

## CHAPTER 4—UNIVERSITY LEARNING RESOURCES

This chapter is something of a study in contrasts. The two primary learning resources under discussion—libraries and learning technology—reflect very different trajectories at New School University: the former is characterized by benign deprivation, slow deterioration and piecemeal support and the latter by aggressive, ongoing development and innovation. In an age saturated with information, however, these two resources must harmonize the crucial parts they play in the lives of teachers and learners. Shared concerns about issues of staffing, space and access represent a common ground where progress toward integration might begin.

Exploration of this matter starts with the Subcommittee on Learning Resources, which included lead faculty members and administrators responsible for academic computing, distributed learning and the libraries. Its charge was to examine the complex relations among resources, research, teaching and learning with reference to a wide range of campus facilities and initiatives. However, this report is restricted to the most pressing issues faced by the university in the next decade. Implementation of the new administrative computing software (BANNER) and administrative computing generally are important to the university and its academic programs but will not be dealt with directly. The assessment is divided into two areas: Part 1: Analysis of Libraries and Related Information Services, and Part 2: Analysis of Technological Resources and Distributed Learning.

### **PART 1: ANALYSIS OF LIBRARIES AND RELATED INFORMATION SERVICES**<sup>29</sup>

The New School University Library consists of three libraries: Raymond Fogelman Library, a general collection strongest in the social sciences and humanities; Adam and Sophie Gimbel Design Library, a special collection library serving Parsons School of Design; and Harry Scherman Library, a special collection library uptown at the Mannes College of Music.

New School University also belongs to the Research Libraries Association of South Manhattan. The consortium includes New York University (located next to New School's main campus), Cooper Union and the New York Academy of Art, and provides access to in-depth resources and affords borrowing privileges to students and faculty associated with degree-granting programs (but *not* for continuing education or non-degree students). It also allows on-site access to many electronic resources, and to services such as interlibrary loan. In addition to the consortium, a bilateral agreement with the Cardozo Law School Library provides both reciprocal reading privileges for students and borrowing privileges for faculty. Reading access to many other academic and specialized libraries is made possible by membership in the much larger METRO consortium, one of the nine New York State library consortia. University faculty and students also have access to the Brooklyn and Queens Borough Public Libraries as well as the 82 branch and four research libraries of the New York Public Library system.

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<sup>29</sup> See Appendix D for description of libraries and other learning resources.

## Assessment of Services, Collections and Access to Resources

Re-examination of the New School University Library has been especially intense during the last two years. Strategic planning to assess and improve library resources and services was begun by the Provost's Office during the 2000-01 academic year. That planning, like this report, sought to assess and coordinate the development of library resources (print, digital and reference support for users) with academic computing and New School University Online (NSOU).

A special challenge for New School libraries, not unlike those faced by all libraries in a digital age, is to re-conceive their service roles in a complex, fast-changing environment. Even if the university itself were not changing rapidly, which it is, the precise direction the University Library should take would be difficult to ascertain.<sup>30</sup> The situation has caused work on the strategic plan for the University Library to move forward haltingly, in part, because of competition for resources.

Deteriorating collections are one part of the picture, as are library facilities that are unattractive, worn and overcrowded. The University Library has also suffered severe staff shortages as well as a general lack of university support. Staff shortages have made it difficult to collaborate with teaching faculty to promote information literacy. Some positive steps have already been taken toward turning this situation around. However, staffing at both professional and paraprofessional levels is still extremely thin.

In the face of dramatic needs, the slow revitalization of the infrastructure has resulted in *ad hoc*, piecemeal development and lack of coordination among the three individual libraries, online programs and information services. The problem has been identified and steps are being taken so that, in the future, improvements in these learning resources will be integrated.

While the New School University Library deteriorated over the last decade, the growth of the Internet and the World Wide Web produced a demand for access to web-based information resources along with new research practices and expectations. Many students, and perhaps some administrators, believe that students can do the majority of their research on the Internet. There is some truth to this. The quantity of reliable scholarly information on-line is increasing. Unfortunately, there is a far more dramatic increase in the volume of unmediated content, which easily overwhelms the untrained user. Needless to say, the "surf and capture" approach used by many students pressed for time and unskilled in research techniques too often produces poor results.

Getting information to students while helping to inculcate research skills is often a challenge. Web-based guides and online instructions provide a base level of learning. But once beyond the basics, many students need to consult a reference librarian to better understand how to focus their research and locate useful subject-specific resources. Unfortunately, one-on-one

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<sup>30</sup> For copies of university planning documents, notably *The Idea of Library at New School University*, and the results of several studies by the Office of Institutional Research of library utilization and user satisfaction see Provost Initiatives Exhibit.

help and information literacy training has become a casualty of chronic staff shortages, particularly in Fogelman Library.

