Moving Beyond the Org Chart: Library and IT Collaboration for Course Design and Support

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Overview

College courses are complicated productions. Creation and management of a course can benefit from the input of a range of educational professionals working in partnership with faculty. Among these professionals are librarians with academic discipline specialties (subject librarians) and learning technologists. New opportunities to leverage the academic subject expertise of librarians, combined with an ever richer universe of curricular content from library databases and media collections and feature-rich learning technologies, such as learning management systems (LMSs), have all expanded the need to coordinate library and information technology (IT) services for faculty. Growing demand for seamless support for our users requires collaboration and communication between library and technology staff.

Library services and library content, such as course readings, subject research guides, and instructional media, are increasingly integrated with and delivered through the LMS. Librarians play an active role in collaborating with instructors to design class assignments, often interacting with students through LMS tools such as discussion boards, wikis, and blogs.

In this research bulletin we describe a Dartmouth College pilot project to provide faculty with a gateway to course design and delivery services. The Team Response for Instructional Planning (TRIP) project developed out of recognizing the need for these integrated services. TRIP is situated within a decentralized faculty support and service environment, a model similar at many institutions. Subject librarians at Dartmouth have long been one of the faculty's first lines of contact with curricular and research support. IT support has developed over the past two decades, though rarely in tandem with the librarians' existing collaboration and sometimes outside of the central IT organization altogether. Until Curricular Computing (a department within the college's Computing Services) was relocated within the library in 2000, communication between the library and IT staff who were all providing complementary services to faculty for their teaching and research needs was primarily at the personal or grassroots level only.

TRIP comprises five staff members from Dartmouth's Computing Services, library, and Dean of Faculty divisions. The library is represented by its director of education and outreach, its director of research and instruction services, and its director of the Jones Media Center. Computing Services is represented by a senior learning technologist from its Curricular Computing division. The Arts and Humanities Resource Center (AHRC), currently reporting to the associate dean of faculty for the humanities, is represented by its director. The directors of Education and Outreach and the AHRC are both on the executive team of the Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning (DCAL).

Institutions have diverse responses to the need for coordinated course development and support services—if, in fact, this need is even recognized. Regardless of the existing administrative structure, it is likely that the organizational chart neither accurately reflects nor swiftly adapts to the evolving needs of faculty for course support. Reorganizing and merging are difficult, drawn-out processes under the best of circumstances.

Changes in both curricular and research technology, and the attendant growth of hybrid and online learning, have restructured the course design process. Librarians and technology staff working at the front lines of faculty support need to discover flexible and resilient processes through which they can coordinate their work and collaborate on services. Outside the administrative boundaries of departments within the college or university, finding a cache of like-minded individuals committed to effective public service happens serendipitously at the individual level and evolves from there. It often will be up to the professionals working in the library and IT to self-motivate and self-organize, co-developing new structures, programs, and methods not bounded by historical precedent and ahead of structured organizational change. The TRIP team was developed from the ground up, with the recognition that the needs for coordinated services across IT and the library for course development support should not be limited by existing administrative structures.

This research bulletin should be read as an early dispatch from the field rather than a thorough evaluation of a completed project. We write as instigators and experimenters, working with a core group of colleagues on the messy business of developing new models for service and collaboration. Our conclusions are speculative, designed to generate discussion and debate rather than to offer a set of validated best practices.

Highlights

Put yourself in the shoes of a new professor. Perhaps you are an adjunct faculty member, teaching a course or two but not fully integrated into the information networks and resources of the department in which you are teaching. Or consider a graduate student, post doc, or newly minted PhD, getting ready to teach for the first time. Or maybe you are a seasoned instructor, and you finally have the time to redesign that course you've taught a number of times and would like to improve.

Until relatively recently, prepping for a new course (or redesigning an existing course) was a task that could and would be accomplished primarily on one's own. An instructor might review the existing syllabus, if one exists and is available, or consult a departmental colleague or mentor. Inputs for a course were limited to a classroom, chalkboard, course readings, overhead transparencies, and perhaps some videos that would be shown in class or put on course reserve. The central organizing instrument for the course was the syllabus.

