

Summer 6-25-2017

Exploring the Future of the Teaching Materials Center at Illinois State University: From e-Textbooks to Makerspaces

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Recommended Citation

Derden, Julie; Gibson, Sally; and Shelley, Anne, "Exploring the Future of the Teaching Materials Center at Illinois State University: From e-Textbooks to Makerspaces" (2017). *Faculty and Staff Publications – Milner Library*. 77.
<http://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/fpml/77>

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Exploring the Future of the Teaching Materials Center at Illinois State University: From e-Textbooks to Makerspaces

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Abstract

In this project, co-investigators explored how college and university curriculum centers are addressing challenges with e-textbooks (particularly acquisition, cataloging, and access) and implementing technology-focused services for pre-service teachers. The results of this research have provided support for planning the future of the curriculum center in Milner Library at Illinois State University, which comprises 2.5% of the library's holdings and accounts for almost 25% of the library's circulation. We identified service gaps and opportunities for improvement and are in the process of acting upon our findings, such as leveraging campus partnerships, integrating makerspace technologies, and exploring different models for ordering and processing the collection.

Curriculum Centers Visited

Center	Location	Collection Budget	Librarian + Staff	School Profile (*UG=Undergraduate; G=Graduate)
A	Main Library	Not provided	1 + 3	Public, 21,000 UG+G*
B	Main Library	\$2,000	<1 + 1-2	Private, 3,500 UG
C	Main Library	Not provided	<1 + 3	Private, 2,000 UG+G
D	Main Library (segmented)	\$17,000	1 + 3	Public, 16,000 UG+G
E	Branch Library	\$20,000	1 + 2	Public, 25,000 UG+G
F	Department Library	\$7,000-8,000	2 + 2	Public, 21,000 UG+G
G	Research Center	N/A	3	Public, 43,000 UG+G

Methodology

Seven colleges and universities were identified as having strong teacher education programs supported by curriculum centers. An online survey was distributed to center representatives, followed by site visits to each location to collect data. A separate online survey was distributed through vendor representatives to three, large K-12 textbook publishers (from whom we received no responses).

Findings/Results

Textbook collections are increasingly difficult to build/maintain; no sites visited are actively collecting e-textbooks. Print edition textbooks typically are no longer available for free from publishers. Libraries realize changes are needed but are uncertain of the next steps. One library is buying as much as they can in order to have textbooks for students. Discontinued state-adopted textbook programs contribute to the challenge.

Further Research

More research is needed on how curriculum centers in academic libraries can help publishers understand our unique role in providing access to preservice teachers to e-textbooks, which are currently unavailable to them based on their publishing model. Additional research is needed in the possibility of outsourcing cataloging of curriculum materials to a vendor.

Technical Services

Often staff are responsible for cataloging materials in the curriculum centers in addition to other areas of responsibility. There is interest in having cataloging staff dedicated to the curriculum centers, but there is also a lack of funding for positions. Dewey classification and local cataloging practices create complications.

Collection Administration

Purchasing K-12 textbooks is a major challenge, as publishers are producing more online, supplemental materials to accompany the Teacher Edition textbook, and the one-user/one-license model is not suited for curriculum centers. Curriculum centers are not actively purchasing electronic "regular" books, as the FTE pricing model makes affordability a major obstacle. Housing of unusual materials was discussed. The most significant takeaway was that packaging decisions are best made before cataloging (e.g.: bags for puppets).

Technology and Media

Technology and services offered varied greatly. One institution provided only desktop computers, while another circulated tablets, camcorders, etc. and had a technology-rich, flexible classroom equipped with SMART and Promethean software. Several sites offered lamination, binding, Ellison die cuts and machines, large-format printing, scanning, and software, equipment, and staff support for video editing projects. Providing a variety of educational technologies to preservice teachers is important to prepare them for a school setting.