

Guiding Text

for the

Integration of ITS Services with the Library in the Creation of an Information Commons

March 31, 2005

Project Goal & Objective: Develop a PSU 'Information Common;' The co-location and integration of the ITS Help Desk and academic technology support with services in Lamson Library by fall 2006.

Information Commons Definition: Student- and faculty-centered integration of information, technology and learning.

Objectives

- Integrate Library and ITS Help Desk and academic technology services.
- Expand technology support for evenings and weekends.
- Develop models for multimedia support where students, faculty and staff can collaborate around research, synthesis and presentation of information
- Develop lab classroom for assisting faculty to integrate library resources and technology into the curriculum

Rationale: The trend to establish an Information Common at many institutions reflects the need to provide an environment that brings together the strengths of library services with rapidly changing technology in an effort to provide a learning space that meets the learning, collaboration, and research needs of students and faculty. One could argue that the entire institution is a dedicated learning space, but what makes the information commons concept unique is the specific focus of melding innovative technologies and services with research needs. It commits institutional resources to an effort that recognizes change is the only constant and that there is a need for continuous improvement as the institution affects and reacts to the needs of the broad community. For Plymouth, an Information Commons should provide virtual and in-person assistance to students in their efforts to learn beyond the classroom. In a sense this is not new, rather it is absolutely consistent with Plymouth's long history of dedication to service. The re-thinking and melding of technology and support systems, along with library services, makes sense for our community. The two initial organizations with tremendous potential to complement one another and meet these needs are the Library and Information Technology. The Information Common will bring the best of both together to build upon Plymouth's traditions of commitment to service and continue our efforts to be a leading regional University.

Project Sponsors: President Wharton, Vice President & Provost Barry, and Vice President Bill Crangle

Stakeholders: Undergrads, grad students, adult learners, Graduate Studies Program, faculty, library

faculty and staff, ITS staff, student workers, etc.

Project Managers & Recommended Team Members:

Project Managers: Dwight Fischer (ITS) and Elaine Allard (Library)
(New Library Director will assume a leadership role on the Project Team)

Team Members will be volunteers from the Library faculty and staff, ITS, students and faculty.

Resources Required:

Project Team Commitment: This project is expected to last 15-20 months, leading to a new and integrated Library/ITS service. The project team (8-10 people) will include members of the Library, ITS, students and faculty. It is also expected that the project team will oversee several sub-teams assigned to deliver components of the project. The project team has responsibility for implementation, management of the schedule, communication, coordination of tasks, policy review, space planning and more. It is expected that this effort will require approximately 20% of their time for the duration of the project.

Space planner and/or architect: An assessment of space needs and modifications to existing library space and infrastructure has yet to be done. Space planning can only be done after integrated service model is fleshed out by the Project Team.

Organizational consultant: The melding of two distinct cultures is critical to the success of this project. Introduction of several ITS units into the library, acknowledging very different cultures, management styles, service approaches and work styles will cause inevitable conflict. It is very important to recognize this up front and do some organizational planning around goals and objectives, approach to the project, communication and decision making. (approx. \$4-6,000, early in project)

Decision Making: An endeavor of this magnitude will require several levels of decision making:

Executive: High level decisions on overall strategy and project scope, space renovations, personnel changes, overall project budget and timeline. (President's Cabinet)

Project Management: Coordination of work plans, space planning, service delivery, project budget expenditures and oversight of sub-teams. Project Team consults with both Library and ITS on findings and overall recommendations, which will be presented to the Executive team for approval.

Project Teams: Primary personnel assigned to develop the information commons model and implement the service model.

Additional Teams: Working groups, standing and ad hoc teams, will be formed to address the planning, policy and implementation needs of the service delivery model that is developed.

Conflict Resolution: Any project of this scope, particularly when it involves two quality service organizations with different approaches to service, will lead to some conflict. Conflict is a healthy component of organizational change. However, it also needs to be managed effectively. The Project Managers will work to develop a set of process guidelines to manage most levels of conflict.

