Standard Seven: Library & Other Information Resources
J. Eugene Smith Library

Description

Mission
The J. Eugene Smith Library is Eastern Connecticut State University’s sole library, providing support for all areas of the University’s curriculum. In 2008, as part of its strategic planning process, the library adopted a new mission and vision statement, which aligns the library’s mission with Eastern’s identity as the state’s only public liberal arts university: “The J. Eugene Smith Library supports and enriches the university’s teaching, learning, research, and outreach objectives by providing services and resources that foster intellectual curiosity and integrity, promote critical inquiry, and encourage awareness of the world beyond the campus. [It provides] a welcoming and comfortable space for quiet study or collaborative efforts, and a professional staff to offer assistance and expertise.” The library’s Vision Statement affirms its commitment to supporting the University’s aim of becoming a public liberal arts college of first choice.

Facilities and Holdings
The library is located at the center of the University’s campus in a handsome 127,000 square foot building with seating for approximately 850 users. The library offers different kinds of spaces for varied uses. In addition to open study tables, the library has two large seminar rooms, five group study rooms, and 16 small (two-person) research carrels. Though not strictly part of the library proper, the University’s new Academic Services Center and a Café are also housed in the building, which encourages students to take advantage of available tutoring and advising services while also offering space for relaxation and socializing.

The library has a current collection of over 390,000 volumes in print, over 900 current print journal subscriptions, 963,000 microforms, 2,711 full-text electronic journals, and 120 electronic databases. All told, the library’s journal and database subscriptions provide users with access to over 41,000 unique journal titles. In addition to its own holdings, Eastern’s participation in a cooperative system with the three other Connecticut State University libraries and the State Library offers users convenient access to a combined total of some two million volumes. Through the shared CONSULS catalogue, users can request volumes from other system libraries, which are then delivered to Eastern’s library by a State courier, generally within three days. The library extends its patrons’ reach still further through its robust interlibrary loan department, which borrowed 4,301 items on its patrons’ behalf in FY09 while loaning 8,588 items to other libraries.

Leveraging Technology
The library has embraced advances in technology in ways that enhance the service it provides students, faculty, and members of the community. The library has, in the first instance, made significant investments in electronic resources, particularly databases and full-text electronic journals. Such resources represent 22% of the overall collections budget in FY2010, up from 12.8% so recently as FY2004. To help patrons more easily discover and access this wealth of material, the library has deployed Serial Solutions’ “Article Linker” software, which indexes all of the library’s varied journal holdings (both in print and electronic formats) and directs users to available holdings. This software has been integrated with many of the library’s research databases in ways that allow students and faculty to identify and locate articles in a single, seamless process—in the event that a patron seeks an article not held by the library, the system is even able to produce a filled-in interlibrary loan request form. The library’s interlibrary loan software (ILLiad) speeds and simplifies the interlibrary loan process for patrons, while also helping library staff to monitor copyright compliance with regard to the number and frequency of
requests for articles borrowed per journal title. All of these technological solutions serve to improve users’ experience at the library, and make it easier to find and/or borrow the materials they need.

In addition to its electronic holdings, the library works to provide the kinds of technological tools that students and faculty require from a modern academic library. The library provides electronic course reserve services, which some faculty opt to use in lieu of or in addition to the Blackboard VISTA course management system [see below]. Eighty computer workstations are available for student use, both individually and in group computer classroom spaces. Six additional workstations are available for members of the general public to use under guest accounts, which allow guests to use the machines for up to two hours per day. The library also provides wireless internet access throughout, allowing students and faculty to use their own laptop computers wherever they need them. Even in the face of recent budget uncertainties, the library made a point of acquiring two very expensive microform scanners (ca. $8,000 each) to replace aging conventional microform readers. These new scanners allow users to save digital copies of microforms owned by the library, which makes that material vastly more convenient to use.

