Our Dream: Developing a framework for the state-of-the-art Learning Commons at UNISA’s Western Cape Region

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Branch Librarian: Cape Town

Library Technology Event 2012
Learning spaces in the 21st century need to foster discovery, innovation, and scholarship, not simply contain them. (Brown & Long, 2006)
My thoughts

• Sense of place
• ODL in a developing country
• Unemployed youth
• When the economy goes south, education goes north
• Serving two gods
• Technology without humans
• Mill’s Report on ‘Space for student personal study’ and the ‘full-time’ student
Parnell’s article on ODL costing

- Implicit reliance on students and external institutions
- Fraction of library resources and ‘other advantages’
- On-campus versus off-campus pass rate
- Drop out rate higher in ODL: research needed
- ODL is a way to reduce the costs of academic programs
- Altruism and reciprocity in partnerships
- Partnerships are seldom considered or costed
- Devise alternatives to traditional reserve collections
Important documents

• Western Cape Regional Operational regional plan 2012
  – Positive student experience
  – Student success
  – Teaching effectiveness
  – Purposeful learning

• Mills Report
  – Prescribed reading redundant
  – Arrangement with other HE institutions
  – Mobile library versus public libraries’ usage
LIBRARY STRUCTURE 2015

Deputy Director
Regional Branch Libraries (5)

Deputy Director
Facilitation of Learning & ICT Support (5)

Manager
Branch Libraries (6)

Senior Branch Librarian
Operations & Remote Services

Senior Branch Librarian
Extended Services

Senior Branch Librarian
Staff Development & Client Services

Mobile Bus Branch Librarian
Bus Driver (10)

Branch Librarian (George)
Electronic Junior Branch Librarian (George)

Branch Librarian
Branch Librarian
Branch Librarian

Branch Librarian
Lending Services

Junior Branch Librarian
Junior Branch Librarian
Junior Branch Librarian

Junior Branch Librarian
Library Commons

Prepared for UNISA Library - Cape Town branch
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• Purpose and context
• E-Library or Commons
• Lippincott’s model
• Staffing requirements
• Resources & facilities
• Internet access
• Challenges
Total estimate of above 30 000 students
Dream the impossible – Go big or stay home!
“Because of the ODL nature of Unisa, there are no boundaries” (Focus, August 2012)
Spaces are themselves agents for change. Changed spaces will change practice. (JISC, 2007)
What is in the name?

• Electronic Library
• Digital Library
• Library Commons
• Information Commons
• Knowledge Commons
• Cultural Commons
• Learning Commons
Reasons

• Signal to students in remote areas
• Competitiveness and welcoming environment
• Modular and multi-functional facility
• Optimal use of physical spaces
• Supplement the Mobile Bus
• Burden on public libraries
Reasons

• George a strategic growth point
• Equivalent on-campus services
• Guinea-pig for non-print collection
• Success rate
Lippincott’s model of evaluation

- Extensiveness
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Service quality
- Usefulness
- Equity
Lippincott’s model - modified

- Positive student experience
- Student success
- Purposeful learning
Resources & facilities

- Laptops or thin-clients
- Newspaper Lounge
- Movable tables
- Individual carrels
- Printing facilities
- Training/seminar room/board room
- Quiet study area
- Group study/discussion areas
- RFID
- Electronic smart-glass
- Wi-Fi connectivity
Staffing requirements

• Branch Librarian
• Junior Branch Librarian
  – **Strong IT skills**
  – **People skills**
  – **Willingness to serve**
  – **Unisa experience**
  – **Research methodology skills**
  – **Writing skills**
Internet Access & Supervision

- Customised Internet
- Open Educational Resources (OER)
- Open Access Resources
Planning and Implementation plans

• Planning Committee
• Stakeholders
• Needs analysis
• Hybrid and phasing out
Communication & Marketing
Challenges to the dream

- Marketing and educating about e-content
- Rented space in George
- New library in 2015 on the Parow campus
- Unavailability of prescribed books online
- Prescribed books versus reading widely
- Competent staff with technological expertise
- Internet access and supervision
- Technological support especially in George
- Ongoing software upgrades and purchases
- Loanable technology