest of the Division in a strategic planning session in December. The findings from this scan will be helpful in developing a vision of the Library's future. Until then, individual staff members should remain cognizant of the aspects of the library that may be unsatisfactory or annoying to users and work to accommodate them in the best ways available.

Chapter 2

Strategic Plan

In December 2005, after the close of the regular term, 28 key staff members of the Division of Information Services convened a full-day retreat to develop a strategic plan for the next three to five years. This workshop resulted in the vision, mission, and goals that follow. The specific groups within the Division charged with these goals continued to meet through winter and spring of 2006 to develop specific objectives and action plans to pursue these goals. Additionally, it was resolved that the Dean would convene a follow-up workshop to discuss the staff organization of the Division.

2.1 Vision Statement

To be a premier liberal arts college library, adding to the stature of the College as a key component of scholarship, research, and service.

2.2 Mission Statement

To provide access to human knowledge supporting the scholarship, research, and service of students and faculty; the tools to pursue those ends; and an environment in which those activities flourish.

2.3 Goals

The following are the goals of the Division to support our mission.

1. **Provide a commons for research, study, and collaboration**

The Library should be a place where students and faculty can gather in formal and informal groups to engage in scholarly, cultural, and social activities.

2. Serve users at the point of need

Users should be able to access information resources, including materials and people, where and when they need them, with as few restrictions on location, time, and technology as possible.

3. Support curricular and research information needs

We must supply the information needed in the classroom and research. This includes traditional and electronic materials, as well as the vital support provided by our staff in using those materials.

4. Enable users' content creation

We should support users in creating works of their own, including research and creative content. This includes providing tools and services for the creation of various media and scholarly content.

5. Grease the wheels

We must ensure that the information infrastructure functions smoothly to support the day-to-day activities of the College.

Although some of these formulations may be new, it is to be hoped that these will be recognized as the longstanding goals of the Division under which we have operated even before they were formally articulated. Their clear statement here will serve as a vehicle for strategic thinking and tactical planning.

2.4 Goal: Serve users at the point of need

Users should be able to access information resources where and when they need them. "Information resources" include the collections of the library, electronic and physical, as well as the extended collection available through reciprocal borrowing and interlibrary loan. "Information resources" also include staff who help users understand these resources, the processes for obtaining them, and the tools used. We should allow users access to these information resources with as few restrictions on location, time, and technology as possible.

2.4.1 Objectives

To support the goal to serve users at the point of need, we have adopted the following objectives:

1. Provide effective online reference service through email and chat
2. Provide a course management system that integrates with library services
3. Enable access to electronic resources from any location
4. Organize physical library services in intuitive ways and provide appropriate signage
5. Organize virtual library services (website) in intuitive ways
6. Promote the library at likely points of need

2.4.2 Action Plan: Online Reference

The staff assigned to this action plan include the Reference and Instruction Librarians, the Cataloging and Web Librarian, the Computing Help Desk Manager, and a member of the developer staff.

The existing processes for reference by email seem to work well. There are email addresses available on the website for reference librarians and the Computing Help desk as well as a contact form, and this service is well-used. The contact form and its place in the navigation of the website should be revisited to understand whether the interface adequately directs users to the service when they are looking for it and conveys the appropriate information to the answering librarian or help desk associate.

Chat reference uses a commercial virtual reference package, and users have indicated that they dislike the interface and there are numerous examples of the technology not functioning correctly for a user. As college students, many of our users are accustomed to chat environments like Instant Messaging (IM) and appear to find our virtual reference interface quaintly antique. We get very few chat reference questions currently (3–5 weekly). Our focus should be on improving this service.

We will take the following steps:

1. The library literature will be reviewed for relevant studies of the effectiveness of various features of chat reference.

Due: 1 Feb 2006.

2. A list of requirements will be developed for a chat reference system.

Meeting: 5 Feb 2006.

3. The list of requirements will be evaluated against available software to select the appropriate technology, as well as other parameters of service such as hours and staffing.

Due: TBD.

4. The service using new technology will be implemented.
5. The service and new technology will be integrated with the website.
6. The service will be promoted to users.

