Merging Library and Computing Services at Kenyon College:
A Progress Report

Full integration of once disparate sources of information requires merging library and computing services

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As merged library and computing service organizations become more common on college campuses, individual organizations have begun to develop greater variety in structure and focus. Kenyon College (see the sidebar on page 20) in particular has created a uniquely integrated library and computing services unit whose evolution and progress are described in this article.

Kenyon's president, Robert A. Oden Jr., recalls that when he was a young assistant professor at Dartmouth College in the late 1970s, he was asked to chair a search committee for a new Director of Libraries. The charge came from John G. Kemeny, co-author of BASIC and originator of time-sharing — as important a contributor as any single individual in advancing the information explosion of the past quarter century. Kemeny said, "This search, Rob, will be the last the college ever holds for a Director of Libraries, because this director's successor will instead be the Director for Libraries and Computing. As all colleges will eventually do, we will soon merge these two now separate divisions."

That prediction turned out to be premature, but Kemeny was correct when he predicted the coming merger of libraries and computing centers at many colleges and universities. In 1995, when we at Kenyon College began to consider embarking on just such a merger, President Oden consulted a number of head librarians and directors of computing or information technology centers. They were nearly unanimous in recommending the course we were considering, although often with the caution that such a merger would be challenging. They were right.

Reasons for the Merger

Kenyon embarked on this task for several reasons. First, while in the past the search for information focused largely on printed materials, personal consultation, lecturing, and the like, in the 1980s it became clear that a vastly increasing amount of computing time went to searching for digital information. This transformation merits more discussion than we can give it here. Briefly, the era when computers largely performed repetitive and otherwise tedious tasks (such as data processing) transformed to an era when computers served equally to store, retrieve, and manipulate information. The transformation has meant an increasing overlap between library services and computing services, making an integrated approach seem sensible.

Second, the continued expansion of printed information plus the massively enhanced use of electronic information meant that we could choose between maintaining two separate and increasingly competitive services, or teamwork and collaboration. We chose the latter. Kenyon relies on many alliances, partnerships, and teams working together, and we want information resources to reflect this same character.

We think it makes sense for us to aid them in a systematic fashion, supported by the integration of technical and library resources and expertise.

A Focus on Constituencies

To accomplish the integration, Kenyon recruited a Vice President for Library and Information Services. When Dan Temple arrived in 1997, he didn't know exactly how he would go about combining the library and computing divisions. However, he did have some basic principles in mind that he knew would be prominent in whatever plan we developed.

Principle 1. The overriding reason for merging is integrated consulting services.

By the early 1980s, libraries and computing centers were obviously on converging paths. One prominent indicator was the growing overlap between their respective consulting functions. However, it appeared that these consulting functions would be the hardest areas to merge because of the social and cultural differences in the two professions. In fact, it was easier than we expected because the avant-garde of the librarian profession has embraced technology expertise so aggressively.

Principle 2. Leadership is the key to success.

Organizations of any kind flourish or falter based on their leadership. Thus, Temple believed it crucial to begin thinking immediately about putting together a good leadership team. He decided on a management team of four directors, two (Ronald Griggs and Glen Turney) already at Kenyon and with long-term commitments to the college, and two recruited through a national search (Oscar Will and Frank Wojcik). Griggs now heads Information Systems, Turney Institutional Information, and Wojcik Information Resources; Will was later succeeded by Janet Cottrell to head Information Access. These departments are described in more detail below.

Quality leadership is necessary, but

Third, partnering these two potentially competitive services makes pedagogical sense — the information explosion makes the traditional discrimination expertise of librarians and other scholars all the more important. Consider an example from the research area of Rob Oden: A great deal of material on the ancient Near East is available electronically, some of it valuable, up-to-date, accurate, and well researched. Much of it is not. Computer folks and librarians need to work together, as partners, to help all of us

discriminate between the fruitful and the less reliable information available to us.

Finally, Kenyon prepares students for the future. The full integration of once disparate sources of information is clearly a significant part of the future. Just as Kenyon faculty members shape what will count as knowledge in their own disciplines, we also want to prepare for the future in information services. Students will arrive at academic libraries with projects requiring both library and technical resources.

About Kenyon College

Kenyon College is a liberal arts college and the oldest private college in Ohio. Over the 175 years of its life, Kenyon College has developed a distinctive identity among institutions of higher learning. It is nationally known for a literary tradition that includes the *Kenyon Review*, which was founded by John Crowe Ransom and developed into one of the most influential of English language literary magazines. In addition, Kenyon College was the originator, half a century ago, of the widely used Advanced Placement program.

