AN ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO ADDRESS THE TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS IN HEALTH SCIENCE LIBRARY INFORMATION IN THE '80's

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Abstract

Virginia Commonwealth University's University Library Services offers through its organizational structure an opportunity for librarians to work directly with media experts. University Library Services envisions the future librarian as an information manager, information specialist, and teacher. In joining together Technical Services, Public Services, Collection Management, Special Collections, Learning Resource Centers, Media Production Center, AV Services, TV Services, Engineering and Telecommunications, the librarian is in an environment which gives the opportunity for growth and support by media expertise.

The Medical College of Virginia was joined with Richmond Professional Institute in 1968 to form Virginia Commonwealth University. The Medical College of Virginia was founded in 1837; and Richmond Professional Institute in 1917. Since 1968, the consolidation process has moved forward.

Prior to 1981, the Tompkins-McCaw Library on the health sciences campus of VCU and the James Branch Cabell Library on the academic campus were loosely joined together organizationally. Separate from these two services was the Visual Education unit on the MCV campus. Audiovisual Services for the academic campus were housed in Cabell Library and operated separately from Visual Education on the health science campus. In 1981, University Library Services was created, joining Tompkins-McCaw Library, James Branch Cabell Library, and Visual Education. The natural outgrowth of such a reorganization brought with it personnel changes, budgetal adjustments, and realignments. However, during this adjustment stage, a great deal was learned about all the services by the members of University Library Services.

In 1982, a further step was taken, and the final reorganization occurred on July 1, 1983. This newly consolidated organization included a Business Office, Personnel Office, Planning Office, Special Assistant's Office, which are directly responsible to the Director and four divisions, each headed by an Associate Director. These four divisions are: Collection Management/Special Collections, Public Services, Technical Services, and Media Services. The four Associate Directors work together as a decision-making and project-undertaking team which develops proposals for consideration of the Director, identifies problems for discussion, and forms task forces in addressing specially assigned projects from the Director.

Because of the closeness of the operation of this organization, the necessary media support, i.e., telecommunications, engineering, photography, television, illustration, educational technology, etc., for the future librarian, information manager, information specialist, and teacher are, in reality, set. It will take a period of time for the full advantages of this organizational structure to take place; however, its impact will most definitely be felt in the training of faculty and students in the use of the automated library information system, future computer-assisted literature searches done by faculty and students, access to databases and data banks, and an orientation to the full information services provided by University Library Services. In addition, as the electronic library emerges, training will have to take place to assure a smooth transition as the library reaches out to research labs, homes, etc. Instructional design capabilities and media production services will become more and more valuable in developing programs to teach access.

The future is very exciting with the cost of information on the line. If the university's libraries are able to organize themselves properly, automate properly, and gain support on the local, state, and Federal levels, then the information that they possess will be made available at a reasonable cost. If instead, the business world takes over the information processing, then you will pay the going rate.