I. PURPOSE.

To review and assess the status of Coleman Library’s Library Commons initiatives (student-focused Information Commons, Learning Commons and faculty-focused Research Commons) and recommend appropriate actions to facilitate continued development.

II. STATUS.

The Coleman Library staff has persisted since 1998 in its determination to design and implement a Library Commons at some level (see section below on levels of Commons: Information Commons, Learning Commons). The Library Director and Associate Library Director have collaborated in moving the nascent initiative forward incrementally through:

1. discussions – on campus, in-state and regionally, nationally and internationally at professional conferences, on targeted listservs, via e-mail and telephone conferences; all Library staff were invited to participate in open brain-storming sessions, seeking varied input to help shape Coleman Library’s Library Commons initiative
2. targeted funding and micro-implementation – library budgets over the last 5 years have included targeted funding for Commons-related resources, including staff, technology (hardware and software), professional travel; Title III funds have been available the past 2 years to support this project, including site visits and consultant services
3. professional workshops – library staff have been supported to participate in local and national Commons workshops
4. site visits – library staff have been supported (some by Title III funds) to make Commons site visits
5. tactical and strategic budgetary planning – library administration has used the budgetary process and budget encumbrances to tactically further the Commons initiative, and have begun strategic planning to move the initiative to the next level
6. professional hiring – library administration has recently hired a professional librarian to assume an explicit lead role in the Commons implementation (cf. February, 2006, job description)

Information and Learning Commons Definitions - Placement of Coleman Library’s Library Commons Initiative in the Continuum.
The Library Commons can be seen as a continuum from Information Commons (Level One - adjustment and Level Two - isolated change) → Learning Commons (Level Three - far-reaching change and Level Four - transformational change).

As per the definitions (below), the FAMU Learning Commons initiative is an Information Commons with most aspects of level two (isolated change) except that the services, staff and facilities ARE NOT “…INTEGRATED in terms of space, desks, staff, training…”

The goal should be to continue development and implementation to transformational change.

Definitions: Information Commons to Learning Commons

Information Commons Levels One and Two:
- **Physically** located on one or more floors of a library
- Providing access to traditional library services, high-touch - general information, library catalog access, reference services, reserves, circulation, ILL, etc.
- Constituting a high-technology-rich environment, high-tech – networks, public access machines of various types as needed
- Providing resources (hardware, software, support) for what was formerly a “computer lab” plus various specialty computer labs (e.g., scanning lab, multi-media lab, etc.) integrated in terms of space, desks, staff, training, etc., into the traditional library services
- With the full range of productivity software (e.g., MSOffice, SPSS/SAS, ArcView, Maple, Adobe Acrobat, Photoshop, OmniPage, Illustrator, Premiere, etc.)
- Using the “electronic continuum of knowledge media” (Beagle) often call the virtual commons
- Various collaborative learning and work spaces
- Beagle’s “continuum of service: 1. search & retrieval, 2. processing and interpretation, and 3. packaging, presentation and production
- Near-seamless integration in terms of space, services, resources, services desks, staff and appropriate cross-training
- Library-centric
- Can be seen as (per Beagle and the American Council on Education)
  - Information Commons Level One - an adjustment – e.g., a computer lab with basic productivity software in the library, with resource access and some coordination; minimal space design implications – library-centric
  - Information Commons Level Two - isolated change – e.g., a computer lab with a broad range of multi-media productivity software and formats, access to all resources and extensive integration of space, resources and staff into the continuum of services, with significantly altered patterns of service, aligned with institutional mission; library-centric

Learning Commons Levels Three and Four:
- Includes all aspects of the Information Commons, but to a greater extent –
o Clearly and explicitly aligned strategically with the institution-wide vision and mission – a dynamic and active partner in the broad educational enterprise
o Imbues most of the library with the integrative perspective
o Includes traditional (high-touch) and technology rich (high-tech)
o Fuller range of technological resources, more seamlessly integrated
o More, more varied and more adjustable collaborative work spaces
o Extended “continuum” to emphasize more creation and construction of knowledge

