Reorganizing for the Distributed Library

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Many university sites are geographically distributed, with more than one installation or campus at which their students can study. While this is true of university systems, such as the State University of New York, the University of Wisconsin, the California state universities, to name just a few, there are individual universities that maintain more than one campus. Some of these campuses are the location for specialized study, such as medical schools or oceanographic research centers. Other universities, though, maintain more than one general campus in the same city, providing geographically distributed access to the universities' degree programs. The Carnegie classification defines these as *urban multi-campus institutions*:

> Multicampus suburban—and urban—serving colleges were identified as multicampus if (a) they have more than one primary physical campus under the institution's exclusive control and governance, each of which provides all courses required to complete a*[n associate's]* degree, or (b) they are part of a district or system comprising multiple institutions, at any of which students can complete all requirements *[for an associate's degree*], and that are organized under one governance structure or body. Institutions were not classified as multicampus simply due to control by a single statewide governing board. Multicampus institutions may report their data as separate entities in the IPEDS system, or they may participate as a single reporting entity. (Carnegie Foundation 2010)

However, the criteria for Carnegie classifications are not consistent across the board. Only the associate's college classification includes geographic characteristics along with the type of degree granted. The category of baccalaureate colleges is based solely on degrees granted, while doctoral institutions are defined by degrees granted and the level of research conducted there. Once we recognize, however, that research universities also have the geographic structures recognized by Carnegie for associate's colleges (suburban, urban and multi-campus), a surprising number of institutions in the United States fit the definition of an urban multi-campus university, among them Fordham University, George Washington University, Arizona State University, Florida International University, and the University of Texas at San Antonio, to name just a few, each with degrees offered at all sites within the city and with libraries at each campus.

This structure, however, is barely recognized in the education or the library literature published in the US. In both cases, searching for data on such university structures leads to discussions of regional campuses offering a reduced number or level of degrees, subject-based branch campuses such as medical or law school libraries, or distance learning, rather than a multi-campus urban structure. This paper will start the discussion by identifying some of the challenges in managing multi-campus libraries as libraries redefine how their overall organization.

Libraries have had to respond to the changing demands made by the postmodern information context, a topic of considerable discussion in the library literature and at conferences for many years now. This

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sparked the trend toward the deconstruction of the traditional department-by-function structure and re-organization according to a fresh understanding of library services oriented toward user needs. The urban multi-campus library adds another layer to the exploration of some of the ongoing issues involved in deconstructing traditional library organizational structures and reinventing library management.

Methodology

This is a pilot study in an ongoing project. As a pilot study, the objective is to test the usefulness of the initial problematic and to identify necessary improvements in the design of the research program. (Persaud 2010). The goal of this particular pilot study, structured as a case study, is to describe the process of one particular university library as it integrated its various library installations while experimenting with changes in traditional departments.

This methodological structure itself has implications for library research. Librarians' depreciation of their own research, as exemplified in the scornful "how we did it good" rubric, obscures the value of case study research. The historic turn to various forms of quantitative analysis, with its techniques of drawing inferences from large populations, led to doubts about the value of analyzing individual situations (Persaud 2010). In contrast, case studies are one of the most popular approaches to business and management research in apparent recognition of the value of this approach to the analysis of organizations. It persists as a method of social science research (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2009). One purpose of this study then is to recuperate case study research for problem solving in libraries. As academic libraries experiment with reorganizing out of our traditional functional silos, a case study approach will be useful to the field by identifying the nature of these organizational experiments, the elements of the organization and their role in change, and issues that led to successes, failures, and new attempts. As the elements of form case study methodologies are detailed they will be applied to the formalization of "how we did it good" research.

In this context, it is necessary to identify purpose of the research to the organization. Libraries are experimenting with changes in organization. Most of these changes are meant as responses to radical changes in the materials, processing needs and user access systems in libraries. Other gaps and issues exist,

of course. In this case these were identified through participation in the organizational changes conducted in my university library. The research question comes out of lived problems: how can we better coordinate or integrate the two libraries in question.

