To: David Lavallee  
Provost, CCNY  

And  

Pamela Gillespie  
Assistant Dean, CCNY  
Library  

From: Camila A. Alire  
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Re: External Review of the City College Library  
Date: May 3, 1999  

Executive Summary  

Strategic planning is of utmost importance to an academic library. The observation of the External Review Team for the City College of New York Library is that this has not yet been accomplished by the current or previous Library administration but should be the top priority for the future. There must be a major infusion of funds for the CCNY Library in the areas of collections/electronic access, service hours, improved telecommunications and networking access, and staffing.  

Considering the dwindling federal and state dollars for higher education research in science and medicine, CCNY has done an admirable job in bringing in federal monies and graduating large numbers of leaders in the scientific and medical fields. More emphasis could also be placed on the multicultural and ethnic enrollments in masters’ degree programs in the arts and humanities and how such graduates have contributed to the community and cultural events in the city, state, and region.  

There is an obvious need for the campus to cultivate existing students who will soon be graduating and alumni in becoming more effective spokespersons and fundraisers of CCNY. CCNY leadership must assume stronger advocacy roles with the city and the state funding agencies. There needs to be weighted formulas for campuses like CCNY and for their libraries.
The library needs to use its qualitative and quantitative outcomes measurements, in conjunction with teaching and research faculty, to demonstrate how the library and information technologies play a crucial role in changing life-long information to strengthen tomorrow’s cultural, scientific, and business leaders.

Public relations and marketing efforts on the part of the campus as a whole, and by the library need to be measurably strengthened, as CCNY offers many opportunities for its graduates to continue to build and strengthen visibility and benefits of such an institution.

The library must begin its strategic planning with some effective methods to address immediate crucial issues through reallocation of existing funds, and the College needs to provide support for this by some reallocation of its existing funds to strengthen the library to support its mission as it now exists. Longer term planning must also occur to ensure that the library does not ever again lose its integral place in supporting CCNY students, faculty, and the community. As noted, responding to immediate needs must first be addressed and then serious planning for the long term are necessary to reinvigorate learning, teaching, and research with the library as complementary to the classroom. It should not just be seen as a support service, supplementary to the classroom, but a key player in complementing every aspect of learning, teaching, and research and enriching and enhancing program planning across the campus.

Assumptions

The External Review Team for the CCNY Library based their recommendations on a number of assumptions garnered from their discussions with a wide variety of library personnel and College faculty and deans, as well as with the provost. These assumptions include:

1. It is doubtful that there will be new funds available, thus, the Team recommends that all be creative in decisions on reallocation of existing funds, with the Assistant Dean of the Library a party to any decisions made and priorities set.

2. There seems to have been and still exist some unstable leadership at the higher administrative levels at CCNY. Key positions need to be filled with strong, visible leaders who can pressure the city and state to provide more funding support for the Library.

3. The Library seems to have some strong support from faculty and deans, but there is also a low visibility for the library on the campus. Public relations efforts and marketing can be strengthened.

4. There has been little concerted effort on the part of research faculty for library support and faculty governance support for the library.
5. CCNY Library has not taken the initiative to being a strong strategic planning effort for the library on the campus. The Team recommends that this be a top priority in the upcoming year.

6. The CCNY suggestion (or request) to become a Carnegie Research II Institution does not seem to be a realistic aspiration, considering the campus funding shortfalls and the decimation of library resources, services, and staffing over the past few years. There was concern expressed by the Team that the Graduate Center seems to be getting the majority of funding for doctoral programs offered at CCNY. This needs to be resolved as well if CCNY is really serious about a Research II status. The Team recommends that such a request be held off on until a majority of these funding concerns can be rectified. Inadequacies and limitations must be resolved, particularly in the library, as no college or university can be a strong research institution without a very strong library, one that is seen as the intellectual heart of the campus.

7. The Advance and Development Office is limited in what it can be expected to carry off in a major capital campaign. This is especially true since it too has inadequate staffing and an office area that leaves a lot to be desired in providing an open, inviting, and aesthetically pleasing environment to attract the kind of funding needed for support of the library and the campus as a whole.

