

“Only connect”¹

The collocation of the University of Washington, Bothell and Cascadia Community College

by Cynthia Fugate

While Forster may have had something more spiritual in mind, the words “only connect” serve as excellent practical advice to those of us engaged in collaborative, cross-institutional partnerships. The need for positive, continual connection to our partners, including the occasional frank exchange of opposing views, is what makes collaborations so challenging and interesting.

The recently launched collocation of the University of Washington, Bothell (UWB), and Cascadia Community College has given those of us in the campus library ample opportunity to put connection into practice—establishing links with the newly created community college, strengthening links with our partner of ten years, UWB, and maintaining our institutional and collegial links with the UWB Libraries.

The background

UWB opened its doors in 1990 as one of five legislatively mandated branch campuses in the state. Charged to serve the needs of time-bound, place-bound students, UWB has from the beginning been an innovative, student-centered institution where collaboration between faculty and librarians is expected and supported. As part of the UWB Libraries, the campus library has had the best of both

worlds—access to a world-class library and its expertise, and a scale which allows for experimentation and rapid change. Defining and redefining our partnerships with UWB and with the UWB Libraries has been an exciting challenge over the last ten years, one which promises to become even more interesting as we add Cascadia to the mix.

Collocation—the decision

In 1994 the Washington State Legislature decided that the state’s newest community college, Cascadia, and the UWB should be located on the same piece of land and should, to the extent possible, share services. Naturally, shared library services had an appeal that could not be denied—just one building to build, no duplication of staff, shared collections; the list is endless.

We were fortunate that our task involved not so much the merging of two existing systems as the grafting of a new twig onto an existing plant. Since Cascadia had no students, and very few staff, until fall 2000, and UWB had been growing steadily for ten years in its temporary quarters, we were able to avoid many of the problems that arise when existing systems try to merge. Having said that, community colleges and universities have different missions and different expectations

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about library services, and attending to that issue was foremost in the minds of those who began to plan this partnership.

Making it happen

Planning and implementing the shared library service and the new library building involved staff at all levels, from the UWB Libraries, the campus library, and from community colleges in the region. We were particularly fortunate to have the advice of a number of community college librarians in planning our new library and its services. Their contributions helped us create a library that serves both community college and university students and faculty equally well.

One tactic that emerged from those discussions and has worked particularly well in creating bridges rather than boundaries, is to assign librarians liaison responsibilities across institutions, so that, for example, the science librarian serves the faculty and students of Cascadia and UWB.

Believing that the best way to become part of a community is to help to create it, librarians participated fully in the curriculum planning process. They were invited to planning sessions that took place in the summer and helped teaching faculty integrate concepts of information literacy into the curriculum. As a result, they have had a busy fall quarter in the library and in the classrooms working with Cascadia students on a variety of projects. We hope to be able to build an information literacy curriculum for our community college students, which will articulate well with the curriculum in place at UW, thus building yet another bridge between the two institutions.

Naturally, in such a situation, one cannot rely on goodwill alone, and the rules of the road for shared library and media services are spelled out in a subagreement to the "Cascadia Community College and University of Washington, Bothell, Operation and Management Foundation Agreement." Services are provided to Cascadia on a proportional basis calculated on the number of full-time equivalent students,

and the costs are recalculated as the institutions grow.

Currently Cascadia has a little more than 800 FTE and UWB has approximately 1,200, so the split is 40/60. The subagreement took months of good faith negotiation between Cascadia and University Libraries administrators, as well as the aid of legal counsel. The basic principle is one of equity—attempting to provide equal services to Cascadia students in exchange for appropriate financial considerations. Working out the actual cost of providing library services on a per FTE basis was

an enormous task which involved the contributions of many of the libraries staff and the good faith and good will of everyone involved in the negotiations. The agreement is scheduled to be revised in the spring, and we will be taking a close look at how equitable an arrangement we managed to achieve.

The symbolic importance of the campus library in collocation is hard to miss—it is one of few services shared equally by both institutions. It is also located centrally on the site. With Cascadia on one side and UW on the other, it reaches out to both communities and invites them to

share a rich legacy of scholarship, as well as the excitement of creating new knowledge. We hope that the campus library will become not only a virtual intellectual commons for our two communities, but an actual one as well.

We have a number of events planned at the library that will highlight the work of students and faculty of both institutions and further encourage collaboration among our community members.

As we look to strengthen and extend our relationships with all of our partners, we are confident that the good will and good faith engendered by our early struggles to come to agreement will endure and see us through the struggles yet to come.

Note

1. E. M. Forster, *Howard's End* (New York: Knopf, 1943). ■

Photo credit: Marc Studer



An exterior shot of the reading room at the University of Washington, Bothell.



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