• *Not* library-centric – brings into and includes within the “library” many formerly external functions and activities, and extends into the former homes of these functions and activities: e.g.,
o Faculty development center / center for teaching & e-learning
o Integration of “library” into a course management system – WebCT, Blackboard, etc.
o Centers for writing, learning support (tutorials), special programs (e.g., Honors), learning communities, career counseling
o Many collaborative work spaces of greatly varied types, sizes and adjustability
o Greater emphasis on the far end of the continuum, e.g., creation and construction of knowledge in Institutional Repository and Open Archives type activities
o Faculty “shared offices”, collaborative spaces in library
o May include such less-traditional library functions and activities as exhibitions, readings, performances (music, dance, theater, etc.), gaming, lectures, dances, panel discussion, institution-wide fora on important / current / controversial topics, putt-putt, design-to-fabrication-laboratories, etc.

• Can be seen as (per Beagle and the American Council on Education)
o Far-reaching change – add faculty development/teaching & e-learning center, course management system integration, virtual reference; more collaborative and not library-centric
o Transformational change – add closer strategic alignment, greater functional integration, Institutional Repository (e.g., D-Space), writing / authoring across the curriculum involvement including an integrated laboratory, greater involvement within and beyond library of fuller range of institutional functions and activities in breadth and depth; planning, design, knowledge (and perhaps product) creation / construction / fabrication and not library-centric

The FAMU Library Commons as Complement to the University Commons (Academic Technology Lab/ATL).

The Library Commons has been considered as a complement to the University Commons (ATL) initiative (and related initiatives), which has been approved, funded and will soon be implemented. The Library staff have sought to coordinate their work with that of the Enterprise Information Technology (EIT) Division.
Concept Clarity and Understanding.

The Library administrative and professional staff has researched the Commons concept (Information, Learning, Library Commons, etc.), implemented first-steps, and refined its understanding in breadth and depth since 1998.

The Library administrative and professional staff has tightened its clarity and focused its understanding of the Commons conceptual model through research and reading, workshops, site-visits and obtaining consultative services. The consultant’s report and follow-up conversations will further strengthen and focus the Library Commons concept for FAMU.

The Library staff will engage in ever more focused and sophisticated conversations and planning to move the Library Commons initiative forward. University Commons (ATL) staff will be included in the conversations and planning; Library staff will be included in University Commons (ATL) conversations and implementation.

Implementation.

The Library has incrementally implemented the following components of a Library Commons:

- provided numerous 98 of computer workstations in the Library
- added productivity software on most Library workstations to make the “scholar workstations”
- added workstations to selected group study rooms to facilitate computer-enhanced collaborative research and work
- via the Library Systems Unit extended the responsibility and expertise in provision of technology (hardware, software, user support, etc.) services within the Library
- added white-boards to group study room to transform them into more collaborative workspaces
- in collaboration with Auxiliary Services planned and opened a café (Jazzman’s Café and Study Lounge) on the main / 2nd floor of the Library
- created a conversation/collaboration area adjacent to the Jazzman’s Café and Study Lounge
- hired a Commons Librarian
- used Title III funds in a targeted manner to investigate and advance the Library Commons initiative (e.g., Commons site visits of Library administrative and professional staff, contracting consulting services, etc.)
- planned additional Commons site visits

Public Service Desk Model.

The public service desk model presently operational in the Coleman Library is a traditional, discrete/segregated model:

- main / 2nd floor: circulation and reserves desk, staffed by a combination of support staff, student and professional staff from Access Services and Library Systems for the hours that the library is open
main / 2<sup>nd</sup> floor: traditional reference desk, staffed primarily by 9 professional (MLS) librarian
3<sup>rd</sup> floor: periodicals/serials desk, staffed by .2 support staff, along with students and 1 librarian

Resources.

Funding
- annual targeted Library planned budgetary requests for Commons-related resources
- targeted portions of FAMU’s Title III funds
- targeted portions of Florida Center for Library Automation (FCLA) Technology funds
- targeted portions of BR318 library annex construction funds

Facilities
- provision of computer work clusters around the main / 2<sup>nd</sup>-floor entrance and across from the reference desk in the café and in study rooms
- installation of café and conversation/collaboration area on main/2<sup>nd</sup> floor
- installation of additional white boards in these rooms to increase writing space and protect walls

Technology
- an increased number of computer work-stations in the Library
- addition of more productivity software on computer work-stations (the “scholar workstations” model)
- provision of Systems help desk services
- upgraded print stations via Auxiliary Services
- laptop loan program initiated
- wireless access to the facility via EIT
- increased data ports for public access

Staff
- greater responsibility, expertise, professional certification and provision of services among the Library Systems Unit staff
- newly hired Commons Librarian

III. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS.

