

**APPENDIX A.3: 1998 Middle States Association Final Report:EXCERPT**

Report of  
An Evaluation Team representing the  
Commission on Higher Education  
of the  
Middle States Association  
of Colleges and Schools

Prepared after study of the Bryn Mawr College's self-study report  
and a visit to the campus on March 14-17, 1999

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**LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES**

One of the fundamental standards for accreditation established by the Commission on Higher Education is "library and learning resources and services sufficient to support the programs offered and evidence of their use." There is no question that the Bryn Mawr Libraries are providing resources to support both the undergraduate and graduate programs that the college currently offers. Funding for the Libraries has almost doubled in the last ten years, and, among its usual peer group, Bryn Mawr ranks #2 in total library expenditures/student. In addition, the Libraries have added new staff and extended service hours in the past several years, all of which reflect the college's continuing commitment to the central role the Libraries play in its academic mission and life.

The Libraries have an extremely well-developed cooperative relationship with Haverford and Swarthmore College Libraries, a relationship cited by the 1998 Self-Study Report as a model for other departments. The electronic catalog, TRIPOD, and virtually all of the full complement of online (Web-based) electronic resources are provided jointly allowing significant economic advantage. Collaborative collection development provides other economies as well as significantly extending the range of resources available to all three communities. User satisfaction results from a very efficient delivery system among the three campuses. Additional tri-college initiatives, including electronic reserves, are currently under development aided by grant funds from

the Mellon Foundation. As the TRIPOD coordinator remarked, "Doing it together is just better."

Librarians are fully engaged in the service and support mission of the Libraries. An active bibliographic instruction program, which is not mentioned in the Self-Study Report, centers on course-integrated presentations on library research methods and resources. In addition to traditional public service, librarians participate with the Instructional Technology Team to provide outreach, training, and support in the instructional use of digital technologies, and they continue to respond to individual requests for assistance with electronic searching on a need-to-know basis.

Student satisfaction with the Libraries is very high based on anecdotal evidence as well as the responses to Senior Exit Interviews--over 80% of the responders in each of the last five years have been generally satisfied or very satisfied with the Libraries. Faculty sentiment, as conveyed by representatives to the Faculty Library Committee, is also generally favorable.

The self-study report clearly identifies issues and concerns for the Libraries, and while these are all important (and fairly typical), they are not about crises or critical disruptions of service. How to cope with the far-reaching consequences of the increasingly pervasive and ever-evolving application of technology to the information search-and-retrieval process is a constant challenge. Catalog records for online resources and a library home page designed to extend reference and public services to the offsite user are just two tangible ways in which library staff has begun to address these concerns.

While the Libraries and Academic Computing have a generally collaborative relationship, user support related to library technology presents some difficult challenges. Defining appropriate responsibilities for resolving hardware problems, diagnosing connection difficulties, and providing applications support that best serve the library user are significant issues for librarians. The idea of redefining positions within these departments as vacancies allow to create jobs with more integrated duties and responsibilities is one way in which the college is thinking about this problem. Other innovative approaches may be required.

The college also supports two specialized and important resource collections--the Language Learning Center and the Digital Media and Visual Resource

Center. Determining the appropriate kind of coordination of these resources may be an area requiring further exploration. The collections in the LLC and the DMVR are well- managed and well-serviced, and both Centers have a natural constituency. With no records in the online catalog, however, their significant resources are essentially invisible to large segments of the user community. Additional physical proximity, regardless of administrative structure, would offer better service by permitting the proverbial one-stop-shopping.

Until very recently, video resources outside of the LLC existed only in largely undocumented departmental collections. Canaday Library began buying videos 2-3 years ago and has significantly intensified its acquisitions in this format since that time. Again, efforts to provide maximum access to a maximum number of users interested in all of this material seem to warrant further exploration.

Overall, the Libraries can be characterized as dynamic, responsive, and forward-thinking. While they already play an important and successful role in providing academic support, there is no sense of complacency. Space, access, services and collecting policies are just some of the topics of ongoing discussion.

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## **COMPUTING**

In the last five years Bryn Mawr has made significant investments in computing technology support. Three significant examples of these investments include: the extension of the campus network to most college buildings, classrooms, and residence hall rooms (completion of the wiring of residence halls is scheduled for the summer of 1999); increased technical support staff in the computer services organization; and the creation of technology-equipped classrooms.