However, when conflict cannot be managed at the Project team level, or it is of a fundamental nature in regards to the scope of the project, the Project Sponsors will be the final resolution point.

Project Schedule: The target for implementation by August 2006.

A more detailed project schedule will be developed by the Project Team. It will include the following elements:

- Campus announcement of Project
- Team formation and development of working norms
- Development of the integrated services model
- Space Planning
- Development of Customer Service Model
- Training of Library & ITS service providers
- Renovations
- Move of ITS Services

Deliverables: A student-centered, service-oriented information commons in the Library. A central, integrated support structure for Library and IT services (Help Desk, academic technology support, multimedia and faculty training for WebCT)

Assumptions:

- We will need to develop a process that is open to suggestion on policy, engages feedback and allows for modification to meet new needs.
- This project will require significant support and oversight by the Cabinet.
- More and more non-traditional students will be coming to campus during evenings and weekends due to the increased enrollment in Graduate programs and planned evening division
- More technology integration and services will increase the gate count of the library.
- Students don't know the difference in what we do. Access to the professional expertise and knowledge of both the Library and ITS in a common location is in their best interest.
- This project is intended to not only co-locate, but integrate and/or develop new services to meet the changing needs of students and faculty.
- At some point, it is possible that roles, responsibilities and organizational structure may change to meet the needs of the information commons.
- The integration of services may provide opportunities to cross train Library and ITS staff to provide greater support to students.
- Customer service is a central component of the integrated service. Combined and continual training is vital for maintaining excellent customer service.
- There may be opportunities to develop new services. Examples include workshops and support on plagiarism, copyright, academic and multimedia support around electronic and print resources
- A driver of this project, albeit not a primary factor but still important, is the need for space in Hyde

Hall. The only way that space (currently where Help Desk and The Learning Center are) is freed up for other use is to vacate it completely. That means all those current inhabitants will need to either move to the library or elsewhere.

Challenges

- This project is being considered at a particularly challenging time for the library with the loss of their director and the search underway for a replacement.
- ITS is struggling to manage explosive growth in support for academic and online classroom technology. They, too, have lost a leader.
- The addition in the Library of an Archives Special Collection Project is happening concurrently. Space planning should look at the overall use of space in the library for both projects.
- Extension of IT support beyond the 5 normal working days will challenge current staffing levels and budgets.
- ITS is currently spread over many areas on campus. The Help Desk needs to be tightly integrated and communicative with Systems and MIS. Migration of Help Desk across campus, leaving the latter two groups in Hyde, will need to be addressed.
- Greater than any other challenge, is the melding of two distinct cultures.
- Support for this effort by both organizations is vital to its success.

Risks:

- The budget requirements for renovations may be more than we think.
- The integration of two distinct cultures and work styles has potential to cause conflict.
- Failure to consider and properly fund the physical and environmental aspects of any changes to the building will diminish the beauty, functionality and air quality of the library.
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Communication Plan:

- The Cabinet will be apprised at monthly extended cabinet meetings and via email as warranted.
- The Library and ITS staff will be apprised of the Project via weekly emails and periodic face-to-face meetings with the Project team.
- The Campus will be provided periodic project updates via Plymouth Week and myPlymouth announcements.

Expense Budget: It is very early to develop an accurate budget. However, since this is time for budget planning for FY06, the following 'guestimate' is based on some loose assumptions.

Early Cost Estimates

ESTIMATE

Ongoing Support for Information Commons

True support costs for maintaining an information commons are yet to be determined. However, ongoing costs are expected. It is prudent to review the operational budgets of the Library and ITS to identify areas for ongoing support, as well as exploring initiatives through the Tech Fee.

Signatures indicating all the above is understood and agreed to.

Updated:

Sponsor: _____ Date: _____ Sponsor: _____ Date: _____
President Wharton VP & Provost Barry

Sponsor: _____ Date: _____
VP Crangle

Project Managers _____ Date: _____ Date: _____
Elaine Allard Dwight Fischer