Kenyon is a member of the Five Colleges of Ohio consortium, which also includes Oberlin College, The College of Wooster, Denison University, and Ohio Wesleyan University. The Five Colleges of Ohio collaborate on a number of initiatives, including an information literacy project, a foreign language technology project, a remote library storage facility, a cooperative collection development project, and CONSORT, a shared integrated library system. Kenyon is also a member of the statewide OhioLINK consortium, which includes the libraries of 80 colleges and universities. OhioLINK's user-initiated borrowing program provides our community with easy access to more than 31 million library items statewide. Most of Kenyon's digital information resources, including electronic journals, electronic books, digital images, and research databases, are acquired through OhioLINK's cooperative acquisitions programs.

not sufficient. Staff performance ultimately determines service quality, so one of the most important jobs of leadership is to find good people, organize them, and support them so that they can succeed. Fortunately, many of the quality staff we needed were already at Kenyon, ready to help make the new plan a success.

Principle 3. It is more important to do the right things than to do things right.

This fundamental led to constituency orientation, the keystone of our organizational philosophy. Thus, the first goals written for the merged division had the following preface (italics added for emphasis):

The goals of a service department should ideally be expressed in terms of the nature of the institution, and the nature and goals of the various parts of that institution: *these are the constituencies of the service department, and it is their needs that define the service depart-ment*. At the most general level, the constituents of Library and Information Services are the students, the faculty and academic units, and the administrative departments of the college.

We believe that narrowness of view causes most service organization failures. Specifically, staff tend to focus overmuch on skills and internal processes in pursuit of efficiency, which is understandable. They can easily fall into measuring efficiency and effectiveness in the narrow terms of the department. Whether in libraries or information technology services, however, our reason for being is to support the effectiveness and efficiency of other parts of the institution — our constituents.

These principles underlie the structure of the merged division, named Library and Information Services (LBIS). The keystone of the organization is a strong constituency focus: an LBIS director is assigned to each one of the three constituent groups — students, faculty, and administrative units — to represent their needs and perspectives in the planning and management of LBIS. Each director is also responsible for some of our basic infrastructure and process management; thus, no department of LBIS serves its constituency group exclusively.

The constituency focus also drives our organization of staff expertise. We have a small staff relative to the large number of areas of expertise demanded, so we assign consultants to support specific departments rather than specific skill or knowledge areas. The departments' needs dictate the skills acquired and developed. We are basically a division of generalists, with each generalist providing in-depth expertise in some area.

Each staff member also needs a good across-the-board grasp of our services. Then, cooperation and collaboration permit us to deliver services in a reliable and expert manner despite our small size. This approach deals with the major disadvantage of the small college with respect to the large: the resources are proportional, but the areas of expertise demanded are not.

Some staff, both technical and library, have left Kenyon for reasons that included, at least in part, incompatibility with the new organizational direction. This turnover somewhat exceeded normal attrition, but never created a significant long-term problem with service levels. In fact, these vacancies, plus several redefined positions, gave us the opportunity to bring in people attracted to Kenyon by the new organizational structure.

Existing staff played a key role in our success by maintaining service levels during the transition. We repeatedly reassured the staff that no one would lose their jobs because of the reorganization, and no one has. We also made it clear, however, that most jobs would change at some point in the organizational evolution. We committed to providing the necessary training and support to help people succeed as their responsibilities changed, and we have done so.

Table 1

Structures and Staffing in Various Service Areas Before and After Integration

	Before (Fall, 1997)	After (Fall, 2001)
Total FTEs	43.25	44.83
Administrators	1 Vice President	1 Vice President
	4 Directors:	4 Directors:
	Academic Computing	Information Access
	Administrative Computing	Institutional Information
	Systems and Networks	Information Systems
	Library	Information Resources
Systems Staff	3	3
Administrative Computing Staff	2	4
Computing Lab Staff	Shared by faculty technology liaisons	1
Help Line Supervision (staffed by students)	Shared by faculty technology liaisons	2
Reference Desk Staff	6	13
With MLS degrees	5	13
With additional graduate degrees	1	7
Faculty Liaisons	9	11
Library support only	5	2
Technology support only	4	1
Both library and technology support*	0	8
With MLS degrees	5	10
With additional graduate degrees	1	6

* These positions, titled Librarian and Technology Consultants, provide both library and technology support.

