Questions and Answers from the University Librarian
April 30, 2012

Why re-envision the Library?
Today the libraries that report to me offer a full range of services in over 20 locations regardless of size, staffing, or use. This has become increasingly difficult to sustain as our staff has shrunk by over 70 positions (one fifth of our people). Two self-study teams of library professionals, drawn broadly from these libraries, have re-envisioned how the Library can add value for the Berkeley community. Their work shows us how to make the support of teaching and research the Library’s top priority by changing the mix of skills and by concentrating library staff where they can deliver a better level of service.

All the models recommended by the self-study teams call for the transformation of library space. The plan is to consolidate libraries where this results in better service overall, and to let some libraries that now report to me evolve into departmental libraries, reading rooms, or other places for faculty-student interaction, according to the priorities of the deans and chairs. The Library can help to facilitate these transitions.

Where are the self-study reports?
There is more information available on the Library’s self study that was conducted to prepare for a campus-wide discussion, including an Executive Summary of the Re-envisioning Initiative and the reports and recommendations of the self-study teams.

Is this Operational Excellence (OE) in another guise?
We all cope with the steep fall in public funding across campus and OE has changed the administrative side of the Library and will change it in years ahead. But Re-envisioning is our plan, not that of a consultant. It focuses on the expertise of our staff and the services they provide in support of the Library’s academic mission. Peer institutions, such as Stanford and Harvard and other UCs, are making similar re-organizations in order to put service and expertise first.

Why place the burden on the Operations budget? Can’t we tap Collections?
It would be possible to run the existing 25 libraries in traditional ways by permanently re-directing to operations up to half the collections funds used to acquire books, journals and other materials in print or digital formats. I feel that this is not the best solution because broad and deep collections are essential to the research and teaching mission of the University. The Library will be looking carefully at the survey input and listening to all who have an opinion on this matter before a final decision is made.

Can I find the future of a library that I care about by reading the work done to date?
No, the teams were told to make no plans for any particular library and none pop up, even as examples. We do know that some configurations will be changed in a
different process (e.g. The Education/Psychology Library and Public Health Library are being examined by a space planning committee in response to closing Tolman Hall).

Won’t your ideas weaken services?
The Library believes it can provide excellent services with reduced staffing if we replace the current service model that has escaped review for decades. Brainstorming new ways to offer these services, the Library focused on coherence and seamlessness of services, and shifting our people to better support growing demands for interdisciplinary research and digital resources. We want to lift some managerial and administrative duties from our academic personnel and allow for greater collaboration, cross-training, and coverage in each library that reports to me.

What is the role of the librarian in a re-envisioned library?
Professionally-trained library staff, such as librarians and archivists, build library collections, make those resources discoverable, and teach individuals and groups how to draw upon library resources for their research, teaching, and learning. Librarians also offer an important perspective for the development of online education, open access, fair use, mass digitization, and data curation. The Library’s self-study suggested that subject knowledge, language skills, instructional expertise, and professional engagement in emerging issues are critical in order for the Library to support the research and teaching mission of the University.

What is the role of library staff?
Library staff are essential in supporting core library services including access to collections, acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, instruction, reference, reserves, and web services. A new model with fewer service points would make staffing more sustainable and reliable, as each location would have adequate staff to cross-train and back-up people on vacation, out sick, etc.

What are the proposed service models?

What are the issues around new service models recommended by the self-study?

Full-Service Libraries Model

Full-Service Libraries, can offer long hours, large collections that integrate related disciplines, a full range of services, and a variety of individual and group study spaces. This model would mean fewer total locations (9) compared to the alternative model (15), but all nine locations would be full-service libraries. This model would require fundamental changes in the operations of 16 libraries and consolidations across the current 25 service locations.

Pros:
- Provides familiar and consistent services across all libraries.
- Allows more full-service libraries than the other model, so people are more likely to have a full-service library nearby.
Pros:
- Provides longer full-service hours in more locations than many disciplines receive now.
- Synergies from consolidation might benefit many whose studies are interdisciplinary – people may need to visit fewer libraries to get the material they need.
- People would have the convenience of deeper and broader staff expertise on hand.
- With fewer service points to staff, there would be more flexibility to develop new and enhanced services.
- Easier to supervise and manage than the other model.
- Offers a larger community for backup and support within each library.
- With more standardization, can allow customization for large disciplinary groups.
- Maximizes the use of off-campus storage while NRLF still has space for our materials.
- Frees up space for other departmental or campus uses.

Cons:
- May require the most change to infrastructure and be the most expensive to implement (for both the one-time costs of capital improvements and collections consolidations).
- Fewer circulation points mean some people may have to travel farther to check out material.
- Could result in less seating for study space.
- Less shelf space would require a greater reduction in on-campus collections.
- May be seen as diminishing contact and relationships with some academic departments.
- There may not be enough space for all the required staff in each library.

**Hub-and-Cluster Libraries Model**

Several large “Hub” libraries, each associated with a cluster of smaller “circulation-only” libraries. Each Hub library would offer long hours, large collections that integrate related disciplines, a full range of services, and a variety of individual and group study spaces. Circulation-only libraries would have reduced hours, smaller collections, and limited services. This model would mean more total locations (15) compared to the alternative model (9), but only six of the locations would be Hubs/full-service libraries while the remaining nine would be limited circulation-only libraries. This model would require 10 fundamental changes in local operations with consolidations across the current 25 service locations.

Pros:
- People may not have to travel as far to checkout materials since there will be more circulation points.
- Retains more shelf space for print collections, lowering the probability that
people would have to request print from storage.

- Retains more seating for study space.
- May be seen as maintaining closer relationships with academic departments.
- Requires less physical change and would be less expensive to implement.

Cons:

- People may have to travel farther for the full range of services as more circulation points mean fewer full-service locations.
- Seems harder for people to understand what to expect.
- More complicated to supervise and manage than full-service libraries.
- May require more standardization but be more difficult to standardize.
- Separates some subject librarians from their collections.
- There are concerns that circulation-only libraries may not be sustainable and may not offer a future of excellent service.
- Growing needs from academic departments for central campus space might force future closures of circulation-only libraries.

These models are complex, but hardly exhaustive . . . aren’t there hybrids or transitional solutions to be considered?

Yes, and we have thought of some and expect our users to have others:

- Electronic Reading Rooms that would have computers, Wi-Fi, and study spaces but no print collections; these could be located near departments and require minimal staffing.
- On-Campus Collection Storage that could house print collections for on-campus paging (as we now page from the NRLF); these spaces could be short-term as part of a transition period, or serve a long-term need for quick paging of medium use collections.

How can I offer my comments?

A Library Survey going out this week will broaden the conversation about what should matter most when we ask libraries to help create, share, and preserve the work of the academy. Your answers to these questions will guide face-to-face discussions with faculty and students and shape the plan we choose. Your thoughts can also be shared with the Library by sending an email to future@library.berkeley.edu.

Campus comments will be reviewed and will guide the Library’s decisions. These will be outlined in an "Outcome Letter" from me by fall 2012. Implementation will begin during the fall semester and require several years to fully accomplish. We expect and allow for feedback and course correction during all of this time.

Tom Leonard
University Librarian
Professor, Graduate School of Journalism