Staffing and Information Literacy
The Library is staffed by twelve full-time and three part-time librarians, plus the Library Director; all of these librarians hold the MLS degree, and some have additional advanced degrees. The Library has 16 full-time support staff, who must meet State-mandated qualifications to hold their positions of Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician; the Library also employs two part-time University Assistants. A state hiring freeze has prevented the library from maintaining the level of staffing that it would like: one full-time and two part-time librarian positions are currently vacant, as are one full-time support position and two part-time University Assistant positions.

In addition to keeping the reference desk staffed 73 hours per week, the library provides information literacy instruction at a number of levels. Since the fall of 2005, all incoming first-year students have been required to attend a basic library orientation session, consisting of a half-hour presentation on the library’s web page and a 45-minute tour of the library’s various facilities. Additionally, the majority of first-year composition instructors invite a librarian to make a presentation on basic database searching, and most First Year Program classes also invite a librarian to present on library resources, with a research scavenger hunt relevant to the topic of the course. Librarians also provide instructional sessions for upper-division classes in various disciplines by request. A library instructional classroom with an instructor’s podium, projector, and 20 computer workstations, accommodates information literacy instruction sessions for most classes. An additional smaller classroom space with six computers serves primarily Education students and faculty.

Appraisal
The University places a high priority on the library, reflected by its placement at the center of the campus, and its attractive, well-maintained physical facility. Rising gate counts summarized in the Data First Forms indicate that the Library continues to be vital to students, faculty and community members. Two recent studies provide some insight into faculty and student perceptions of the library: a LibQual survey was conducted during spring, 2006, and in spring, 2010, library staff collaborated with a faculty member in the Psychology department who assigned his upper-level research class a project to conduct focus groups. Library staff are still analyzing the findings, but some preliminary remarks based on those studies are provided below.

Planning and Resources
The library actively seeks input from faculty and students in order to deliver the best service possible. Faculty input into decisions about collections purchases is solicited through a library liaison program. Each librarian is assigned one or more academic departments, and each department has a designated
faculty member (the “collection builder”) who serves as the conduit for collection requests from that department. This liaison/collection builder program provides a good conduit for back and forth communication between the library and academic departments. Though some departments are more active than others in making their needs known, the presence of a designated liaison librarian for each field ensures the collection is maintained appropriately, even if the department offers little input. Additionally, the library has a “Grant” program whereby faculty can request special purchases over and above their normal departmental allocation to support new curricular needs or to build the collection in areas that are under-resourced.

The library keeps detailed usage data on its electronic resources and records in-house use of all journals and microforms. The library also has a special use survey of its most expensive print journals to determine if the cost and the use warrant renewal of the annual subscriptions. Likewise, the Library sends lists of print journals by academic discipline to each academic department for review every year. Decisions concerning adding or dropping electronic resources are regularly vetted through the academic departments via the liaisons.

The University has consistently maintained its commitment to sustain Library collections and technology, though the current budget pressures felt by all departments on campus have not left the library untouched. Historically, the University has been able to provide an annual increase to the library’s collections budget in order to keep pace with cost increases from scholarly publishers, which are routinely greater than inflation in the broader economy. This level of funding has enabled the library to build its collections effectively and has supported the shift from print to electronic resources. In the year ending June 30, 2009, for instance, the Library had a collections budget of $1,010,234, which represented an increase of 27.6% over the previous five years. Such levels of commitment had enabled the Library to maintain a level of acquisitions that had not heretofore been significantly affected by economic inflation. While many libraries decrease their book budgets in order to sustain journal collections, the Smith Library acquired 4,526 paid monographs in FY2009, compared to 4,711 in FY2001. At the same time, the Library continued to sustain a relatively healthy proportion of the collections budget for books and A/V materials at 29% for the year ending June 2009, compared to 34% for the year ending June 2004. Unfortunately, such trends could not be sustained in the current fiscal climate. In FY2010, the University was unable to provide the customary inflationary adjustment and, indeed, was forced to cut the library’s collections budget by 2.5%. This cut has resulted in a structural deficit of about $75,000 for FY2010.