8. The wonderful and motivational video (which has not been viewed by most of the individuals and groups that the Team met with) demonstrates that CCNY has some strong potential alumni leaders in fundraising and developmental contacts. However, the Team got the impression that a few alumni only were being considered as potential donors. The Team recommends that the alumni database be updated. The database should include complete information on potential funding amounts that might be expected from more than just a few potential “heavy hitters.” The Team also recommends that others who may have great contacts with other potential fundraisers be surveyed and brought into the fold in leadership areas. Such planning will really get the major capital campaign underway, and ensure that there be a commitment to make the library one of the top priorities for raising funds for endowments and one-time needs. The library must be brought back to a stronger position in meeting needs, demands, and expectations for the future at CCNY.

9. CCNY, with its large urban and multicultural population, is in a key position to provide partnering with business and industry in the city and state. It can provide internships for its students in a future global environment focusing on urban environments where such students could really gain substantive experience and expertise for getting jobs and contributing to the CCNY community in the future. Yes, with the exception of the motivational video for recruitment and retention, the Team saw little emphasis on development in this manner of partnering with city and state leaders and legislators.

10. The Team also recommends that CCNY consider joining with other urban institutions in distance learning initiatives, related to programs of diversity and multiculturalism,
and use such alumni to teach courses that focus on the value of diversity in an expanding world marketplace.

Favorable Impressions

The Cohen Library and its branches are staffed with quality, dedicated staff in general. Their attitudes seem positive, and it appears that morale is good. This is important to note considering the daily obstacles they face.

There is strong and very able leadership in the Assistant Dean, Pamela Gillespie. Even though she more than lacks in adequate funding, she is driven to improve the libraries using initiative, hard work, commitment, and executive ability. Her initiative on the Library Lecture Series is impressive because of the visibility the Series brings to the Library in friend-raising efforts.

Again, given the limited resources to work with, Gillespie has assembled creative information technology support. The External Team was impressed with her systems support staff. Additionally, the library personnel in the Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery (ILL/DD) Department are progressive in thinking and have accomplished much with few resources. The manager of that department has exhibited leadership in a very vital area of service for the campus.

Cohen Library personnel have taken the initiative to provide better resources and services to City College users through their collaboration with the 57th Street funding group. It is through this type of continued partnerships that Cohen Library can realize more resources.

Another strength is the research/teaching faculty of City College who seem to care about City College and the libraries. However, they need to take a more communicative, advocacy role in supporting the criticality of a strong library.

One of the biggest advantages City College has is its multicultural student population. This is evident not only during the Team’s visit to campus but also in the excellent, motivational video the College has produced. Unfortunately, many people on campus had not seen the video.

Collection Development/Access

Cohen Library and its branches are so inadequately funded that they cannot be all things to all people on the City College campus. The Team recommends that the Library make some hard decisions to use its materials budget more effectively to reflect a more focused effort of quality collection development. The library should look at the College’s curricular mission (undergraduate education and unique programs on campus such as engineering, architecture, and bio-medical) and focus its resources to build a unique image of quality collections in these areas.
Additionally, the Library needs to reallocate some of its resources by diverting funds used to support all the other research/instructional needs of the campus to fund a more aggressive ILLL/DD program that can meet the information needs of those campus academic programs using these alternatives. Thus just-in-time method of access to materials is practiced among many academic libraries today to combat the inflationary challenges of purchasing library materials.

**Library Planning/Marketing**

The Team could find no evidence of any systematic planning completed either in this library administration or previous library administrations. Consequently, there is no real focus for Cohen Library to follow. This strategic planning will serve as the guide for the library to focus all its resources – fiscal, human, time, and to some extent, facilities – on some strategic goals to achieve.

The Team recommends that the Cohen Library administration chart an aggressive planning process as soon as possible to develop its mission, vision, values, goals and objectives with priorities (strategies) and action plans. These plans should include the methodologies for achieving measurable outcomes and assessments for each action. It is only through this planning effort that the Team believe Cohen Library can focus on the kinds of resources, services, and materials it can systematically provide to the College library users given all of its restraints and challenges.