The Merged Division

The merged division encompasses four departments: Information Access, Information Resources, Information Systems, and Institutional Information.

Information Access was the first department to be integrated. It includes core traditional library services such as reference, circulation, and audiovisual services, and core traditional computing services such as the computer help desk, campus computer labs and classrooms, residential networking, and classroom technologies. The Director of Information Access serves as an advocate for the student constituency. She is also responsible for facilities management.

Information Resources includes essential library functions such as collection development, acquisitions, interlibrary loan, and cataloging, plus technology and information consulting for faculty. The Director of Information Resources serves as an advocate for the faculty constituency.

Information Systems handles essential computing functions such as planning, design, and management of technology infrastructure, including servers and networks. It also supports administrative information systems. The Director of Information Systems serves as an advocate for the administrative constituency.

Institutional Information is responsible for organization and leadership of a distributed institutional research function and administrative systems conversions. The group provides leadership and coordination for campuswide training and staff development.

Table 1 compares the LBIS structure and staffing of various types prior to the merger and today. One of the most significant changes is an increase in direct user-support service areas, with virtually no increase in the overall size of the staff.

Although organized into four departments, LBIS emphasizes interdepartmental cooperation and support in serving the needs of the college community. Other priorities common to the division as a whole include strengthening our constituency orientation, facilitating staff development, and maintaining a broad institutional and higher education perspective.

This collaboration and common perspective prove important in another aspect of creating and managing a merged division: budget management. The task of reallocating funds from traditional library and computing budgets into budget lines serving the new organizational structure was not trivial and did not happen overnight. The new fiscal structure includes budget lines reporting back to each of the four departments, plus additional lines for telecommunications and administrative operations. Two of the four departments, Information Access and Information Resources, have separate categories for expenditures that are primarily library-oriented or primarily technology-oriented. For example, in

Information Resources, library acquisitions are budgeted separately from faculty technology support; in Information Access, residential networking is budgeted separately from circulation or audiovisual support. This arrangement provides adequate flexibility while allowing expenditures to be tracked in a way consistent with national reporting standards (such as IPEDS or Oberlin Group).

The evolution to a stable integrated organization spanned three years. During the first year (1997–1998), we focused on developing a workable plan for reorganizing the two divisions into one. The second and third years we focused on developing a leadership team, recruiting new people to join the existing staff, and refining the budget structure. During this time, the organization took on its integrated form and function. By the fourth year (2000–2001), the organization had stabilized, and the benefits to Kenyon became increasingly visible.

Benefits for Students

Cottrell credits a research project she undertook before coming to Kenyon with convincing her of the merits of an integrated approach to library and computing services. Working at a university library reference desk, she began to keep track of every reference encounter on her shift. She found that they fit quite well into the standard models describing information problem-solving: defining a topic, figuring out the kinds of information needed and where to find them, getting the information, evaluating it, compiling it, and organizing it into some shareable form.

However, Cottrell's results indicated that while the reference desk did a good job helping students with several stages of the model, others fell completely outside its responsibilities. For example, it was almost always possible to help students define or refine a topic, determine what information they would need, locate and access it, and even evaluate it. But students who needed to compile and present their project information could not do so in the reference area for the simple reason that the computers in that area were effectively banned from running any word processing, spreadsheet, database, or other application software — they were reserved for finding information, not for organizing or sharing it. Students needing help with those tasks had to go elsewhere. Cottrell came away from the experience convinced that what students do cuts across the traditional ways of organizing services. To be effective, she concluded, we must organize in new ways.

The microcomputers in the reference area of Kenyon's library support a wide range of application software in addition to providing access to library databases. Students use these computers for everything from checking e-mail to finding books or articles to writing papers. Questions at the reference desk reflect that range of tasks — in addition to the usual queries about locating books and articles, many computer questions came to the reference desk. The staff there could answer many of them, and the computer help desk nearby took the more difficult technological problems. As the next step in providing one-stop shopping for students seeking assistance, the reference and computer help desks now adjoin each other. The implications of that proximity are still being evaluated, but early indications are quite positive.