Collections
With these various mechanisms in place, the library collection is, at present, generally adequate to meet most of the needs of Eastern’s primarily undergraduate student body and to support the University’s curriculum. Still, “Information Control” was the area where users rated the library lowest in the 2006 LibQual survey. Even undergraduates found the library’s print and journal holdings to be short of what they desired—indeed, close to what they considered the minimum acceptable level for a university library. This relative discontent with the library’s holdings is perhaps a function of the increasingly sophisticated work that Eastern students are pursuing in their studies: as they take on more ambitious projects, more students begin to find themselves reaching for resources that are more likely to be found in a research library. These results notwithstanding, for undergraduates the library’s holdings fall within what LibQual calls the “zone of tolerance”: though short of what they would like to have, it is certainly within a realm that they consider acceptable.

Faculty members, predictably, are less satisfied by the state of the library’s holdings. For faculty members, the library’s print holdings, electronic holdings (e.g. databases), and journal holdings actually fall below the threshold of what they consider minimally acceptable. To a certain extent, faculty members’ appraisal of the library’s collections must be attributed to higher expectations of libraries arising from their experience at research libraries. Faculty members routinely identified “desired” levels
for library collections of 8.5 and higher on a 9-point scale, and their mean scores for what would be minimally acceptable never fell below 7.0.

Clearly, a library like Eastern’s is not in a position to support all faculty research needs, nor can the library meet students’ needs for advanced student projects in every field—very expensive specialized digital collections (e.g. EEBO, Compustat, etc.) are out of reach, for instance, and the library will never be able to provide the number of journal subscriptions that would be found at a research library. The library takes steps, however, to ensure that its collection is able to meet most of the university’s students’ needs most of the time. In Spring 2009, the Library used an electronic collection analysis tool called the Bowker Book Analysis System (based on Resources for College Libraries) to identify gaps in the collection. In consultation with faculty, a portion of the library collections budget was used to fill the gaps noted. Then too, the library has made a policy of paying for interlibrary loan requests for faculty and students to the extent that resources can sustain the requests: so far, they have.

**Staffing**

The 2006 LibQual survey shows that staff members are effective in administering the library’s services. In all categories, library users reported that library staff answered their expectations of service. Staff members were noted, in particular, for their readiness to respond to patron’s questions and their willingness to help. It is perhaps worth noting that, though they represented only a very small constituency in the survey, graduate students were especially positive in their assessments of the library’s staff, rating the “Affect of Service” as being near their ideal levels in numerous categories. Student participants in the 2010 focus groups confirmed the LibQual survey findings, noting, for example, that staff “were very helpful about specific questions and finding specific materials.” Though the library’s staff are doing a good job of serving the library’s patrons, the State of Connecticut’s hiring freeze has presented real challenges for staffing the library. As a result of several vacancies, in 2009-2010 the library reduced Reference services on Saturdays, eliminated Reference services for the 8:00 to 9:00am hour Monday through Friday, and added Technical Services librarians to the Reference desk coverage rotation. Staff have been stretched more thinly across all of the library’s operations and hours of operation will be reduced to 87 per week in 2010-2011.

**Information Literacy**

The Library has developed a comprehensive information literacy program, though some students do not participate in all program elements. While there is a “mandatory” library orientation for new students in the Fall, there are no “teeth” to the policy that would ensure compliance. The large majority of new students do participate in the Fall orientation, but the ability of some students to skip the session is a weakness. Of greater concern is the lack of full participation of all English 100 and 100P classes, as well as the uneven participation of students in the First Year Program. The choice of whether to invite a librarian to present to first-year classes is left to the individual instructor, and recent data indicate that 32% of the students enrolled in English 100 and 100P in the 2009-10 academic year did not receive a presentation from a librarian. Presumably, many of those instructors are offering students instruction on using research databases themselves, but the library staff cannot ensure the consistency of instruction for students in classes to which they are not invited. Further, the fact that relatively few upper-level classes in the majors have a library instruction session means that students may not be learning to use information resources pertinent to their discipline as fully as they could be.