The FAMU Library Commons as Integrated Complement to the University Commons.

The following recommendations support the library’s goal of transitioning from a basic Information Commons to a second-level Information Commons and later to a Learning Commons. The Library Commons has been designed and will be implemented as an integrated complement to the University Commons (ATL) initiative (and related initiatives), which has been approved, funded and will soon be implemented. Each initiative provides a range of services targeting student patrons.
(advanced research needs for doctoral and faculty research will be broached below in the Research Commons and the Digital Commons institutional repository), intended to enhance teaching and learning, improve student learning outcomes, and improve retention and graduation rates. It is important that each of these initiatives provides: 1) internally integrated services and tiered, taxonomic (vertical) articulation of services, and 2) services that are both complementary and where possible integrated (horizontal) across initiatives. That is, the University Commons (ATL) provides extensive high technology with appropriate ancillary services, and the Library Commons provides extensive library research resources and support with appropriate high-tech resources and appropriate ancillary services. The patron should feel that both areas are seamlessly integrated parts of the student commons area with different emphases, with complementary and integrated resources and services.

Both initiatives combine high-touch and high-tech in a mutually inclusive way. Shared and standardized technologies ensure efficient and effective communication and data-sharing; shared mission and collaborative staff efforts are intended to facilitate face-to-face communication (library staff participate in the University Commons initiative and University Commons (ATL) staff participate in the Library Commons initiative).

The University Commons (ATL) initiative includes and integrates numerous services, spaces and resources for students, e.g., traditional computer labs; “creative” computer resources; smart classrooms; instructional design resources; social spaces; refreshment/café availability; tutorial services (math and writing support), a testing center, adaptive technologies, etc. Some or all of these services will be available during extended hours.

The Instructional Media Center is located on the ground level of the Library building. It provides access during most Library hours to technology resources and services for students and faculty: traditional open computer labs with a range of software; training (one-on-one, small-group, and workshop) for faculty in Web design, presentation (PPT), course-management (Blackboard) and e-learning (Techsmith Camtasia) pedagogical tools and products, productivity tools (MSOffice), etc. Its plans appear to be continuation of its present services with regular refreshment of technology and some slight increase in faculty training.

The Library inhabits all four floors of the Library building (services primarily on floors 2 through 4). In addition to the present traditional library (information access in-house, through the Florida State University system, interlibrary loan, and document delivery; student, paraprofessional/support and professional staff support and services; quiet study spaces), the Library provides numerous (how many?) public access computers with internet access and some productivity software (scholar workstations). The intention of the Library is to develop and provide an evolving increase in the quantity and variety of research-related services in an ever-greater technology-rich environment.

Public Service Desk Model.

Move toward an integrated services model (especially at the first-, full-service desk on the main/2nd floor, as opposed to the discrete, segregated service model): all public service staff (student, paraprofessional/support and professional staff) accept,
embrace and seek cross-orientation and cross-training at various levels of complexity, creating a sort of “informational triage” desk.

One or two smaller, full-service desks could be implemented 1) in the room where the reference collection is presently located on the 2nd/main floor, *and* 2) perhaps in the room behind that, adjacent to the group study rooms are. Both of these desks could be staffed by student staff as needed and as they are available.