A Geographically Dispersed University and Library

The University of Texas at San Antonio has two teaching campuses. One, recently renamed the Main Campus, is on the outer loop of the city. It houses the university administration, and is the primary home for the Colleges of Engineering, Liberal and Fine Arts, Sciences, and Business. All of those colleges except Engineering have a presence via scheduled classes on the Downtown Campus and with representation on the Downtown Council. The campus, and the council, are headed by a vice-provost. The College of Architecture and the College of Public Policy are located entirely Downtown. The College of Education and Human Development is split between the two campuses, with their departments of Counseling and Educational Psychology on the Downtown Campus. At least one department in the College of Liberal and Fine Arts, the Department of Political Science, has divided the department between the two campuses, with a significant percentage of their faculty based in downtown offices. No distinction is made on department pages between faculty Downtown and faculty on the Main campus. In most of the official organization of the university, no distinction is made in services, degrees or enrollment between the campuses. In practice, justified by the smaller enrollment, some student, staff and faculty services (ID card services, the computer store, the bookstore, among others) have shorter hours Downtown and/or have administrators without regular Downtown hours.

Total student enrollment at UTSA is 30,000; over 6000 are enrolled in at least one course on the Downtown Campus. At the same time, thirty-three percent of the university's graduate students are enrolled downtown. At least 10 graduate degrees, at both the masters and doctoral levels, are offered by three colleges exclusively at the Downtown campus. Since university web pages do not identify degrees by campus, it is difficult to determine how many other degrees (in Education for example) can be completed on the Downtown Campus. Students are accepted to the university as a whole, and any student can enroll in courses on either campus; that is, there is no distinction in enrollment between the two campuses. With

fewer courses offered downtown, it is more common for Downtown undergraduate students to also take classes on the Main campus. The campuses are about 15 miles apart via the interstate highway, and transportation between the two campuses is provided by the city's public transit system. In terms of fundamental organization, then, this is one university geographically distributed in its city.
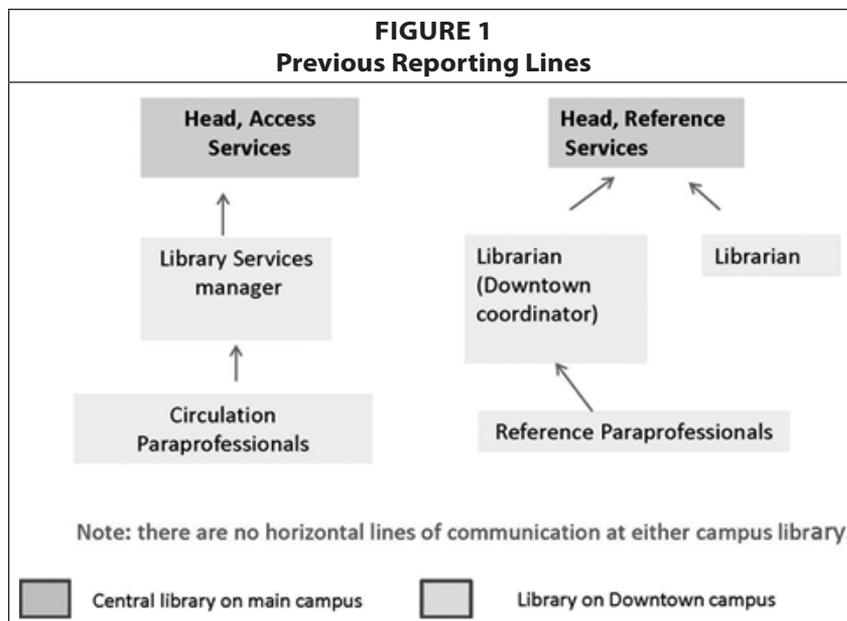
A Geographically Dispersed Library