Student participants in the spring, 2010, focus groups spoke highly of the library’s training sessions, but noted that, in some cases, they had received what they perceived to be redundant trainings when as many as three or four of their professors had scheduled library instruction sessions. On the other hand, some students also noted that they had difficulty retaining what they had learned in a one-hour session, and wondered about the possibility of a series of sessions, possibly offered each semester during the first and second years. At issue from the students’ perspective, then, is not the quality of library instruction, but
rather its timing and coordination, which are issues that would require more consistent engagement and cooperation across academic departments.

While the library has developed a range of information literacy training programs, the University has no systematic assessment program in place to determine whether students are receiving effective information literacy instruction. The Library currently uses the free TRAILS test, developed by Kent State University with funding from the IMLS, to assess the information literacy level of incoming first year students. It is clear from the results that there are gaps in incoming students’ readiness, even though the test is geared toward ninth graders. Many students do receive a broad array of instruction while at Eastern, but there is currently no program in place that determines whether all students are graduating with proficiency in use of information resources.

What evidence is available suggests that many students are not gaining the informational literacy skills the University would like for them to have by the time they graduate. Anecdotal comments from students in upper level courses who do come in for an information literacy session, for instance, reveals that many of them have little knowledge of the relevant databases in their field of study prior to the session. In Spring 2010, the Library tested 59 upper class students using the ILT test developed by Johns Hopkins University. (This test is more sophisticated than the TRAILS test and is more useful as a test for graduating seniors.) The median score was 65 on a test where 100 is the top possible score—more than 60% of the students in that small sample failed the test if one considers 70 a passing grade. It must be noted, however, that the students tested were those ineligible to take the Collegiate Learning Assessment test (CLA) in classes where the University was administering the CLA—the ILT was the alternative test administered so that all students in the participating classes would be tested. The 59 students who were tested, then, do not represent a true random sample. If their results are at all indicative, however, there is cause for concern that students are not graduating with satisfactory information literacy skills.

**Delivery of Services**

The library works to provide services to its users when and where they want them. Librarians provide online real-time chat reference service during the 73 hours per week that the Library Reference desk is staffed and an email reference service that answers questions within 24 hours during working days. The library has contracted for a 24/7 professionally-staffed reference service to take questions when the Reference desk is not staffed or is too busy to take the request. Students and faculty can access electronic resources remotely by authenticating through a proxy server, and the interlibrary loan service is likewise available remotely.

The library’s services extend as well to students who never set foot in the library building. Librarians provide information literacy instruction at satellite campus facilities by request. The library has partnered with EasternOnline to establish a librarian contact and liaison for distance learning, and has established a distance learning web page. Students enrolled in distance learning classes do not have to come to campus to obtain the ID card they need to access the library’s services. The fact that the CONSULS system allows patrons to retrieve books from whichever partner library is most convenient for them means that students in distance learning courses can avail themselves of nearly all of the library’s materials and services without ever visiting the Willimantic campus, if need be. The only aspect of remote service that is not fully available to off-campus students is delivery of interlibrary loan books from non-CSU libraries. The library currently has no provision for borrowing and then mailing the books obtained from other libraries to Eastern students who cannot come to campus. Thus far, there has been no call for such a service.

**Physical Environment**

The Library is comfortable, well-maintained, and adequately sized for the student population. At peak times of the academic year all computers are in use, but even during exam periods, those arriving earlier in the day have access to a computer. Respondents to the 2006 LibQual survey rated the library highly on
its physical space. Undergraduate students rate the library especially highly, finding it an attractive place to study. The findings of the LibQual survey are borne out by responses to the 2010 focus groups. Fully 70% of the student participants reported visiting the library at least once a week, noting that the library is “peaceful and quiet and not with many distractions,” and that it is the place “You go … to get the job done.” Singled out for particular comment were the group study rooms, which were declared “genius.” While a few students expressed a desire for softer chairs, and some noted that the third-floor quiet study zone was not always as quiet as they’d like, the most common remarks about the library as a study space were a desire for an earlier opening time and a feeling that closing custodial procedures should wait until after the library was officially closed so that students didn’t feel as though they were being “chased out.” On the whole, then, students would seem to find the library a congenial spot for study: if anything, they’d like to spend more time there.