Benefits for Faculty

Educational institutions typically require a wider variety of technical support than do businesses of similar size. That technology is tied to, selected for, and characterized by the curriculum and the faculty's research needs. In addition, educational institutions require the best possible support of information resources. To do the most effective job, our staff must understand and support both the curriculum and faculty research. Staff also must be relentless learners who enjoy learning, particularly learning on their own.

To meet this need, Kenyon has developed a unique job description — the Librarian and Technology Consultant, or LTC. LTCs provide both library and computing support to specific academic departments across the spectrum of information resources and technology. They work closely with faculty, doing collection development, teaching effective use of software and the library, and promoting innovative applications of information literacy across the liberal arts. Typically, an LTC works in many if not all of the following ways:

■ Providing personalized support for faculty using computers, application software, and instructional technology applications.
■ Participating in various instruction programs, including software applications and instructional technologies, basic library usage skills, advanced library research, and electronic search skills.
■ Participating in reference and technology consulting services, and aiding in the identification and use of both traditional and electronic information resources.
■ Participating in the academic department liaison program as both a subject specialist and a technology specialist.

This model reduces the number of faculty per liaison. It provides the opportunity to better understand departmental pedagogical and research goals, and allows more personal connections between faculty and the LBIS staff. It also reflects our organization's response to meeting diverse needs with limited resources.

So far, we have purposefully recruited librarians (that is, people with masters of library science degrees) for these positions. The best librarians bring excellent skill sets to these positions, they have a well-developed service ethic, and they value being part of an academic community. However, we are open to hiring individuals with interesting alternative credentials, and our current job descriptions reflect this possibility.

Benefits for Administrative Units

We tailored our administrative computing focus to the requirements of our constituents. We replicated the philosophy of LTC support of faculty, with Information Analysts assigned to support specific administrative divisions. In addition to technical skills, Information Analysts must know the operational requirements of the administrative offices in order to provide effective information services assistance.

On the constituent side, a Computer Records Supervisor in each administrative division is responsible for operation of the system processes and maintenance of the data integrity for that division. In addition, the Computer Records Supervisors are the first line of assistance for personnel in the division. They also serve as liaisons to the administrative computing staff.

The partnership we have created provides quality system support to each administrative office. This is crucial, since Kenyon is migrating all administrative systems from a VAX text-based system to client-server workstations, using relational database tools for file management and Web products to permit access to administrative information by an even broader constituency. The working partnerships between the Information Analysts and the Computer Records Supervisors have been a key factor in the success of this migration:

- first, in implementing workstations on administrative desktops;
- second, in converting departmental systems to client-server processing; and
- third, in integrating client-server processing with desktop tools, such as WordPerfect and Excel, for information presentation and manipulation.

Information sharing between Turney and his counterparts at other institutions indicates that our progress in administrative computing support compares favorably with our peer institutions. The constituency model has been an important factor in our journey from text-based platforms to client-server workstations and then on to the Web.
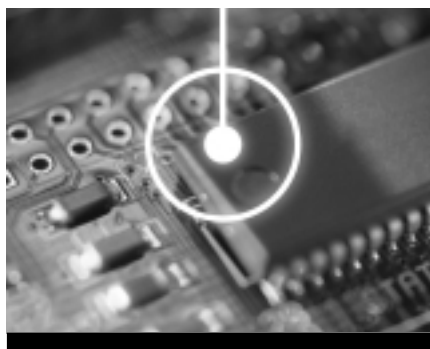
The constituency model has been an important factor in our journey from text-based platforms to client-server workstations and then on to the Web.

We are also beginning to see the benefits to administrative systems support of the library merger. For example, a librarian is working with some of our administrative departments on a project to store paper files and archival records in electronic digital form. This effort grew out of a project to digitize and store images in our slide library. We see it as an indicator that the theoretical potential for collaboration between systems analysts and librarians in support of administration is quite real.

Benefits for the Institution

Last year, two different meetings at a national conference presented two strikingly different attitudes toward the relationship between computing services and libraries. The discussion in one group seemed to focus on turf and antagonistic competition, specifically how to wrestle away the resources and especially the budgets of the "competition." This contrasted sharply to the discussion in another meeting, which focused on effective collaboration and coordination between campus information technology leaders. The second group expressed great interest in the Kenyon model.

These discussions convinced us that, whatever else we accomplish here, we're doing the school a great service by avoiding the divisive turf wars and fiscal infighting faced by some other colleges in our peer group. We still argue over money occasionally, but not along the traditional split of computing versus library and not with rancor.