The university libraries operate on the same system, though it is possible that the libraries in fact lead the university in figuring out how to integrate the two installations. This integration has taken various forms over the years. The structure as it existed in 2008 and the structure that was created in 2009 are analyzed below, and the implications of that current structure are analyzed in the context of the dissolution of traditional library departments.
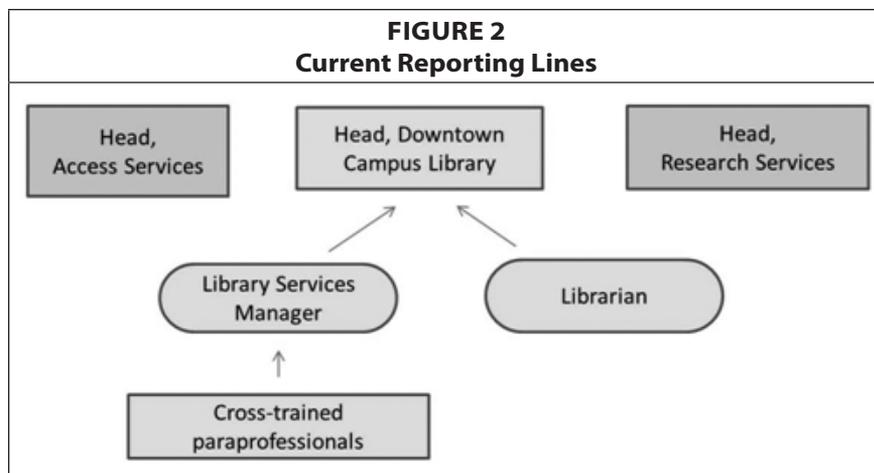
The administrative structure of the Downtown Campus library has had several iterations. By 2008, in a structure integrated with the library on the Main Campus (known as the John Peace Library, or JPL), the reference librarians reported to the head of reference (based on the main campus) while the circulation staff and the library services manager reported to the head of access services, also on the main campus. Three librarians were based Downtown, with one acting as coordinator. The coordinator reported to the head of reference. The reference paraprofessionals re-

ported to the coordinator. (Fig. 1)

While this structure appears to be a parallel structure, with all reference librarians reporting to the head of reference, it does not take into account either distance or the presence of issues local to the Downtown campus. No one actually in the Downtown library had the authority to make decisions about that library's services. Originally, while the position of head of reference was not filled, the downtown reference coordinator reported to the assistant dean for public services, who had created the coordinator position. That dean met regularly with the coordinator, and they worked together on projects that benefited the Downtown Library: providing additional computers, for example, and additional shelving. That investment in the coordinator position, however, was lost when a head of reference was hired and later when the assistant dean left the university. After her departure, the Downtown reference coordinator reported to the head of reference services, but as is often the case when there is a change in administration, the original understanding of the relationship between positions did not endure. The Downtown reference coordinator did not have the authority to take care of issues that arose, but no one else was really in charge of them either. Ambiguities persisted, with some confusion about whether the librarians at the Downtown library reported to the coordinator or to the head of reference on the main campus. Busy with the responsibilities of the position at the larger library, the new head of reference was not regularly scheduled to spend time at the Downtown Library. The same was true of the head of access services. The Downtown coordinator had responsibilities but little or no decision-making power, and was not present at policy discussions by the library administration, which was entirely based on the Main Campus.

The underlying philosophy of this structure was constructed as a positive one: that just as it was all one university, it was all one library. In practice, though, problems arose that can be seen as structural. Without structured representation, the Downtown Library was characterized by its distance and its secondary location in the administration structure.

FIGURE 1
Previous Reporting Lines

Head, Access Services

Head, Reference Services

Library Services manager

Librarian (Downtown coordinator)

Librarian

Circulation Paraprofessionals

Reference Paraprofessionals

Note: there are no horizontal lines of communication at either campus library

Central library on main campus   Library on Downtown campus

FIGURE 2
Current Reporting Lines

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and circulation staff belonging to the same department and reporting to the same supervisors. In this model, the integration of the two libraries happens on a couple of levels. First, the head of the Downtown Library has equal status in the administration with other department heads and speaks for the Downtown library from the initial stage of policy formation. This helps avoid situations in which policy is decided in the context of the larger library and only then adapted for the Downtown installation.

That presence at the beginning of the policy formation process also means that staff members from the Downtown library have been included in teams created to develop processes and policies. The extra burden of traveling to the main campus for meetings is at least partially offset by a sense of participation and of representing their library. Travel is still largely, though not exclusively, from the Downtown Campus to the Main campus, moving one person instead of several. This became an issue only after the university's contract with the city bus system was allowed to lapse, and no free transportation between campuses currently exists.

A Reorganization

In 2009, a new dean of libraries, committed to creating an administration that could power the profound changes needed by the library, began reorganizing the library administration. Among other changes at the initial stage, the dean created the position of head of the Downtown Campus library. This position is at the same level as the head of access services, of reference services, and other library departments such as cataloging and acquisitions. Along with other department heads, the person in this position sits on the Library Management Team. Thus the Downtown Library, in this administrative structure, has representation at the level of policy making.