Though faculty members’ responses to the LibQual survey indicate that they are generally content with the library’s facilities, more than 70% of 2010 faculty focus group members indicated that they did the majority of their library work online, perhaps visiting the library, as one respondent put it “several times during the semester.” Faculty member participants did note, however, that they feel it is important for their students to visit the library in order to get the full experience of research, and the vast majority (92.3%) said that they give their students assignments that require a visit to the library. On the whole, then, it would seem that, while professors do not see the library as a place to do their own work (preferring, presumably, to work in their own offices or at home), they do see the library as a valuable space for students.

Technological Infrastructure
Maintaining up-to-date computers and related hardware and software is critical for the smooth delivery of library services. In general, the library has been able to maintain a three-year replacement cycle for all of its public computers. Given financial circumstances during the last computer replacement cycle, however, many library staff machines were not replaced: while patrons consistently have access to modern, capable terminals (and, furthermore, that all terminals in use are under warranty), some staff machines are now five years old or older. While the library’s policies and practices on computer hardware are generally effective and have made serving patrons the highest priority, many of those older staff computers will need to be replaced soon.

Projection
Collections and Resources
While the library expects to maintain its relative priority in the overall scope of the University’s activities, the serious fiscal deficit projected for the State of Connecticut for the next two fiscal years is a source of concern. It is not yet clear whether the University will have the resources to sustain the level of commitment that has been funded in the past. The level of collections funding in the FY2010 budget, though diminished from what it had been in previous years, was still adequate to meet most of the needs of the University’s primarily undergraduate student body. Without adjustments to keep up with rising costs in the scholarly publishing market, however, the library will not be able to keep pace in its acquisitions. If the current financial climate forces collections funding to remain flat—or if it necessitates further cuts—then the library will have to make cuts based on usage and cost. The usage data that the library collects on journals and electronic collections will inform any decisions on cuts, as will discussions with academic departments. The library has already braced for the possibility of further cuts by asking departments to identify serials and database subscriptions to target for cancellation if necessary; departments were asked to identify cuts amounting to 10% of the cost for subscriptions associated with their disciplines.
Also of ongoing concern is the CSU System Office’s ability and willingness to sustain funding for shared CSU electronic resources and for ILS maintenance. Should this funding cease, the Library would have a very serious budget deficit to address. Likewise, the Library depends heavily on databases funded by the State iConn program, which was reduced and almost eliminated in the Connecticut State budget this year. If this program were to lose funding, the library would be challenged to sustain access to all of those resources.

**Staffing**

The State of Connecticut’s hiring freeze has already affected the library’s ability to deliver services, and promises to create further predicaments in the near-term future. The loss of another part-time staff person in the Spring of 2010, for example, means that the library will reduce operating hours for the 2010-11 academic year from 94 to 87 hours per week. Though staff have been stretched thin in all areas, the diminished number of librarian staff, in particular, will make it challenging to provide additional support for the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum’s integrated curricular element of information literacy if professors increase requests for instructional sessions.

**Information Literacy**

Implementing an assessment tool for a valid sample of graduating seniors would be a useful first step in identifying whether or not students are aware of the information resources available and know how to effectively use them. The ILT test that the library administered to a small, unscientific sampling of upper-level students would be a promising candidate, but the test is a costly one. Information literacy has been adopted as an element in the Liberal Arts Core curriculum, so the library, in collaboration with other academic units, will need to find a way to assess systematically students’ information literacy.

As an interim step, encouraging a greater level of collaboration between the new Writing Center (located in the Academic Services Center in the lower level of the library building) and the Library Reference librarians might help more students to seek information literacy assistance individually.