The very structure of the merged organization helps us avoid that conflict. Successful support for each constituency depends on a strong and effective relationship among all of the LBIS departments. Each constituency we represent is integral to the school as a whole; thus, each department is crucial to effective operation of the institution. No constituency, and thus no department within the integrated library and computing services division, can be systematically shortchanged without damaging the whole.

Any complex organization requires attention to clear communication, and ours is no exception. We on the management team make a determined effort to keep in close contact. More importantly, we like each other, and we enjoy our combined work, so we find the collaborative effort rewarding. We consider our different managerial styles to be an asset that enriches the division and provides an interesting — we hope even inspiring — model of collaboration for the campus.

Meeting the Challenges

However much we like Kenyon's model for integrating LBIS, we realize that this approach — like the entire idea of integrating library and computing services — is not without controversy. Consider the following anecdotes from Kenyon's experience:

- A young professional is told by an older colleague that she will never get a "real" library job after working so much with computers. "There are white rabbits and black rabbits," she hears, "with roles for both. But you are a gray rabbit, and the world doesn't want gray rabbits."
- A new administrator receives e-mail

before arriving on campus, warning her of a faculty petition to displace the vice president who hired her and who engineered the merger. Although the e-mail contains inaccuracies, receiving it is an unsettling experience for a newly hired employee.

■ Several first-choice applicants are hired, all of whom say that the merger is the very reason they applied for their jobs in the first place. Traditional job descriptions in clear-cut black-and-white roles hold little appeal for them.

Obviously, merging library and computing services provokes both enmity and enthusiasm, determination and distrust. It seems to invite polarization and, occasionally, distortion. For us, the negativity illustrated in the first two anecdotes is more than countered by the hope in the third — and by objective evidence. In the past two years, we have hired outstanding national candidates. We have upgraded our network infrastructure with improved DHCP service and a gigabit backbone. Our facility now includes wireless networking, laptop jacks, and a digital video editing studio, and our students now have Web access to the Banner student information system. Including consortial arrangements, we have access to more than 7 million books, plus 24,000 electronic books, and 5,700 journals, including more than 4,300 online journals, and we are partners in a half-million-dollar information literacy grant and a $325,000 cooperative collection development grant (see the sidebar "About Kenyon College").

Clearly, for Kenyon the model works. Nonetheless, at various times it was greeted with a good deal of skepticism and sometimes outright criticism. To meet these inevitable challenges and to foster friendly collaboration, we found a number of techniques useful.

First, Oscar Will, the original director of one of the most integrated departments (Information Access), proved to be an effective team builder. He carried out specific initiatives within the department that helped staff members find points in common. He fostered a communally developed mission statement and service objectives, promoted cross-training and collaboration, and in general helped the formerly separate units form a cohesive department. This groundwork provided a model for other departments and proved crucial when, after a year in the position, he had to relocate when his wife accepted the presidency of another college. His successor inherited a department that was already functioning smoothly, allowing core service areas to run effectively during and after the transition.

Similarly, the first two LTCs, hired in mid-1999, originally served in the Information Systems department, that bastion of core technologies, servers, and networking. This intentional placement put librarians and technologists in close proximity, both physically and in terms of job responsibilities. The resulting collaboration and cooperation proved the validity of the model, as well as the effectiveness of the new LTC positions.

Again, this initial success provided a model for future development. As ultimate responsibility for the faculty constituency shifted to Information Resources in the third year, after having been shared by the two departments, the LTCs were reassigned. They took with them their close ties to Information Systems, fostering further collaboration between that department and Information Resources. Today, LTCs work in three of the four departments of the merged division, and will probably be incorporated into the fourth.

In addition to these internal techniques for reducing conflict and fostering collaboration, we found that a variety of outreach activities was essential in addressing concerns within the wider college community. Throughout the growth of the merged organization, we worked closely with a faculty subcommittee on library (later library and technology) issues. This group served as an effective brainstorming forum, where ideas could be discussed freely. Their ideas, and their reactions to our ideas, remain invaluable.

The merged division also sponsored an open campus meeting toward the end of the third year of the integration, where division managers presented information and answered questions or criticisms. Although not without tension, this forum provided an important opportunity to remind the campus of the history and goals of the merger, and to introduce many of the new faces in the division. The president presented the background information included at the beginning of this article as a reminder of the reasons underlying his decision to create the merged organization and also as a strong public statement of his support. The structure of the division was outlined once again, and brief progress reports were given. Although the forum raised many questions (indeed, the question and answer session lasted as long as the presentations), it seems in retrospect to have been a turning point in the campus's ability to accept and understand the new organization.

