

Periodic Review Report : EXCERPT

Prepared by Bryn Mawr College

June 2004

Chief Executive Officer: Nancy J. Vickers

Commission Action which Preceded this Report:

**1999 Decennial Self-Study and Reaffirmation of Accreditation,
following the Evaluation Team's Visit in March 1999**

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4. TECHNOLOGY AND LIBRARIES

The *Plan for a New Century* strongly emphasizes the need for students and faculty to use, manage, and create new technologies. Building on our traditional strengths in the sciences and with the goal of increasing the representation of women in high-tech fields, two broad objectives were established from the *Plan*: enabling all our graduates to flourish in an increasingly technological world, and facilitating the use of technology in the laboratory and classroom by the faculty. The first objective, **discussed above**, is represented by the significant expansion of the program in Computer Science. The second objective has been to invest in a technologically sophisticated learning environment. To this end, we have reconfigured the infrastructure and staffing related to information technologies and the libraries, tightly integrated the two functions, and moved planning and management for different areas closer to the

users. We have also significantly invested in renovating spaces for teaching and learning and using information technologies on campus.

4.1 Information Services

The period since 1998-99 has seen a significant shift in how the College manages and plans for information technology. The top two positions in the libraries and in computing services have been merged into a single position of Chief Information Officer, now held by the former Director of Libraries. Both the information technology and library organizations have been reorganized into Information Services in order better to integrate their functions, and to support a distributed model for information technology, which in some ways parallels our distributed library system. Information Services has, in its two years of existence, developed a campus-wide online calendar and taken the lead in redesigning the College's website. Four "nodes" have been created, for the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and administration. The three academic nodes bring together librarians, computer support specialists and instructional technologists knowledgeable about the node areas, able to respond to local issues, and available to assist in local planning for technology and information. Each node has representatives from the departments it serves. We will describe one of the nodes as an example of the concept.

4.2 Distributed Information: The Nodes

The Science node, the first to be introduced, includes a director, a UNIX/LINUX support position and a desktop resources staff position. The resources of two librarians, posted to Collier Library, are available to the node. Centralized support is provided for networking and some user services. The node does not have a dedicated budget, but applies to the general information services pool for financial support for its initiatives. Current projects in the node include the construction of a Beowulf cluster initiated by Computer Science and Physics faculty, the Survey Response Clickers (for interactive teaching and electronic voting), and a cluster of workstations to support computational chemistry, physics, and mathematics research. The new node structure was assessed in spring 2003, via a survey, which showed excellent support for the model in the user-community, but which also underscored the need to devote additional resources to solutions of complex problems for a small minority of users.

4.3 The Collections

The tri-college libraries have a "collections grant" from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation designed to help the three colleges' libraries work together to control costs while maintaining the quality of the collections. One of the most pressing problems for all three libraries is the shortage of space for more books. Swarthmore and Haverford are nearly at capacity. At Bryn Mawr, we expect to cope for another

five to ten years without undertaking any of the major renovations that were planned a few years ago. Providing new space is a very expensive way of addressing the problem of shelf space for books, and at this point, adding to their libraries' square footage is not at the top of any of the colleges' lists of priorities. Rather, the libraries propose to reduce the number of volumes we are storing. A collection study, undertaken last year, showed that the tri-college libraries contain a large number of books which rarely circulate and that many of these little-used books are held by more than one library. Planning is under way to prune the collections, cooperatively. Through this initiative, we expect to gain several years' worth of growth space to add to our collections, while increasing the number of distinct titles available to students and faculty in the tri-college community. The libraries are currently using Anthropology in a pilot project of book-culling and are encouraging faculty to take an active role in making decisions about which books are kept and where they should be located. After this spring, the libraries expect to increase the pace of the project, so that review of most of the major areas will be completed within the next two years.

4.4 "Smart" Spaces

The College has more than 30 "smart" classrooms and teaching laboratories, each of which has video-data projection equipment, network connections, and a host of other multi-media equipment and peripherals in various configurations. These rooms are used for courses and course-related laboratories. Smart classrooms are located throughout the campus and serve all disciplines. With few exceptions, all classrooms are networked. Classroom equipment and software are reviewed annually and replaced on schedule (or, if needed, earlier) to assure good functioning. The nodes and the audio-visual staff support the classrooms, offering training for faculty members and problem-solving when difficulties occur.

Recommendations:

- **Review Information Services periodically in the interest of providing the best support to faculty, students, and staff.**
- **Perform an external review of the College Collections to assure both stewardship and affordability of these historic resources.**
- **Continue tri-college cooperation in collections and technology ventures, including tri-college grant applications.**
- **Increase the quality and number of technology-enabled classrooms.**

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