These efforts have resulted in an increase in use of information resources by faculty, in connection with the academic program. Annual expenditures on computing and networking now represent between three and four percent of the educational and general budget. A proposed replacement of the college's administrative information systems will further increase these annual expenditures.

The college now faces three important technology challenges: planning to

assure that representative planning structures are in place to guide future investments in both academic and administrative technology support areas; selecting and implementing a new administrative information system to serve all college offices; and exploring ways in which bi-college cooperation and planning in the use of library and computing resources can lead to pooling of staff expertise, and more efficient and effective use of institutional resources.

#### *Adequacy of Resources*

In the last several years, under the leadership of the Director of Computing Services, substantial improvements have been made in public computing facilities, technology classrooms, technology support staff, and the campus data network. In addition, annual budgets now provide for the replacement of desktop computer equipment and the continued improvement of classroom facilities.

Additions to computer services staff in recent years have provided a predictable baseline of support to members of the Bryn Mawr community. Staff turnover is still a problem, as it is in most technology organizations. Office areas for IT staff have been recently renovated and provide a pleasant work environment with some planned space for staff additions.

The Instructional Technology Team (ITT), which includes the directors and key staff for faculty technology support, helps to facilitate training and assistance to faculty in their use of technology in connection with instruction. The support staff in the ITT, while relatively new to Bryn Mawr, are an impressive group of professionals with a strong collection of technology, library, and service skills.

As a result of the above improvements, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of computing by faculty and students in connection with their courses. Library, computer services, and other staff have played a supportive role in helping faculty while recognizing that not all faculty are ready, or interested, in integrating technology into their activities.

However, there do not exist any statements of "appropriate use" of computing and networking resources in the student, staff, or faculty handbooks. Such statements should be developed and publicized to encourage legal and ethical behavior of all technology users.

#### *Planning*

The faculty Committee on Academic Computing (CoAC) focussed attention on the need for additional computer support and the development of a stable infrastructure over the last several years. They were successful, and faculty use of technology has increased substantially. Now CoAC needs to focus its attention on planning for the future uses of technology in the academic program. However, there is a need to clarify its mission and obtain consistency in how its members are elected, consistent with other faculty committees.

At the trustee level, a subcommittee of the Board dealing with Libraries and Information Services meets annually. This is a proper recognition by the Board of the centrality of information resources to the academic program and the substantial cost associated with maintaining and improving these resources.

#### Administrative Information System

The coming replacement of the administrative information system will be a major undertaking for the college. The Committee on Administrative Computing has done a thorough job of involving the community in the assessment of current needs and in understanding the complexity of the coming changes. Good thinking has gone into the benefits of the new system, and there is a realistic view of the need for additional staff to complete the transition. In addition, there is a commitment among members of the Committee to rethinking how the college does its business, rather than attempting to modify a new system to do business in the old way. This commitment will be regularly tested during the implementation process as technological change comes face-to-face with organizational culture. It is essential to a successful implementation that this commitment receive strong support from high-level administration.

#### Bi-college Collaboration for Computer Services

In 1997, the presidents of Bryn Mawr and Haverford indicated that they wished to intensify their institutions' cooperation in the areas of libraries and computing services in hopes of pooling expertise and experience. A thoughtful document dealing with technology guidelines was developed by the library and computing directors at both institutions. The directors of computing services at the two institutions meet regularly to share ideas and discuss common issues. The library directors do the same as part of the tri-college library consortium.

Consideration of the adoption of a common administrative information system for both colleges is a possibility that would simplify the sharing of student registration information across both institutions. But there are numerous

integration challenges to serious collaboration in the area of computer support. Among these are different organizational structures for computing; different technology environments; and different institutional cultures. Significant collaboration is hard work that requires a strongly felt need, the development of a sense of intimacy among the participants, regular face-to-face communication, equality of the participants, and respect. Some of these elements are present among some of the participants. However, it will take continued strong advocacy and leadership on the part of the presidents, provosts, or other senior administrators to overcome these challenges.

The technology environment has been stabilized and is generally reliable, resources are more than adequate to meet the academic needs of faculty and students, faculty support has improved significantly, representative planning groups have contributed to academic and administrative areas, and there is a willingness to cooperate among bi-college computing colleagues. As Bryn Mawr approaches the new millennium, it finds itself in a much-improved position with respect to its information technology environment.

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