**Facilities**

The Library has the physical capacity to house 500,000 volumes. At present there is still room for growth, but a plan for off-site storage (if off-site storage is desired) or for regular weeding and discard needs to be established and funded to prepare for the day when the library reaches its capacity. Duplicate volumes are already in the process of being weeded, and many volumes of journals available through JSTOR will be removed in AY2010-11.

The group studies and research carrels need to have computers installed in order to make them more attractive for student use. The Library had hoped to use “roll-down” computers to install in the 16 research carrels when the last allotment of new computers was received, but other needs on campus precluded that from happening. The Library is planning to experiment with loaning laptops for use in the study rooms.

**Instructional Technology**

**Description**

Information Technology Services (ITS) supports the mission of the University by providing leadership in technology research and implementation. ITS provides a wide range of services to the campus community. This section addresses only those ITS services relating directly to instructional technology, information services, and academic planning. Other ITS functions—including basic IT infrastructure and classroom technology—are addressed under Standard 8 (Physical and Technological Resources).
**Course Management System and Ancillary Tools**

The Information Technology initiative in Eastern’s 2008-13 Strategic Plan articulates the fundamental goals and assumptions of the University’s approach to Information Technology: “[The University] will provide faculty, students, and employees access to innovative technologies, platforms, resources, and state-of-the-art facilities, and facilitate University- and System-wide partnerships. Technology will not be regarded as a driving force, but rather the foundation that creates an environment which promotes learning, critical thinking, and engagement.” ITS seeks to provide students, faculty, and staff the tools they need to pursue the University’s academic mission, without allowing those tools to take precedence over the work they are meant to facilitate.

Eastern has chosen Blackboard VISTA as its course management system. VISTA is used, variously, as an adjunct to traditional “on the ground” classes; as a component in “hybrid” courses involving both in-person and online interaction; and as a vehicle for delivering courses entirely online. Incorporating VISTA into classes allows faculty members to deliver course material in new and flexible ways, and allows students who are accustomed to online environments to engage with their courses on their own schedules.

ITS provides all users with a number of communication and productivity tools to support academic work. In addition to email accounts and network-based storage, an institutional site license allows the University to provide students and employees with the Microsoft Office suite for home use. In the Summer of 2010, ITS will migrate a number of its offerings to Microsoft’s Live@edu platform. Live@edu will provide students with a portable email address that they can keep once they leave the University; 25GB of online storage for storing and archiving their coursework (far more than the University’s current network storage scheme allows); and a suite of cloud-based tools that will facilitate sharing and collaborating on documents, scheduling, and messaging.

The University supports academic departments in the delivery of departmental web pages, and also provides students and faculty with server space for the publication of personal web sites. A number of faculty use personal web pages in addition to (or instead of) VISTA for distributing materials to their students, as well as for maintaining their own scholarly presence on the web. A recent upgrade now allows faculty members to deploy not simply static HTML pages, but also more sophisticated database-driven web sites running on a LAMP (Linux/Apache/MySQL/PHP) stack. ITS also maintains a multi-user Movable Type installation to provide blogging services to faculty and other campus offices—a number of departments and centers have begun to take advantage of this capacity in order to communicate their latest news to students and the public.

All of the University’s technologies are accessible to students and faculty wherever they may be. All computers on the campus network can access email, network storage, and library resources; these resources are also available from off campus via web authentication.