More recently, individual meetings with chairs of most of our academic departments have provided an opportunity to discuss specific initiatives and to promote general discussion. This type of individualized face-to-face conversation seems to decrease the tensions that so frequently accompany any discussions of resources and service levels.

Finally, throughout the process, disseminating accurate information has been imperative. Often, we found that people simply needed to know what was going on and what had been accomplished. In addition to informal information sharing, formal documentation has proven critical. Each year, we publish a detailed annual report highlighting trends, changes, issues, and accomplishments, with a link directly from the division's Web site. In addition, we have begun to publish specific comparison charts highlighting enhancements in services or materials over time. These factual state-

Further Reading

Most of the original documents relating to Kenyon's organizational planning, as well as the annual reports of Library and Information Services, can be viewed on our Web site at <http://lbis.kenyon.edu/about/documents/>. Also see the following publications for useful information.

Chris Ferguson, "'Shaking the Conceptual Foundations,' Too: Integrating Research and Technology Support for the Next Generation of Information Service," *College & Research Libraries*, 61, July 2000, 300–311.

Timothy J. Foley, "Combining Libraries, Computing, and Telecommuncations: A Work in Progress. Are You Ready?" *Proceedings of the ACM SIGUCCS 1997 User Services Conference XXV* (New York: The Association for Computing Machinery, 1997).

Larry Hardesty, ed., *Books, Bytes and Bridges: Libraries and Computer Centers in Academic Institutions* (Chicago and London: American Library Association, 2000).

Brian L. Hawkins and Patricia Battin, "The Changing Role of the Information Resources Professional: A Dialogue," *CAUSE/EFFECT,* 20 (1), Spring 1997, 22–30.

Arnold Hirshon, "Integrating Computing and Library Services: An Administrative Planning and Implementation Guide for Information Resources," CAUSE Professional Paper Series, #18 (Boulder, Colo.: CAUSE, 1998).

Anne G. Lipow and Sheila D. Creth, "Building Partnerships: Computing and Library Professionals," *The Proceedings of Library Solutions Institute Number 3* (Berkeley, Calif.: Library Solutions Press, 1995).

Marilyn J. Sharrow, "Library and IT Collaboration Projects: Nine Challenges," *CAUSE/EFFECT*, 18 (4) Winter 1995, 55–56.

Patricia Favel Vander Meer, Howard Poole, and Thomas Van Valey, "Are Library Users also Computer Users? A Survey of Faculty and Implications for Services," *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, 8 (1), 1997, 6–31; on the Web at <http://info.lib.uh.edu/pr/v8/n1/vand8n1.html> (accessed 22 March 2001).

Arthur P. Young, "Information Technology and Libraries: A Virtual Convergence," *CAUSE/EFFECT*, 17 (3), Fall 1994, 5–6.

ments backed up by data carry more weight than rhetoric would.

Generalizing from the Model

The Kenyon model won't fit every environment. Any college or university planning to integrate library and computing services will need to define a structure and process suited to its unique circumstances. Some things will hold true in all instances, however. Some of the prerequisites we believe to be essential requirements for success include

- Time to develop and implement an effective plan. A successful integration isn't going to happen overnight.
- The absolute support of upper administration. The president and senior administrators of the school must understand and support the goals as well as the process of the integration. At Kenyon, it helps that the head of the merged organization reports directly to the president and is a member of senior staff. The Board of Trustees also offered unwavering support and encouragement.
- The flexibility to adapt the plan as needed. Although your plan must be essentially sound to begin with, minor course corrections or adjustments in pace may be needed along the way.
- A stable, preexisting technological infrastructure. Your infrastructure must already be strong, as skeptics probably won't be in a position to know the precise cause of any failure and will probably blame all of them on your new organizational structure.
- A committed management team and staff. People committed to each other and to the institution will work to make your plan successful, even if they harbor private doubts about small details.

And doubts there may be. But time, top-level support, flexibility, technological stability, and commitment will go a long way in meeting the political tensions certain to exist on any campus that implements substantive change.

Both the challenges and the rewards of integrating library and computing services have been substantial. Looking back, we are heartened by our progress; looking forward, we are exhilarated by our potential. *e*

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