Creating the position of head meant redefining the Downtown Library as a department, just as reference (since renamed Research Services), Access Services, etc. are departments. So, as illustrated in Fig. 2, everyone at the Downtown Campus Library now reports to its head. All paraprofessionals report to the Library Services Manager, and the manager and the librarian/subject specialist report to the head of the department. The paraprofessionals were cross-trained, and their identification gradually shifted away from "reference" and "circulation." This cross-training is seen as modeling similar changes about to take place at JPL. It does however mean that the organization downtown cuts across the traditional department structure, with what were reference

Hybrid Structures

As can be seen in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, we are part way through a redefinition of the administrative structure of the library. The Downtown Library now has

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FIGURE 3
Previous Reporting Lines

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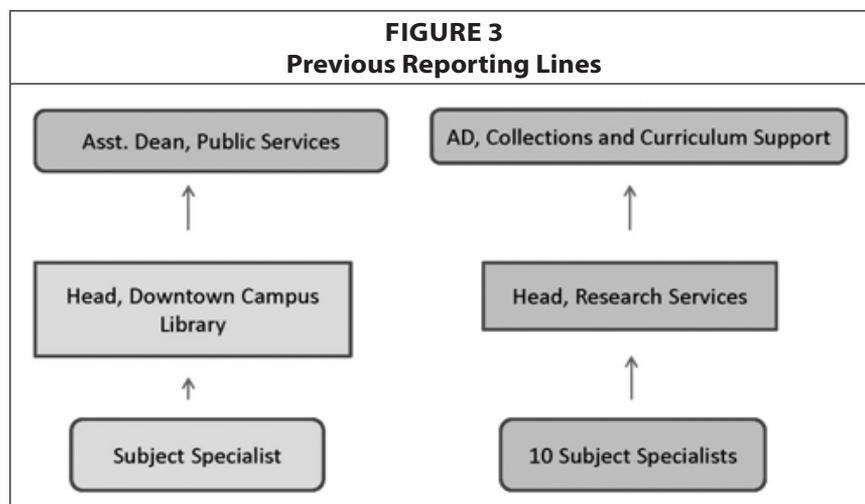
the status of a department, and is using it to initiate changes that are easier to try out in a smaller environment, such as cross training desk staff. It is now represented in a range of teams and committees. In the main library, the boundaries between the service desks have recently become blurred as well, as administration of the Info Desk, now staffed almost entirely by paraprofessionals, and the Front (circulation) Desk fall under the management of the head of access services. Changes blurring other traditional department boundaries are also underway. The former Cataloging Department is now dealing with collection maintenance as well as electronic resources. Acquisitions now deals with all types of acquisitions, include interlibrary loan.

We still need to find ways to make other departmental boundaries more porous. As can be seen in Figs. 2 and 3, there are still no institutional channels that run horizontally among the departments of access services, downtown and research services. While there are subject specialists in the downtown library, they do not belong to the department of research services. There are two monthly meetings, one for collection development and one for instruction, in which the Downtown librarians participate. But many, if not most, projects that reach out to faculty, embed librarians in university programs, or kick off new approaches to teaching are discussed within the confines of Research Services departmental meetings, which other librarians do not attend. Thus many of these projects are completely unknown to the Downtown librarians unless they are mentioned in other contexts. In fact, as illustrated in Fig. 3, Access Services and the Downtown Library heads report to the assistant dean for Public Services, while Research Services reports to the assistant dean for Collections and Curriculum Support. The departments are in different divisions.

The current structure does allow for a degree of autonomy for the Downtown Library, which has been given the mandate to design services that support Downtown students and faculty. That however moves us away from integration. And what becomes clear is that administrative structures are in fact relationships in a state of ongoing negotiation. The pre-2008 breakdown of support for the Downtown reference coordinator after the departure of the then assistant dean for

public services was due to the end of one relationship and the lack of a new one, which would have had to be instigated by the new head of reference. Cooperative work between the Downtown and Research Services departments will have to be negotiated personally between the department heads (or assistance deans) until we can define structures for joint work between departments. While one possibility is the establishment of cross-departmental teams, there are only two librarians Downtown, and participation in more than one or two such teams might cause problems with workload. So in addition to the lack of ongoing structures of cooperation, size appears to create limits to interdepartmental cooperative projects.

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