The team is also recommending that, hand-in-hand with the planning process, there is the need for Cohen Library to develop a marketing plan for the main library and the branches. As Assistant Dean Gillespie works with her team in the planning process, she can also use this team effort to develop a marketing plan in tandem with the College. In the Team’s exit interview with Assistant Dean Gillespie, it provided her with some suggestions for follow-up.

**Staffing**

There are several issues relative to the staffing challenges at Cohen Library. The first issue is the near-crisis staffing problems due to attrition and freezes on and/or the delays in filling vacancies. This inadequate staffing poses serious implications in services to the City College community for the library. The Team is impressed, however, with what the library is able to accomplish with little staffing. However, that is not sufficient.

When the Team visited with Provost David Lavalle, he assured the Team that two vacancies – reference and archives – would be funded in FY 1999/2000. The Team recommends that this assurance be fulfilled and that the Assistant Dean for Cohen Library be assertive in moving to fill those positions within that fiscal year.
The second issue relates to salary savings realized by the library vacancies. The Team understands those funds do not revert back to the library which could be used to help cover operating costs and/or new initiatives for services.

Because of the inadequate staffing challenges, the Team recommends that the library should be exempted from having to justify filling positions and/or filling positions. The Team also recommends that the library should be exempt from the holding of any salary savings by the College administration to staff a position(s) in ILL/DD and to provide for digitizing unique resources that exemplify a real identity for the library in the city and state. These unique resources could help with fundraising in making these resources accessible to a broader community.

The third staffing issue is more programmatic. It was the Team’s perception that the library faculty/teaching faculty connection was not as strong as it could be. Therefore, it recommends that the library faculty work to strengthen their liaison activities, with the College’s teaching/research faculty. This will help strengthen the library’s collections, electronic access and information literacy/library user education programs.

Staff development was a concern of the Team. It recommends that some salary savings funds be used for staff retooling, training, continuing education, and professional development activities.

**Information Technology**

CUNY’s leadership is, on the record, committed to enhancing “support services for all students, including state-of-the-art library and resource centers, and writing workshops. Particular emphasis will be placed on computational and computer applications, to help students master the use of information technology.”

The CCNY library, under its current assistant dean, has made tremendous progress in establishing a technology infrastructure that is ahead of most units on campus in resources and network connectivity, including bibliographic and full-text databases via the Internet. Assistant Dean Gillespie and her staff have made commendable efforts to reallocate the limited funds proportionately and logically. However, severe cuts in periodical subscriptions and book acquisitions, as well as staff shortages, can have a detrimental impact on educational quality, and deprive the College of a good reason for students to attend this institution. Electronic libraries require investing more of a college’s resources, not less.

The Team has noted a number of areas in need of improvement:

1. Wiring for full network connectivity in the Cohen Library is partial. It is non-existent in the Architecture Library.
2. The hours of the Student Computing Lab in Cohen Library, which is managed by the Computer Center, should be adjusted to approximate the library’s business hours.

3. More full-text databases are needed. The current list of online bibliographic databases needs to be reviewed for redundancy of coverage. Infrequently used services may be dropped in favor of new online services.

4. The library should consider charging market rates for use of the electronic classroom for non-library sponsored activities. The revenue may be applied toward equipment maintenance and upgrade, and to fund student wage employment to assist in user instruction and facilities’ maintenance.

5. The library has a competent and enthusiastic Library Systems Manager. This position is critical to a strong and sustainable technology environment. Although the position does not require an MLS degree, it does require professional expertise. The Team recommends that this position be granted the same status as the library faculty, one that is commensurate with the significance and responsibility of this position.

6. The CUNY Technology Center supports the library with the infrastructure, equipment, and subscriptions to online databases. However, the current decision-making process for new online services appears to be inefficient and exclusionary. Faculty and student participation is important and should be sought seriously. Greater attention must be given to the special needs of City College, especially at the graduate and doctoral levels.