Today, the inputs to create and run a course have expanded dramatically. The availability of the LMS, robust online library databases and research tools, Web 2.0 social networking tools, lecture capture systems, and course-related media has created new opportunities for the development and delivery of courses. Hybrid and online course delivery modalities move much of the curriculum—and a large part of the faculty/student interaction—from the classroom to the web. Rich media curricular content, once scarce, is now abundant through channels such as YouTube EDU and iTunes U. Selecting appropriate and relevant curricular media and course materials from the vast sea of available resources, both in print and in digital formats, underscores the necessity for collaboration between instructional technologists and librarians. Subject librarians' roles

as liaisons to faculty in academic departments, and librarians' experience with and understanding of print and digital resources, increase the importance of collaboration in the course planning process. New options for active learning, such as the use of social networks or Web 2.0 tools to accomplish course objectives (Google Docs or VoiceThread, blogs, and Twitter, to name just a few), create new opportunities and demands to integrate a learning technologist into the course planning process.

Increasingly, faculty members require a team of learning specialists from the library, IT, and elsewhere to partner with them in designing, developing, and even delivering a course. Learning technologists in academic computing centers provide training on the LMS and work directly with instructors on effective course design. Subject librarians work with instructors to provide access to course readings, design student research assignments, and plan and deliver teaching sessions on the use of library databases and effective research strategies. Media professionals, whether based in the academic library or a computing division, work with faculty to digitize course materials and make the resources available for students in the LMS. All of these tasks require close collaboration and coordination among faculty, library staff, and IT professionals.

Typical Models of Service Coordination for Faculty Teaching Support

There exist a wide range of institutional responses to the need for coordinated course development and support services. Put on a continuum, these responses range from fully integrated teaching/course development centers to fully distributed and disaggregated support units.

A fully integrated teaching/course development center is likely to provide a physical space that houses learning designers, librarians, and media professionals. Faculty members can receive in one place a range of services including course design consulting, collaboration with a librarian on curricular materials selection, media/article digitization and scanning, and LMS/technology training. Some teaching centers run and support the institution's LMS; some offer lecture capture services and support. Faculty development efforts centered on leveraging technology for advancement in teaching may be initiated from these teaching/course development units.

Examples of integrated teaching/course development centers that closely coordinate library, technology, and course design support include Duke University's Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) (http://cit.duke.edu/), Brandeis University's Library and Teaching Services organization (http://lts.brandeis.edu/teachlearn/), and the Teaching and Learning Center at Bucknell University (http://www.bucknell.edu/x18957.xml).

At Duke, the CIT is part of the library, and although librarians do not work directly in the CIT, they collaborate closely with CIT staff. For example, subject librarians and CIT staff co-developed content for LibGuides (guides that provide recommended discipline-specific library content), which integrate directly into the relevant Blackboard course. According to Lynn O'Brien, Duke's director of academic technology and instructional services, "The CIT and the library share an assessment specialist. We routinely refer

faculty back and forth or work together on projects with them, depending on the nature of the project. We co-sponsor events and training. It's a good collaboration."[1]

In their *EDUCAUSE Review* article "Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts: The Integrated IT/Library Organization,"[2] Chris Ferguson and his co-authors enumerate four main benefits of integration:

- Teaching and learning services for both faculty and students are increasingly created for and delivered through the web.

- Institutions can capture synergies of web and technology-enabled library and IT support services by combining the infrastructure to support these services.

- Merged library/IT organizations allow greater flexibility, visibility, and opportunities for strategic leadership within their parent institutions.

- Competition for scarce institutional resources can be reduced, as a shared library/IT mission and organizational structure supports strategic collaboration and investments.

According to Bonnie Oldham and Diane Skorina, "Only through collaboration will librarians and instructional technologists be able to effectively serve the needs of students and faculty in the 21st-century educational framework in which online elements mold seamlessly with face-to-face teaching and learning."[3] Librarian and learning technologist collaborations do not need to follow reporting structures or organizational arrangements.

Dartmouth Library/IT Model for Course Design and Support

At Dartmouth College, the model of delivering library and computing services for faculty course development is decentralized, illustrated by the makeup of TRIP's membership. Subject librarians focus on research and curricular support to faculty and students as well as on the development and maintenance of library collections, both print and digital. The librarians are housed in various subject-specific libraries across campus. Learning technologists report through Computing Services, within the Department of Curricular Computing, and are housed within the library. Additional support and resources for course design and development are provided by the AHRC, located outside the library, and the Jones Media Center, part of and located within the library.