In 1989 the American Library Association promulgated a set of information literacy competency standards. These have now been adopted, in shorter form, by accrediting agencies nationally. New School University has been taking steps to raise awareness of these standards both through the library web pages and the curriculum. But much work still needs to be done to assure that these efforts reach into the capillaries of the curriculum, the classroom and the practices of New School students. For example, if there is to be a serious commitment to information literacy, the University Library should have sufficient librarians to provide reference service during most hours of operation, including weekends and evenings, for on-site and distance learners.

The discussion of on-site access relates to only one constituency—those patrons who walk through the doors. Students in distance programs need to be served equally well. This includes teaching them how to do research, providing them with professional reference services, and giving them access to appropriate research materials.

Collections. Evaluating resources available to students and faculty is a multifaceted topic. Some resources will be on-site in different formats; others will be accessed via consortia or area public libraries; still others will be online in fee-based systems or available on the Internet at no charge. Adequate collections exist in some subjects but not all, the result of benign deprivation. Materials budgets for New School's library collections have been in a steady state for at least five years. Annual budget increases have not kept pace with inflation, and high price increases have further eroded purchasing power. In addition, some funds for purchase of new materials have been diverted to preserve existing, heavily used collections. Finally, support for new resources has typically not been included when budgeting for new academic programs. This is another case where lack of coordination in planning and development can lead to problems.<sup>31</sup>

The Consortium and User Access. The local consortium is often incorrectly viewed as providing access to all the necessary print and electronic resources not contained in New School libraries, with the exception of the focused materials needed to support programs at Parsons and Mannes. At present, only students in degree-granting programs have full privileges at NYU's Bobst Library. This is a serious limitation the roughly 8,000 non-degree students enrolled in courses at The New School each semester. These students often need access to videos at the Avery Fisher Center in Bobst. It is difficult to get these students admitted to Bobst and the Center and each time requires the intervention of a librarian.

Familiarity with New School Resources. On December 4, 2001, a focus group composed of 20 members of the Faculty Advisory Committee met with the University Librarian and the Provost to discuss the role and use of the university's libraries. It was clear that many New School faculty are not familiar with the extent of library services and resources, including those publicized and listed on library web pages. Faculty also mentioned in meetings of the

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<sup>31</sup> To cite just one example, when The New School's graduate International Affairs Program was planned three years ago, little consideration was given to whether the university had sufficient library resources to support the new degree.

University Committee on Libraries (recently re-named the University Committee on Learning Resources) that many students do not know about either the library consortium or Fogelman Library.

The University Library offers seminars for teaching staff from across the university. Instructors have been quite positive in their evaluations of the seminars and have commented on how much they have learned. They said that these seminars provide an important opportunity to meet colleagues in other schools, and suggested that beginning and advanced seminars be held.

The University Library has actively and successfully targeted specific constituencies. A number of positive working relationships have been developed, including the Gimbel Library/Parsons Liberal Studies program, the Fogelman Library/Milano and Fogelman/New School Media Studies collaborations, and the Scherman Library/Mannes program. As a result, some faculty members are bringing their classes to the library for orientations and research seminars.

Use of New School University Library. Determining actual usage is a challenge. Historically, measures of use have been crude. Reviewing circulation or entrance gate statistics is not sufficient. Important data is often not taken into account, such as in-house use. For example, in 1999-00, over 97,000 items were borrowed at Fogelman Library, and an additional 68,000 items, or 70% of the total borrowed, were used in the library, for a total of 165,000 items used.<sup>32</sup>

Reports of studies published in the library literature, as well as tax referenda, show that people actively support libraries and utilize them. Students use the libraries for many different purposes: for access to research and reserve materials, for quiet and group study, for the assistance of a reference librarian with their projects and research, for meeting friends and simply being together in a space that they view as belonging to them. All of these diverse uses were emphasized in planning visits to libraries at Baruch, Marist and Vassar Colleges, and at Polytechnic University. Seeing these libraries was both inspiring and dispiriting. Students appreciated beautiful facilities and used them heavily, whether at campus-based or commuter schools. In contrast, the unattractive state of New School libraries discourages community use.

Planning for Improvement. Prospects for immediate improvement do not look good. Last year, the University Library Committee discussed concrete ways to reconfigure the collections and enhance environments. This led to a proposal for merging Fogelman and Gimbel at the 65 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue site. A feasibility study for such a merger made it clear that much would need to be done to create an attractive, comfortable facility that would get the institution through the next five years. Critical to the success of this effort was the recognition that combining these two libraries should not be viewed as a way to cut staff. As was pointed out above, operations are so thinly staffed at present that everyone is stretched beyond their full capacity. That plan was shelved because costs were too great, strategic gains insufficient compared to costs.