7. CUNY’s plan to migrate to a web-based client-server catalog should continue. A web-based OPAC will make the library’s catalog more accessible to all users, in library, on- and off- campus, and will provide easy linkages to the resources of a networked world. It will have flexibility to incorporate new technologies and capabilities.

8. The College should grant a proxy account to every registered student to enable him/her to access licensed databases from outside the campus. Excluding the students will depress the use of online subscriptions overall.

9. The Team learned that besides the science and engineering faculty, few humanities and social sciences faculty offices are connected. Inadequate network connectivity on the campus also depresses the level of use of library online resources.

10. The Technology Center, in concert with the library, will benefit tremendously from developing a strategic action plan for information technology. The plan will identify and set priorities for the equipment, materials, personnel, and funds necessary for a coherent and sustainable infrastructure. Serious deficiencies are bound to attenuate the quality of work and, in time, the attainment of College goals and objectives.
**Funding/Reallocation**

There is no doubt that CUNY’s library is under-funded by any standards. While the percentage of the college’s educational and general expenditures allocated to the library (about two percent) is similar to most Association of Research Libraries, two percent can translate into a sizeable budget at a well-endowed institution. It may be next to mere survival level at a less fortunate institution.

Because the University administration has informed the college not to expect new funds, and that it needs to re-allocate current funds, the Team proposes the following:

1. The library needs to make a stronger case for funding support, other than referencing to ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) standards. At any institution, the scope of library resources, human and physical, depends on the nature of the institution. (See “Outcomes Assessment” strategy, below.)

2. The library needs to build a strong case for receiving two percent of the indirect cost recovery ICR funds generated each year by research grants. The money will be spent to strengthen and expand document delivery and purchase of relevant full-text database services.

3. Direct efforts and funding towards undergraduate teaching and unique graduate programs must be undertaken.

4. The library must limit its limited acquisitions funds to “must own” or high use, high demand materials, judiciously selected in consultation with the faculty. The library must rely more on interlibrary loan/document delivery and cooperative reciprocal borrowing arrangements.

5. The Team strongly supports the library’s request for (a) exemption from having to return salary savings from unfilled positions, and (b) using these funds for temporary appointments, or for new initiatives and under-funded initiatives, including for equipment and materials.

6. The Team strongly supports the library’s request for the return of overdue fines to the library’s budget.

7. The Team strongly supports the library’s request for receiving a portion of the revenue generated from the photocopying service, in proportion to its share in the contract.

**Outcomes Assessment**

The library’s case for its fundamental importance to the educational and research process at the College will be stronger if the library can demonstrate its effectiveness in enhancing educational excellence. It needs to develop a system for assessing its
effectiveness with respect to the quality and relevance of the collections and electronic resources for study and research. The effectiveness of reference and instructional services, and the use of library resources of all kinds, are crucial to curricular effectiveness. (The reported reference and resource utilization statistics are extremely low). The library must in the end provide tangible indicators of its role in promoting student learning and development at City College.

Development and External Fundraising

The Development Office and Major Gifts and Planned Giving personnel are limited in number, especially considering that CCNY is planning for a major capital campaign. They work with every division of the College, including the library. They have a database manager who processes gifts into a donor management system, provide acknowledgement letters for gifts for the President to sign, and provide monthly and quarterly reports for the campus. There is some outreach and cultivation to alumni that they see as a key potential for giving. However, the alumni list is not up-to-date. The Alumni Association is separate, not a part of CCNY, and not involved in fundraising efforts to any great extent, if at all. However, the Development and Advancement Office does conduct some cultivation events for alumni as prospective donors.

On the planning for a Capital Campaign, they are working with a national consultant’s group, Ketchum, Inc. The consultants have conducted 75 to 125 interviews with some primary alumni support prospects. They are preparing a case statement for the College to focus largely on individual donations/gifts.

The Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving, Arlene Kay, has met twice with the Assistant Dean of the Library, Pamela Gillespie. Assistant Dean Gillespie provided Vice President John Lubbe and Ms. Arlene Kay in Development with a March 15, 199 “Library’s Big Picture Want List.” This list includes a large number of needs for the library, from establishment of two endowed positions and funding for temporary help, to endowments for acquisitions, funding for renovations and construction of a Visual Image Center, as well as some innovative initiatives needed for the library. Funds requested amount to approximately $5,000,000, a minimal request considering the severe funding problems the library faces.

The recommendation is that this “wish list” be reviewed for broader brief proposals that would be attractive for partnerships with corporations and foundations and individual donors who would see mutual benefits for both the library and themselves. There are potential naming opportunities and potential beneficial public relations for corporations and foundations in the city, state, and region.

The Assistant Dean for the library is not comfortable with soliciting funds because of her lack of experience in this arena. To assist with this, however, she has established a Friend’s Support Group with approximately 30 members to help her with bringing in lecturers to make the Library more visible and to assist in fundraising. There seems to be an assumption that such a group has the capacity to bring in major donors but
no leadership for this effort has emerged. The Team believes that this group could assist at a minimal level with the development of an acquisitions endowment and discretionary funds for the libraries, but to undertake a serious fundraising role this group is probably not the best one for this type of work. Therefore, the Team recommends that the library, in cooperation with the Development and Advancement Office, seriously consider the establishment of a Library Board of Visitors, with some prominent alumni who could assist with planning, advice and counsel in approaches to potential wealthy donors, corporation and foundation board officers. The group membership for an advisory board would not have to be large and could meet once or twice a year, and at other times assist with making some initial first contacts and later contacts with the Assistant Dean for the library.

A second recommendation is that because fundraising takes a tremendous amount of time in development of potential donor contacts that the College consider hiring a Library Development Officer, or at least sharing such an officer with areas such as education and social work, and/or the humanities and the arts. In addition, the Assistant Dean of the library will need to play a key role in donor development. Therefore, the Team recommends that the College provide opportunities for her to participate in seminars, workshops, and continuing education in writing winning proposals and to attend the annual ALADN conference to learn from colleagues who have been successful in fundraising in the library field.

**Partnerships and Resource-Sharing**

The library consortial partnerships, both on- and off-campus, are not maximized to the extent possible. There should be a close liaison with the academic computing center, with stronger leadership demonstrated by both entities. The same is true for the liaison between the Teaching/Learning/Research Center and the library as there are lots of opportunities on this campus to strengthen the links among students, faculty, and library users and in providing improved electronic access for all entities of on- and off-campus users. As noted in the “Outcomes Measurements” section, library resources and services utilization statistics can be used to improve and provide benefits to classroom, study, research, and life-long learning/information literacy competencies at many levels from the undergraduates, to graduates and faculty.

Resource-sharing in consortial partnerships provide wonderful benefits in the development of discounted site licensing possibilities – i.e. to ensure the broadest and most varied of the commercial and locally-produced databases are accessible to all at reduced rates. The Team recommends that every electronic resource should be evaluated for need, not just to indexing and abstract citations, but to full-text databases needed and requested from all areas of the College. The team also recommends that a survey of such user needs be conducted involving the students and faculty in this decision-making process. They are the major stakeholders in the development of greater reciprocal consortial electronic access, reciprocal borrowing and loaning, and even in reciprocal decisions of which local, state, and regional consortia should build strengths in which subject fields.
Carnegie Research Institution II Classification Issue

It was apparent that the Dean of Sciences felt that CCNY should make a strong request to become a Carnegie Research II Institution. Although the College may well meet the criteria for such a request, the Team recommends holding off on such a request until the library is in much better shape to support doctoral programs in science and engineering, as well as other targeted scholarly areas, that might benefit from such a classification. It seems that the College would also need to ensure that funds for such a request would require that the campus have returned to them research funds now going to the 57th Street graduate operation center. The library is in no way able at this time to support such a College research status. The library has been decimated over a period of years in adequate funding for resources, staffing, service hours, and other operational funds.