All of the various units and professionals who partner with faculty for course development and design intersect at our DCAL, which assumes primary responsibility for ongoing faculty development and the fostering of innovative and student-centered courses and learning opportunities at the college. The director of DCAL is a senior member of the faculty appointed to a three-year term. The director and the DCAL executive team determine the center's programming and services.

While reporting lines for library and computing staff do not run through DCAL, librarians and learning technologists do serve on the DCAL executive team, and they work with DCAL's leadership to plan and offer faculty development institutes, workshops, and talks, as well as to bring in outside speakers. One example of a DCAL event is an annual Active

Learning Institute, a two-day intensive workshop where faculty, librarians, and curricular technologists come together to discuss and develop new skills and techniques around course development, assessment, and advanced classroom pedagogies.

Description of the TRIP Methodology

In 2009, representatives of Curricular Computing, the library, DCAL, and the AHRC came together to discuss ideas and methods to improve Dartmouth's current model of support for course design and delivery. We named ourselves TRIP, and we set to work to figure out how to improve coordination and collaboration of course design services within our current organizational model. We wanted a seamless model of services to drive the support we provide, rather than the decentralized structure of the administration within which we work.

Very quickly we were able to identify the pros and cons of how our institution is organized to deliver course design and development support services. This process was made simpler by placing ourselves in the position of a faculty member at the point where she would need to design, plan, and assemble a new course. A summary of the pros and cons for a non-integrated library/IT course development and support model is synthesized in Table 1.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of a Decentralized Library/IT Course Development and Support Model

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong relationships between faculty members and individual subject librarians and individual computing professionals. Faculty are able to receive course assistance at multiple points of access. Cohesive cultural orientation within library and technology departments. Flexibility and agility within library and technology departments.	Faculty required to initiate separate appointments to receive IT and library assistance for course development. Faculty are not always sure where to go to get assistance or that certain areas of support even exist. The full range of steps, deadlines, opportunities, and resources necessary to develop a technology-enhanced and library-integrated course are not fully transparent to everyone in the process. Courses become imbalanced as either strong in library resources or strong in technology/course design, depending where faculty enter the course design process.
Opportunities	**Threats**
Create a methodology that coordinates all course design steps and resources into a single process. Develop materials that enumerate and provide contact information for the milestones in the course design and development process that can be shared with faculty, made available on the web, and distributed to library and IT staff. Cross-train librarians and learning technologists in each other's course design resources.	Computing and library professionals are not uniformly or completely aware of services—or of the methods to access these services—in each other's organizations. Time-intensive services, such as digitization, acquisition of curricular materials, and training in specialized software may not be initiated in a timely fashion due to lack of awareness of existing deadlines. Decentralized structure limits the ability of librarians or IT staff to proactively work with faculty and departments for course development.

The main opportunity that emerged from the TRIP team discussions was the need to develop a written methodology that ties together the services offered by the library, computing, the AHRC, and DCAL within a timeline of milestones for course development. In this way, regardless of where contact originates, faculty can be guided smoothly and consistently through the course development process, knowing exactly whom they should contact to accomplish specific tasks prior to the start of the class.

Examples of milestones for course development include (but are not limited to):

- Work with the subject librarian to select materials and discuss curricular goals and opportunities for librarian collaboration for the course.

- Receive training on the LMS.

- Place library materials on course reserves and discuss any necessary resource purchases with one's subject librarian.

- Partner with a learning designer to develop a rich course in your LMS.

- Collaborate with a media specialist to develop a media project.

- Have media digitized, streamed, and linked to your course in the LMS.

- Plan to have your course lectures recorded and shared through your LMS.

- Contact your subject librarian to finalize plans for student research instruction sessions and course research projects.