**Implementation and Resources.**

The Library administration and staff should move forward on the following components of the Library Commons initiative – adequate and appropriate funding is imperative:

- increase annual funding via Library planned budgetary requests for Commons-related resources should increase in dollar-quantity, strategic allocation for several years of incremental and evolving Library Commons implementation
- ensure continued and increased access to Title III funds
- ensure continued access to FCLA funding
- progress toward ubiquity of computing – full, standard range of software resources on all workstations (desktop, laptop, etc.), so the patron makes decisions “digitally” where s/he wants/needs to go, rather than deciding which building, room, or bank of computers to select (e.g., MSOffice, SPSS/SAS, ArcView, Maple, Adobe Acrobat, Photoshop, OmniPage, Illustrator, Premiere, etc.)
- reconfigure the area around the main entrance (e.g., move foyer walls inward to allow use of space to extend computer work areas) to use the “scholar workstations” and better, more spacious furniture (desk/table space for 2-3 patrons per computer station, 2-3 wheeled chairs per computer station, versus the cramped, straight-lined spaces presently provided, as in a traditional computer lab setting) for collaborative workspaces – more space and varieties of space (versus cramped, rectangular, straight-lined environment), clearly collaborative ambience (visual indicators of collaboration, e.g., space and chairs for 2-3 patrons at each workstation, wireless keyboards and mouse for variable computer control), as in the PPT
- free up space presently occupied by microforms - this is prime real estate and could provide impactful, varied, patron-focused services adjacent to the main entrances: collaborative computer workspaces or group study spaces or scanning areas or shared-faculty-office spaces or other ancillary and related services
- bring the broadest possible range of tiered-services to the main-/2nd-floor, first desk (full-service, Commons desk), so the patron receives her/his response and has her/his need fulfilled within three “clicks” or attempts (from the accepted Web-design “three-click rule”) by simply coming to the first available service point, asking her/his question, which is either 1) answered immediately, or 2) researched and answered shortly thereafter, or 3) has the patron referred immediately to the answer (whether the answer is the location in the Commons, the appropriate staff-person, phone number, e-mail address, Website, or other “location” of her/his need)
• close the reference desk (perhaps remove it), replacing it with the 2nd-floor, front-entrance first-service-point, full-service-Commons-desk for most questions (data tell us 80% of questions coming to the reference desk do *not* need MLS reference librarian responses); reference librarians serve at the first- and full-service-desk and/or as referral consultants, thereby freeing up reference librarians to do appropriately high-level work (bibliographic instruction, outreach, research, teaching, collection development, etc.)

• enhance facilities in terms of:
  o technology (hardware and software) evolving to greater robustness, greater variety (including not only searching but progressively more aspects of productivity: MSOffice Professional, SPSS/SAS, Maple/Mathematica, full range of scanning/digitization and multimedia activities) and quality (industry standards, e.g., network backbone; refreshment cycles; P4+ speed; server-based back-up; multiple terabyte storage; exchange server for full remote access, etc.) of resources
  o furniture/furnishings replaced and upgraded to provide more patron-focused, collaboration-facilitating, ergonomic, aesthetically-pleasing accommodations, including carpet (carpet squares versus rolls), walls, full-spectrum lighting, natural light, acoustical sound-damping, pleasing and comfortable seating/lounging areas, especially on the main/second floor: at and around the entrance; in the room where the reference collection is presently located; in the next room adjacent to the group study rooms (cf. DR Bailey’s PPT images)
  o creation of a *visible Commons link* between the University Commons (Academic Technology Lab/ATL) and the Library Commons: collaborate with the graduate programs in Architecture and Landscape Architecture to bring competitive creative energies to bear on the design and creation of a Physical Commons Bridge between the two buildings housing the University Commons (Academic Technology Lab/ATL) and the Library Commons, demonstrating to students that these constitute one, seamless student Commons with 1) technology (University) and 2) research (Library) emphases: the patron can move freely and seamlessly between the two and the service resources will follow the patron and be available to the patron
  o enhance the present café to make it card-swipe access 24/7 or 24/5, placing more technology (computers, a printer, etc.) in the café

• enhance technology resources as follows:
  o technology (hardware and software) evolve to greater robustness, greater variety (including not only searching but progressively more aspects of productivity: MSOffice Professional, SPSS/SAS, Maple/Mathematica, full range of scanning/digitization and multimedia activities) and quality (industry standards, e.g., network backbone; refreshment cycles; P4+ speed; server-based back-up; multiple terabyte storage; exchange server for full remote access, etc.) of resources
  o add computers and more writing surfaces to group study rooms
• employ “migration of generations” for older, slower computers (migrate to less robust-needs-based applications, e.g., e-mail, Web-browser or word-processing only), perhaps moving current computers for which there is not adequate space to different locations (e.g., group study rooms), if work areas are crowded
• continue to provide Library Systems Unit adequate access to technologies, training, support, and staffing to promote provision of high-quality technology appropriate to patron research and production needs.