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<sup>32</sup> Not measured is the usage of online resources—library web pages, digital full text, and electronic indexes and databases—used in-house or remotely. Software could be set up to count this kind of use. Documentation of use would provide hard data that would enhance library planning.

Scherman Library, while having completely inappropriate facilities, so closely supports Mannes' academic programs that it will have to remain uptown as long as Mannes does. Some cosmetic improvements have been achieved in Scherman, and it may be possible to realize others. Unfortunately, these are band-aids.

## **Strategic Questions**

The clock cannot be turned back to create anything resembling adequate collections at the university libraries. Nor is there the space to house such collections, even if funds were available. Careful consideration, with input from appropriate quarters, is needed to determine how to answer the following strategic questions concerning information resources:

- Which collections does the university want to develop? What materials should be held at the university's libraries, even though these might duplicate heavily used parts of the consortium, such as the NYU Bobst collection?
- What are the consequences of dependence on a competitor institution's library? While New School students and faculty utilize Bobst heavily, many do not consider it "their" library. What effect does this have on student retention and faculty recruitment?
- How can New School's Gimbel and Scherman collections be upgraded? To give a sense of the magnitude of the task, purchasing and binding a mere 2,500 items for the deteriorating collection at Scherman would cost approximately \$200,000.
- How much emphasis should there be on technology infrastructure? Can the university guarantee both a portal and a network that are fast and robust enough to do what is needed? Can they also support increased access to electronic resources?

## **Recommendations**

1. The library staff must be expanded this year to include the following positions: one reference librarian each for Fogelman, Gimbel and Scherman; one systems/metadata librarian; and one learning resources librarian. With the present number of staff, it is difficult to even keep the libraries running. It is equally challenging to develop an information literacy program. Given adequate staff, the libraries could partner with teaching faculty to develop high-profile, high-impact activities.
2. New School students and faculty must have access to the resources they need for their studies, research and teaching. While the consortium provides a broad range of materials, it does not satisfy the needs of either the Parsons or Mannes communities. Nor does it satisfy all of the needs of the rest of the university community. The university must decide which areas of focus need on-campus support and take steps to provide this. It must further develop both the Gimbel and Scherman collections to ensure the viability of Parsons' and Mannes' programs.
3. Further integration of the university library must be an essential part of information technology planning. Fast and reliable portal and network environments, as well as up-to-date computers replaced and upgraded on a regular three-year cycle, are

critical. Without these, the library cannot carry out even the most basic functions, nor will information literacy and digital library efforts succeed.

4. Library facilities are inadequate and unattractive. It is not just the appearance of the libraries that the administration must address: it is the very functioning of components that are important to the university's educational mission.
5. The consortium contract needs to be reviewed and unmet needs addressed, including access to electronic resources and access to Bobst for a wider section of university community.
6. Development, budgeting and planning for library programs and information services must be increased and coordinated. Institutional support should be given to fund-raising initiatives undertaken by and for the library, including a capital campaign in collaboration with the University Development Office.

## **PART 2: ANALYSIS OF TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES AND DISTRIBUTED LEARNING**

Prior to 1990, the institution had, with exceptions, little computing capability. Indeed, the accrediting team that visited the New School in 1991 remarked that the institution "started late," but had the advantage of not being saddled with obsolete equipment. Between 1992 and 1998, the university moved aggressively to create a network linking most of its downtown facilities.<sup>33</sup> The Knowledge Union was created in 1997, adding high-end video and audio. Both the University Computing Center (UCC) and the Center for Education and Technology (CET) were created in 1995. Investments made in this period total nearly \$30 million—a bold vision for an institution with a modest endowment.

In 1993 The New School attracted federal support for an innovative online educational resource called DIAL. For the first five years it was developed, funded and operated by The New School and used almost exclusively for adult education courses and conferences. In 1998 its operations were extended to serve the entire university, its management was centralized, and its name changed to New School Online University (NSOU). In fall 2001, NSOU developed and launched the university portal, an entry point for students, staff and teachers who want to use university resources like libraries, check on courses, access the Web, and communicate with their colleagues.

In 2001 the university acquired Luna Insight, a presentation software system with the potential for university-wide application. Currently, New School students and faculty have access through the Luna interface to approximately 200,000 digital images used in three pilot art history survey classes and foundation studio courses at Parsons School of Design. With its ability to support music and video and its library-compatible search features, this is a resource that can be expanded across various disciplines and curricula.