**Staffing, Training, and Support**

ITS has an organizational structure of 40 staff members, ten student workers, three University Assistants, and three student trainees. The State of Connecticut’s hiring freeze has left some positions vacant, such that ITS currently has 35 members in various support positions. ITS has several staff members dedicated to providing training to the campus community on technology equipment and software. Incoming students receive training on a number of systems during new student orientation, for instance, and one team—the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT)—offers classes on new software for faculty and students throughout the year. CIT also assists faculty members with the instructional design and the implementation of courses using Blackboard VISTA.
ITS maintains a number of different spaces where students and faculty can access the University’s technological tools, both in classroom settings and independently. Classrooms are universally equipped with technology with the minimum in any classroom including internet connectivity, an LCD projector, sound system, digital camera, VCR/DVD player, and lectern with controls. All of the University’s academic classrooms meet this standard. In addition to the eighty workstations in the library, most of the residence halls offer PC/study lounges, and students have access, as well, to an open computer lab on the fourth floor of Webb Hall, which provides more than 100 PC and Macintosh workstations, as well as laser printers and scanners. A number of computer lab-style classrooms are available in the several academic buildings for use in classroom sessions. Some of these classrooms are primarily dedicated to particular disciplinary uses (as is the case with the English Writing Lab in Webb Hall and the Macintosh Graphic Arts Lab in Shafer Hall), while others accommodate multiple disciplines, both with commonly-used productivity software and with specialized applications for use in computer programming, mathematical analysis and visualization, and other fields. Moreover, students and faculty can connect their own computers to the campus network via wireless access points throughout the University’s academic core—the library, Webb Hall, the Science building, and the Student Center. ITS is in the process of extending wireless access to the residence halls, as well.

Policies
A college campus is not simply a workplace for students, but also a second home. As such, the lines between academic and recreational use of technology are not always sharp ones—students play games, chat, and spend time on social networks, even as they also access library resources or collaborate on projects using Blackboard VISTA. While the University offers students ample network capacity for recreational uses, ITS maintains clear policies outlining the appropriate use of technology on campus. These policies are published in the student handbook, but students are briefed on University policies during new student orientation and are, additionally, reminded of those policies each time they connect to the campus network. ITS maintains a web site that explaining the consequences of downloading copyrighted material and directing students to legal outlets for obtaining digital music and videos. As a further precaution, the University’s firewall and packet shaper are configured to prohibit P2P traffic.

IT in Academic Planning and Administration
Eastern uses Sungard’s Banner enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform for a variety of administrative purposes, including course scheduling and enrollment management. Students can register for classes and monitor their progress towards their degrees using the eWeb portal. The same portal provides faculty with an overview of enrollment in their courses and allows for electronic submission of midterm and final grades; eWeb serves as a tool for academic advising, as well, allowing faculty members to examine student transcripts, analyze students’ completion of degree requirements, and view available courses in the upcoming term. With programming assistance from ITS staff, departments and offices across the university rely on Banner to generate reports for use in analyzing and assessing programs. Banner provides insight into enrollment patterns, patterns of student performance, etc. and so helps the University both plan its course offerings and identify potential pressure points in the curriculum. In addition to the data provided by Banner, ITS provides survey tools powered by SelectSurvey that allow offices and groups to gather information on an ad hoc basis for use in decision making.

Appraisal
The University and the CSU System office are working hard to leverage every technology dollar to maximize services to students and staff. ITS actively seeks input from the University community in planning and evaluating IT services. ITS holds open meetings with users on campus to determine the adequacy of their services and infrastructure, and the CIO and Directors meet regularly with key stakeholders to maintain dialogue regarding plans and programmatic changes. Only recently, the
University Senate created an Information Technology Committee to advise the CIO in planning, administering, and evaluating programs and services. The University’s 2008-13 Strategic Plan included a comprehensive review of the University’s IT needs and led to a plan for targeting the future growth of the University’s IT capacity.

Use of Instructional Technology
The technological tools that ITS provides are used by many faculty to enhance their courses, but those tools could be exploited still more fully and more widely. Naturally, faculty members have differing levels of comfort and facility with computers and other technology: some leverage many different tools that VISTA provides, some use only a few, and some make no use of VISTA at all. Of course, VISTA is only a tool for the work of teaching and learning—it doesn’t represent a one-size-fits-all solution for every course—but it is a powerful tool, and one whose potential more faculty would do well to explore. Increasingly, students arrive at Eastern well-versed in the web and accustomed to seeking out and interacting with information in a variety of ways and on their own schedules. Confining the presentation and discussion of course materials to the set periods of class meetings risks missing out on the opportunity to engage students’ attention and interest in ways that come naturally to them.