• develop and enhance staff as follow:
  o provide adequate quantity and quality of student (utility Student Commons Assistants, paraprofessional/support (utility Library Commons Assistants) and professional (technology-savvy, focused on patrons’ needs rather that traditional staff needs) staff to meet patron needs (point, level, time, place, speed, format and container of need)
  o provide appropriate and adequate training and development of staff (SOLINET, NEFLIN, online, professional certification like Microsoft, etc.)
  o provide access to appropriate and adequate training, development, tools and spaces for *all* Library staff for Commons cross-orientation and cross-training
  o restructure all positions when they come open (or even before, if they do not serve the Library’s / University’s mission well enough) to support the Commons model

• enhance digital materials as follows:
  o embrace the Institutional Repository concept – a digital library of FAMU intellectual productivity openly accessible to and useful for FAMU faculty, students and staff, as well as other academics around the world (cf. http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/)
  o continue investigating appropriate tools (hardware and software, e.g., Digital Commons, ContentDM, DSpace, etc.) for a FAMU digital Institutional Repository to capture the intellectual capital of FAMU’s faculty (working papers, pre-prints, post-prints, publications, datasets, etc.), graduate students (prized research papers, theses and dissertations, and publications), and high-achieving undergraduate students (promising seminar and honors papers)
  o seek funding within and beyond (i.e., grants) the University’s revenue pools to implement and maintain the digital repository
  o provide funding to train present staff and add staff as needed to deposit born-digital materials into the repository, digitize important materials not born digital (archives, special collections, etc.) irrespective of medium (including images, audio, video, multimedia, etc.)
  o enhance the Library Commons to include the hardware (various types of scanners; robust computers like Macintoshes, to process digital materials), software (Digital Commons, ContentDM; image and sound manipulation software like Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, etc.)
Faculty Research Commons.

The University Commons (Academic Technology Lab/ATL) and Library Commons are student-focused (undergraduate and graduate). Faculty have research, technology and facilities needs of different robustness, complexity, quantity and quality than students. A Research Commons (of which there are several models) would provide concomitant research resources for faculty. The original Library reading room on the third floor front section of the library (1942 vintage), which houses the periodical collection, would provide an appropriate Research Commons: integration of older (1942 and before) research media, methods, resources and services fully integrated with cutting-edge technologies, media, communications resources, etc., to promote and facilitate robust scholarship incorporating and integrating the power of the past (pre-1942 and the 20th century) with contemporary 21st-century and future-orientated scholarship. The physical ambience could provide “visible signs of integration and collaboration among the centuries.” Funding resources (IMLS, NEH, NEA, NSF, etc.) would likely find the concept attractive, especially vis-à-vis the cultural and intellectual significance of Historically Black academic institutions.

The Library has also investigated implementing an institutional repository – storing and making searchable the institution’s intellectual capital not captured in traditional publications. There are about 500 in the world. Some use “open-source” software (e.g., MIT’s DSpace, or FEDORA), but these require a tremendous amount of programming support on the institution’s part. There are several turn-key packages (Digital Commons, ContentDM). Apparently the FAMU faculty have a growing interest in this and it should be supported; the cost is $20,000-$30,000/year; you can see an example of this in the recently launched site: http://digitalcommons.providence.edu.

SUMMARY.

The University would best serve its students and faculty by providing ongoing support for the Commons initiatives in the University Commons (Academic Technology Lab/ATL), the Library Commons, and related initiatives. As outlined above, these include 1) the Commons framework of integrated services; 2) staffing which provides services based on patron needs, with cross-trained, integrated staff; 3) patron-focused learning spaces; and 4) a technology-rich environment imbedded in and integrated with traditional library resources.

The University would best serve its students and faculty by providing strategic planning, funding, training/development, tools (technology, spaces, time, etc.) to move the clearly evolving Library Commons initiative at least incrementally forward toward a Learning Commons at the highest, transformative level. The Library administration and staff have demonstrated clarity of concept, understanding and persistence in pursuing patron-focused services and should be supported in moving an already successful initiative consistently forward.

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