Unpacking all the steps involved in developing a rich course—one that includes library content and services and advanced technology tools—and then placing all these steps in one document helps reveal gaps and roadblocks that faculty may experience. In our case, we learned that neither IT nor library professionals fully comprehended the extent of each other's services, much less the steps a faculty member would need to follow to access these services. One reason for this lack of understanding about services and resources outside of our own organizations is that the number and range of these services are constantly expanding. Another primary reason is the lack of a history of collaboration and real communication between the library and IT departments. Individuals within the library and IT are now developing this understanding through a grassroots desire to comprehend each other's roles.

IT and the library have been able to roll out new course design and development services as new technologies have become available. Examples of these services include presentation/lecture capture and librarian-led wiki-based research assignments. TRIP is currently developing a single document that will enumerate all services regardless of their departmental source, place those services within a process flow of milestones that faculty may follow, and provide links and contact information to access these services. This document is critical to making these resources transparent to faculty and staff alike.

A second outcome of our TRIP process has been to increase awareness of existing areas of strength across units involved in course design. Rather than working to correct weaknesses in the course design support process, it is more efficacious to build on those processes that are already working well. This approach is particularly important in the absence of any departmental reorganization. In our case, the TRIP team decided to focus on better leveraging the resources of the subject librarians, given that these librarians enjoy a long-established tradition of meeting with all new faculty. In addition to working with new faculty, subject librarians have already developed close relationships and a high degree of trust with both the departments and faculty in their academic areas through collection development, research support, and collaborative work in curricular design. Rather than create new structures, we plan to leverage these existing relationships to expand the range of communication between faculty and librarian to encompass services offered by IT staff. Librarians will not be training faculty members on the LMS but rather advocating for these services and connecting the instructor to the appropriate resources.

Many of the insights we developed for instituting a TRIP methodology of coordinated library/IT services for course design and development emerged from a pilot program we ran with a limited set of faculty. One of the main outcomes of the pilot was to clarify the opportunity to build on existing relationships between librarians and instructors to coordinate technology and media resources. Piloting a coordinated course service approach, one where faculty members met with both subject librarians and a learning technologist and worked through a checklist of course development steps, uncovered numerous areas in which the methodology could be improved. Through the pilot, for example, we realized it might be overwhelming for a faculty member to meet with their subject librarian and TRIP members from IT simultaneously, something we had initially thought would be productive. This discovery led to the development of the checklist that allows the librarian to more appropriately direct faculty to those members of TRIP, or others in the institution, who are able to help faculty realize their curricular goals.

What It Means to Higher Education

The need for coordinated curricular and technology support has run ahead of the traditional organization of higher education. Technology, in the form of the emerging ubiquity of the LMS and Web 2.0 tools, has increased possibilities for rich course design and the need for faculty training and support. These same platforms and tools also come with the potential to more closely integrate library services, databases, and expertise deeply into the course. All of the additional resources and technologies have created new opportunities for pedagogically sophisticated courses. The ability to fully realize this potential, however, rests on our ability to coordinate curricular and technology services across the organizational structures within which we operate.

Based on our experiences in working to coordinate our curricular and technology services around course design and support, we offer four takeaways to the community:

See the Problem through Faculty Eyes. Design course development and support methodology from the perspective of an instructor. In this instance, it makes sense to

develop processes, procedures, and documentation with the new or part-time instructor in mind, as this population is often starting with a high degree of motivation and relatively little knowledge about resources for course development. For a faculty member, the distinctions between the library, IT, and other units are not very salient—she needs to gather the resources and build the relationships necessary to design and run her course.

Lead from the Middle (and the Institution Should Encourage This). Recognize that the people who are actually "on the street"—librarians and technologists working directly with faculty—will need to initiate coordination around course design, development, and support. The degree to which the LMS has created a convergence of the services provided by librarians and technologists and the attendant need to coordinate these services are not obvious outside the course design process. The collaboration to develop new methodologies of faculty support around course design is not dependent on larger institutional or technical integrations, and those in the position of curricular and technological support should not wait for this unification to take place. The resources that are being offered to faculty for course development do not require any new purchases or support of additional technology platforms. Nor are librarians or learning technologists changing what they do with faculty. Rather, the stress is on coordinating these services and resources, making them more transparent to faculty and to each other, thereby promoting richer course design and a more seamless overall experience. Librarians and learning technologists should not wait to be directed to initiate these collaborations, and the leadership of the library and of computing has the opportunity to catalyze these collaborations by actively promoting (and recognizing) any efforts towards these ends.