Chapter 3

Staffing Plan

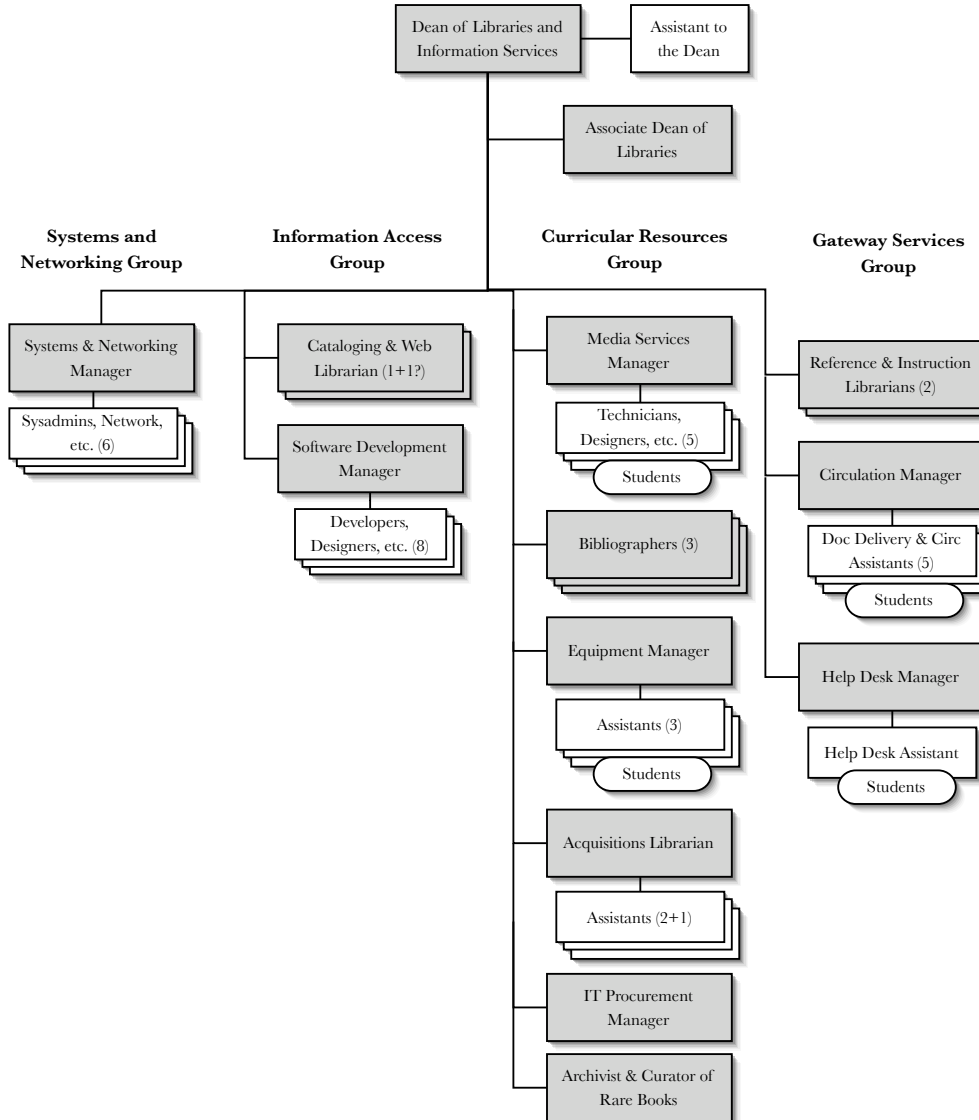
This plan is the result of a Division workshop in March 2006 on how better to organize the Division to support our strategic goals. Additionally, the library capital campaign was announced in January, and caused us to begin thinking about how the design of the new library building will support our work processes and how we will organize and manage staff during the construction period.

The functional groups in the Division are being reorganized to better support the goals set out in the strategic plan. This reorganization is the product of careful deliberation and reflects better how staff interact with users.

The Division will be arranged in four groups:

- **Systems and Networking Group**, which will retain the core staff of the old systems and networking group, and focus on infrastructure
- **Information Access Group**, which is newly formed from the new Cataloging & Web Librarian position(s) and the software development group, which will focus on user applications and web services
- **Curricular Resources Group**, which combines media services, equipment management, materials processing, and library liaisons to academic departments, which will function as a one-stop shop especially for faculty services
- **Gateway Services Group**, which combines reference, instruction, circulation, and the Computing Help Desk, which will function as the “front door” to the Division’s services

Division of Information Services De Vries College



Division of Information Services Organizational Chart, revised

The organizational chart on the previous page depicts the new arrangement. Several expected enlargements of the staff in the near future are also indicated.

This arrangement better reflects a number of existing and emerging work relationships. Although there has been some concern about splintering library staff and technical staff, it is expected that cross-group work relationships will continue and that the better integration of library and technical staff with each other will result in more cohesive efforts in providing services to users.

The Division is managed by the Dean, who reports directly to the College President. Positions in grey on the organizational chart are considered managerial positions that are hired by and report directly to the Dean. Managerial positions hire and evaluate the staff and students below them. Additionally, the Associate Dean of Libraries exists as a first-among-peers within the librarian staff and assists the Dean with the hiring and evaluation of librarians and other administrative duties including budgeting.

Nine positions require professional librarians with the master's degree in library science or equivalent:

- Bibliographer for the Fine Arts, Languages, and Humanities
- Bibliographer for the Social Sciences
- Bibliographer for the Natural Sciences
- Reference and Instruction Librarians (2)
- Acquisitions Librarian
- Cataloging and Web Librarian
- Archivist and Curator of Rare Books (half-time position)
- Associate Dean of Libraries

3.1 Job Description: Bibliographer for the Natural Sciences

3.1.1 Job Summary

The Bibliographer for the Natural Sciences engages in collection development for and outreach to the academic departments of the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

3.1.2 Supervision

The Bibliographer reports to the Dean of Libraries and Information Science. This position does not supervise others.