The team at the Center for Instructional Technology provides training and support to faculty members seeking to move their course materials into a digital environment, but that team can find itself overwhelmed by requests for assistance with routine issues of VISTA course creation and set-up in the weeks before the start of each term. Though ITS offers a number of trainings throughout the year, attendance at those trainings is relatively sparse; it seems likely that this training is not reaching those faculty members most in need of basic skills.

Training, Support, and Staffing
Of course, it is not only the faculty who have varying levels of comfort and skill in using technology. Contrary to the popular image of a generation of “digital natives,” not all students arrive at Eastern equally conversant with computers. Even among students who are comfortable with computers, a lifetime of web surfing and instant messaging does not always translate into facility with the kinds of systems they will be asked to use as part of their studies. Students, too, require support and training if the University is to ensure that they have the skills that will be required of them as they enter upon careers in the twenty-first century. Results from two years of assessment of technological skills of entering students indicated that the majority needed additional skill in only one area, the use of electronic databases to manage data.

ITS has adapted to the best of its ability to the staffing challenges presented by the State’s hiring freeze. The ITS organizational structure was modified in 2008 to respond to changing demands for services. This realignment of staff and functions allowed ITS to support a growing academic mission without additional staff. In early 2009, library computer and media support staff were moved into ITS support services to better serve faculty and students utilizing the technically complex Library systems architecture.

Policies and Security
ITS is constantly reviewing and enhancing its policies and adding equipment to protect sensitive data and critical applications. Network access is reviewed semi-annually. The University restructured ITS to create an Information Security Officer to monitor the security of the University’s technologies. Security briefings are conducted around campus to keep staff up-to-date on the latest threats and security measures.

Facilities and Resources
The University provides appropriate computer hardware and software to students, faculty, and staff. Computing resources are accessible across the campus, and ITS offers training and support in the use of available technologies.
ITS requires a more formal assessment tool to determine the quality of its services and make adjustments to increase effectiveness. Although good information is obtained from meetings with faculty and staff and the analysis of the Helpdesk, a formal survey would provide more concrete feedback to allow appropriate adjustments.

**Projection**

The Information Technology initiative of the 2008-13 Strategic Plan lays out the directions for growth and development for the University’s IT capacities.

ITS will develop a more robust University portal for students, faculty, and staff by better leveraging capacities that the University already has. Currently, Eastern has a license for Sungard’s Luminis communications platform, which integrates with both the Banner ERP and the Blackboard VISTA course management system. To date, the University has not exploited Luminis sufficiently. Together, these systems will provide an integrated digital environment for all campus business: students can register for classes, review their schedule, see upcoming calendar events, and pay their bills all in one place; faculty can see all of their classes at a glance, share materials with the students in particular sections, post announcements, and moderate chats; all community members will be able to use the portal for posting announcements and sharing materials for collaborative work.

As technology becomes ever more central to the University’s operations and its academic programs, training for faculty, staff, and students will grow increasingly important. ITS will conduct open forums with various groups to determine the greatest areas of need, and will tailor trainings to meet the community’s requirements. Technology training will need to become available on an on-demand basis.

In order to better support users on campus, ITS will improve its methods of gathering data and feedback about support needs. Efforts to analyze data from ITS’s Helpdesk provide a model for mining available usage data in order to evaluate how technology is being used on campus and to assess the effectiveness of different solutions. Additionally, however, ITS will use currently-available tools to develop a more formal survey system to provide better feedback and more consistent data.

Provided that: 1) ITS staffing remains stable; 2) planned strategic projects are completed; and 3) proposed changes to ITS budgetary formulas agreed upon by Eastern and the CSU System office take effect, ITS will continue to be well-positioned to support the University’s academic mission and its administrative operations.

**Institutional Effectiveness**

The adequacy and appropriateness of Library and Information resources are assessed through surveys, focus groups and analysis of usage data. Adjustments are made in response to findings as resources allow. Additional information that will help in aligning resources with student and faculty needs will be obtained from further evaluation of students’ information literacy and from a survey tool designed to assess faculty, student, and staff satisfaction with ITS programs and services.