A Wireless Initiative (see Appendix D), begun in 2000, also stretches the New School learning cultures. Several academic buildings now support wireless communication between

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<sup>33</sup> The administration has funded \$1 million a year in recent years to upgrade and maintain software and hardware. Classrooms and student labs are high priorities.

user laptops and the university network. Faculty members at Parsons use wireless computing across the curriculum to teach students during the freshman year.

Another major initiative has been the development of presentation classrooms connected to the Internet described in Appendix D. Currently, there are 22 presentation rooms and six mobile projectors. This technology allows instructors to bring a wide array of electronic resources such as maps, illustrations, multimedia texts, sound files and databases directly into the classroom.

### **Survey of Current Resources**<sup>34</sup>

Distance learning courses are offered through New School Online University (NSOU). The mission of NSOU is to provide online, asynchronous learning support for existing academic divisions through a computer-conferencing teaching and learning environment available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from any computer connected to the Internet's World Wide Web. NSOU is a virtual campus complete with courses, public events and programs, library access, student services such as advising, admissions and financial aid, and several social venues for extracurricular discussions. Currently, more than 3,000 students each year are enrolled in over 300 courses. Students are widely dispersed, residing in nearly every state and over 60 foreign countries.

Students enroll in courses for degree credit, general credit and on a non-credit basis. All interaction is online. Students participate in a one-week online orientation prior to their first course. Courses made available through NSOU are developed and administered by departments and faculty at The New School, Lang, Parsons and Milano.

All courses and online programs are interactive. Students and instructors "meet," asynchronously, in classrooms and project areas where they share information, ask and answer questions, and complete assignments. The academic standards for an NSOU course are comparable to traditional, on-site courses. Pedagogical strategies and techniques, while focused on the same goals, vary somewhat in response to the online environment. Most courses last eight weeks, and students studying for credit must complete assessment exercises (papers, tests, integrative projects, etc.), just as they would in the traditional classroom.

In addition to learner assessment, NSOU operates a regular program of self-evaluation, drawn from input gathered from student and faculty participants. Using a set of protocols developed specifically for NSOU by a team from the University of Michigan's School of Education, questionnaires and random interviews are used to collect data on the effectiveness of the interactivity, participant "comfort levels" in the environment, sufficiency of services and other aspects of the online experience.

NSOU also offers a faculty development seminar for all faculty teaching online for the first time. Instructors explore pedagogical, group dynamics and platform issues in the mediated

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<sup>34</sup> A comprehensive inventory of university learning resources can be found in Appendix D. Information documenting NSOU user satisfaction can be found in the Exhibit Room in the Provost's Initiatives folder.

environment. Successful completion of the faculty development seminar is required for instructors scheduled to teach online for the first time.

New School University provides the faculty and students with additional facilities throughout the campus: the University Computing Center, the Knowledge Union and the Center for New Design, all at 55 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street; the Academic Computing Center at 65 Fifth Avenue; and facilities located in specific departments such as The New School Computer Instruction Center (CIC), and Parsons Photography, Fashion and Architecture. Computer facilities located at 55 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street are open for extended hours, during the last portion of the semester.

The University Computing Center (UCC), a student computer lab, has approximately 225 Mac and Windows stations, presentation classrooms, modeling and animation facilities, digital video and audio suites, and a transfer room. The facility is expansive, well suited to student needs, but heavily used.

The Knowledge Union (KU) houses advanced media labs including video editing, audio editing, 3-D modeling workstations, and an equipment center. Degree-seeking students petition for KU access beyond what is made available automatically through their program and course enrollment.

The Center for New Design (PSD) is a laboratory for innovative collaborative design and a forum for new ways of teaching design. This facility was established in 1999, but already it is in need of upgrade in hardware and advanced software.

The Academic Computing Center at 65 Fifth Avenue was created in 1986 with a focus on the needs of graduate students. There are three computing classrooms and an open lab area, with approximately 50 Windows 2000 computers. An additional 25 computer workstations reside in a Windows 2000 classroom located in the Fogelman Library. Both facilities are networked with standard research and productivity software including email and Internet connectivity. Degree-seeking students, faculty and all staff members with a current photo ID card have full access.

The Fashion Computing Center offers 42 workstations made up of Windows and Macintosh systems as well as scanners, and black-and-white and color printers. Software includes Lectra U4ia, Lectra Primavision, the Adobe suite and the Macromedia suite. The Fashion Computing center provides support for undergraduate, graduate and continuing education programs in fashion and textile design. The aim of the facility is to offer the most current, and widely used, industry standard software applications and equipment.