Emphasize Building on Existing Strengths (Rather Than Filling Deficits). When library and IT learning professionals begin to view the course design and support processes and systems through "faculty eyes," the inevitable result will be a discovery of gaps. Wherever possible, endeavor to focus any enhancements on the areas that are currently working very well rather than on creating new structures, committees, or processes. For instance, if faculty and subject librarians already have in place a tradition of proactive collaboration (as is the case at Dartmouth), then this relationship can be leveraged to expand technology services.

Have a Core Team, but Strive to Be Inclusive. Organizing for collaboration across institutional departmental lines works best when the core planning team is small, cohesive, representative of all areas involved, and includes staff who enjoy a challenge. In our case, we began discussions with one person from each of the library and computing units involved in faculty course design support (a total of five people). This group already works together and has developed a strong degree of trust. Each member of the core team is knowledgeable about the resources their unit can provide for course development and is motivated to provide a better faculty experience. But we also recognize it is essential to interact and engage with our colleagues to take advantage of the larger circle of knowledge and experience within the institution.

Individual IT and library units, as well as the departments themselves, exist within a traditional institutional administrative structure that, while providing service to the same

constituency, does not always function systemically to integrate the services offered across the institution. This structure is so massive that it is unrealistic to expect changes at a granular level to always occur when they are needed. We must instead look within our own administrative departments—in Dartmouth's case, the library and Computing Services—to share materials, methods, and ideas in support of course design. Many members of these departments work daily with faculty and have developed a rich understanding of their curricular and research needs. While a core team will provide the structure needed to move the process forward, members of the institution must work together to support each other in providing effective and seamless support to our faculty.

Key Questions to Ask

- What would enable and encourage the professionals in the library and IT to view services with "faculty eyes"?

- What efforts for grassroots integration between your library and IT staff are already emerging on your campus? How can you build on these for course design and support?

- How can your campus promote a culture of cross-departmental cooperation that would enable and encourage IT and library professionals to initiate joint projects?

- To what degree is leading from the middle encouraged and valued in your organization?

- How can you facilitate the creation of opportunities for the library and IT to jointly discuss the strengths of the current processes and resources for course design and support, with a goal of further leveraging these strengths?

Where to Learn More

- Allen, Laurie, Joshua Wilson, Amy Bryant, David Consiglio, and Kevin J. T. Creamer. "The Perfect Storm: Assessing Trends in IT and Library Services; MISO Survey Results from 2005 to 2009." Presentation at the NERCOMP Annual Conference, Providence, RI, March 8–10, 2010. http://www.educause.edu/Resources/ThePerfectStormAssessingTrends/198555

- EDUCAUSE IT-Library Mergers Resource Page, http://www.educause.edu/Resources/Browse/ITLibraryMergers/30427.

Acknowledgments

College, Dartmouth College; Cynthia F. Pawlek, Deputy Librarian of the College, Dartmouth College; Lynn O'Brien, Director, Academic Technology & Instructional Services, Duke University; Kimberly Hayworth, Manager, Academic Technology Lab, Stanford University; Richard Holeton, Director of Academic Computing Services, Stanford University Libraries and Academic Information Resources; Geoffrey Schneider, Director, Bucknell University Teaching and Learning Center and Associate Professor of Economics; and Sarah Cheverton, Manager, Faculty Development Services, James Madison University.

Endnotes

1. Lynn O'Brien, personal communication, March 2, 2010.

2. Chris Ferguson, Gene Spencer, and Terry Metz, "Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts: The Integrated IT/Library Organization," *EDUCAUSE Review* 39, no. 3 (May/June 2004), 38–47, http://www.educause.edu/EDUCAUSE+Review/EDUCAUSEReviewMagazineVolume39/GreaterThanthe SumofItsPartsThe/157901.

3. Bonnie W. Oldham and Diane Skorina, "Librarians and Instructional Technologists Collaborate: Working Together for Student Success," in *College & Research Libraries News*, 70, no. 11 (December 2009), http://crln.acrl.org/content/70/11/634.full.

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Citation for This Work

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