3.1.3 Duties and Responsibilities

- Engages in collection development for natural sciences, including creating collection development policies, supervising the materials budget for the natural sciences collection, and weeding
- Liaises with the faculty of the departments in the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics to understand their curricular and research needs in building the collection and communicate library services and resources to them
- Provides reference service, as requested, for specialized questions in the natural sciences, as well as occasional shifts on the reference desk
- Provides bibliographic instruction, as requested, for specialized resources in the natural sciences
- Other duties as assigned

3.1.4 Qualifications

- Master of Library Science degree from an ALA-accredited institution
- Two years experience in a library; at least one year of experience in collection development or other budgetary oversight preferred
- Undergraduate or Master's degree in science, engineering, or mathematics preferred

3.1.5 Knowledge and Skills

- Understanding of the principles of collection development
- Knowledge of budget management
- Understanding of the types of resources available in the natural sciences
- Knowledge of current trends in scientific publishing including open access and journal pricing concerns

3.1.6 Working Relationships

The Bibliographer must maintain a good relationship with the faculty in the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics to understand their research and curricular needs for information and to communicate to them the resources the Library and Division offer.

The Bibliographer works closely with the Bibliographers for other subject fields, the Acquisitions Librarian, and the Associate Dean of Libraries on budgeting and materials processing issues.

The Bibliographer also works closely with the Gateway Services and Information Access groups to provide service to users requiring assistance with resources in the natural sciences.

3.1.7 Evaluation

This position is subject to a six-month evaluation after initial hiring and annually from the date of hire thereafter. Evaluations will be conducted by the Associate Dean and the Dean and the employee should submit evidence of the work completed during the period according to the College Faculty Handbook. At the second year, the employee becomes eligible for status of expectation of continuing employment, consistent with the policies in the Handbook.

Chapter 4

Budget Plan

This represents the proposed budget for the Division of Information Services for FY2007, beginning in September 2006.

Budget FY07, proposed

Expenditures	4,499,994
Materials	1,003,759
Natural Sciences	404,234
Social Sciences	299,975
Humanities & Fine Arts	269,345
Reference	30,205
Personnel	3,028,795
Salaries & Wages	2,547,895
Benefits	456,300
Professional development	24,600
Services	137,820
Interlibrary loan	122,350
Consortial fees	5,600
Processing & binding	7,650
Conservation	2,220
Technology	329,620
Computing hardware	75,300
Software licensing	152,120
Maintenance fees	35,250
Office machines	40,050
Supplies & consumables	26,900

Income	4,500,716
Endowments	34,900
Archives endowment	25,500
Rare books endowment	9,400
Fines & Fees	6,500
Allocated by College	4,459,316

Chapter 5

Business Plan: Wiki Subject Guides

5.1 Project Summary and Goal

The reference librarians and bibliographers create and maintain subject guides for students and faculty, for each of the academic programs and often specifically for particular classes. Librarians often have limited time to update these and do so only once per term (at most). Additionally, it is to be expected that faculty and students also often find additional items that could be added to these subject guides that would be useful for their colleagues, but there is no formal way to submit these for inclusion in the subject guides.

I propose that we institute a wiki—a software application for editable web pages—for subject guides. The guides can be created and periodically updated and weeded by librarians, but students and faculty can also easily add items as they find them. This will keep them more up-to-date, have wider coverage, and encourage scholarly collaboration.

5.2 Project Plan

The project can be implemented using internal staff (the Cataloging and Web Librarian, a developer, and general library staff for user testing) and without purchasing software. The project will proceed according to the following plan:

1. Create a list of technical requirements of the system and select an

open-source wiki software package that meets those requirements.

2. Install a test wiki system.
3. Configure the design of the wiki to integrate it into the website.
4. Copy the currently available subject guides to the wiki.
5. Test the wiki with internal staff and solicit suggestions for its design and functionality.
6. Replace the current subject guide pages with the wiki.
7. Monitor use over 1–3 months and make adjustments as necessary.
8. Publicize new subject guides.

5.3 Evaluation Plan

This approach uses library staff for user testing, and then uses a “soft launch” approach, implementing the new subject guides before promoting them with the user population. This gives users time to discover the new features, during which we can monitor the usage patterns and take in user suggestions. When we have adjusted the system adequately, then we will publicize its availability and new functionality to faculty and students.

We will closely monitor usage (hits, number of items added) and user satisfaction (through a feedback form) during the soft launch period and especially after the new system is publicized.

5.4 Conclusion

This project can implement new software to make a traditional library service more useful and relevant at relatively little cost.