The Computer Instruction Center (CIC), located at 68 Fifth Avenue, is The New School's computer center. It houses eight computer labs, a mix of Macintosh, Windows, and Unix operating systems. The CIC is a networked environment with access to the Internet and email. Access is limited to students enrolled in CIC courses.

Outside the computer facilities, express stations with Internet access are available in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor lounge at 55 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street as well as the 66 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street locations.

## **Assessment of Academic Computing Resources**

Part of the New School's mission is to support innovation and creativity; technology is an important element. To achieve that goal and maintain quality, the university must have a well-focused and strategically well-thought-out vision that integrates ongoing assessment and planning.

Faculty and students need to meet basic competency standards with hardware and software. The Center for Education and Technology (CET), established six years ago as a dedicated lab for faculty course development and training, is currently developing a series of workshops to support the academic curriculum. It begins with a basic hardware/software competency course and advances toward specific software applications designed to enhance the teaching and learning experience, both in and outside the classroom. This approach supports more school- and discipline-specific pedagogy, providing the faculty with means to incorporate new teaching methods. The CET works closely with the various schools' distributed learning coordinators to provide programming for faculty that will support departmental technology-based goals. While the CET works well and is highly valued by its users, it does not have the staff necessary to serve the needs of part-time and full-time faculty. Currently, there is only one educational technologist on staff.

Academic Computing provides training opportunities to the university community at large. Throughout the semester, User Services offers two- to three-hour introductory sessions in the use of productivity, graphical and statistical tools. Orientation sessions are scheduled during the beginning of the term and tutoring is available through User Services, in conjunction with Digital Design. In addition, technical support tips on common problems are made available to users online and in print form. The Knowledge Union offers orientation sessions to faculty on how to use the equipment presentation spaces at the University Computing Center and the Knowledge Union.

The university portal, launched by NSOU in the 2001-02 academic year, allows access to course materials, discussion features, file sharing, rosters, email addresses and announcement boards. The introduction of the portal has been successful, and many faculty members are incorporating it into their classes. But there are cross-platform and bandwidth issues to work out. Pedagogical discussion of how to use the basic tools (the discussion board, etc.) is limited and does not address late adopters who may be reluctant to use the technology.

Fall 2001, the university installed wireless computer access in select common areas and designated classrooms (with computer workstations, Internet access, and LCD projectors) throughout the downtown university campus. Great demand exists for "smart classrooms" and pedagogical initiatives to enable faculty to devise new teaching methods to take full advantage of this environment.

New pedagogical methods are needed to improve teaching and learning. Students are entering undergraduate school with greater skills in this area. It is necessary for the faculty to

upgrade skills. To expect this in the absence of comprehensive training, especially for our many part-time faculty members, is unrealistic.

Often technology initiatives are implemented without addressing the additional technical support issues and personnel they will require. When problems occur and faculty members are made aware of the lack of necessary support, they are less likely to participate in teaching initiatives. The lack of training and development of trouble-shooting guides for hardware and software can leave faculty feeling stressed, unprepared and unwilling to engage students with the new presentation methods. Consequently, additional technical support and published guides would provide incentive for faculty to participate in new teaching initiatives and assure better allocation of personnel resources.

Need exists, too, for additional equipment and equipment upgrades for in-class use and for student use outside the class. Consistent complaints from the faculty suggest that basic items such as slide projectors, VCRs and monitors are often not provided when requested, do not arrive in a timely fashion, or do not work properly when they arrive. The state of basic equipment is one issue, service provided to instructors is another. When you consider that slide projectors and screens must be requested from the Facilities department, while VCRs and sound equipment are provided by the A/V Department, it's clear that consolidation and centralization of services is needed. The mechanism for equipment requests needs to be systematized so that the procedure for requesting, maintaining and upgrading equipment is standardized across campus.

## **Recommendations**

1. The university must continue to address cost and availability of space for new technology through careful re-purposing and use of existing space.
2. The institution has been more effective in making capital improvements than it has been in funding staff to support users of these improvements. In the past two years, an effort has been made to increase staff and support services.
3. While at the Milano Graduate School and the Graduate Faculty, planning is underway to support network access to high-capacity computing for teaching and research, the university must do more to support undergraduate, graduate and faculty research.
4. The administration must make across-the-board technology support a goal for the next phase of development. In the past, the university tended to develop "pockets of excellence" in technology deployment and integration. This has led to an environment in which some groups of students do not have the same level of access to, or practical experience with, information technology. Through wireless access to the network, positive steps toward more universal access are underway.