ACCSC

Accrediting Commission
of Career Schools and
Colleges

ACCSC Monograph Series

Learning Resource Systems

About ACCSC

Since 1965, the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) has been committed to establishing and advancing quality education at postsecondary career schools and colleges. ACCSC scope of recognition includes the accreditation of non-degree granting institutions and degree granting institutions that offer career, technical, and vocational training programs at the postsecondary level. ACCSC is dedicated to ensuring a quality education for more than 200,000 students who annually pursue career education at over 700 accredited institutions across the United States, Puerto Rico, and abroad.

ACCSC has been continuously recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a reliable authority for the quality education since 1967. In 2011, ACCSC's recognition was renewed for five years, the maximum timeframe allowed under current federal regulations.

ACCSC's mission is to serve as a reliable authority on educational quality and to promote enhanced opportunities for students by establishing, sustaining, and enforcing valid standards and practices which contribute to the development of a highly trained and competitive workforce through quality career oriented education.

ACCSC's mission has two primary objectives:

- To assure students and the general public of the quality of educational training provided by ACCSC-accredited institutions and their programs and
- To assist institutions in continuously improving themselves and the training they provide students

As a way for the Commission to continually meet its mission in a committed fashion, ACCSC has established a values-based framework supported by the following foundational core values

Integrity
Accomplishing our mission with a commitment to ethics, honesty, trust, consistency, and fairness.

Accountability
Fulfilling our responsibilities to one another, the higher education community, and the public.

Continuous Improvement
Cultivating personal and professional growth through learning, goal setting, innovation, commitment, and participation.

Community
Fostering a free and timely exchange of ideas and information in a collegial environment through the establishment of strong partnerships that emphasize respect and mutual support.

Welcome to the ACCSC Monograph Series

As higher education continues to expand and diversify in the United States, it has become apparent that now, more than ever, postsecondary school leaders need better tools to achieve their strategic goals and to ensure institutional and student success. Higher education in the United States continues to change in profound ways. With increased globalization, a greater reliance on technology, and more competition among education providers both domestically and internationally, America's higher education system must embrace a culture of continuous innovation and quality improvement as a means to remain viable and a global leader in postsecondary education.

The Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) developed a series of brochures — *the ACCSC Monograph Series*— on topics critical to institutional success. These brochures are designed to provide guidance on some of the more technical areas of ACCSC accreditation. Through the *ACCSC Monograph Series*, the Commission hopes to help accredited schools to comply fully and accurately with the S*tandards of Accreditation*, achieve institutional success, and ensure that students are well prepared to enter the workforce.

This brochure, Learning Resource Systems (LRS), explains why your institution needs a comprehensive learning resource system and provides information designed to assist institutions to examine, establish, implement, integrate, and evaluate their LRS. The brochure begins with a focus on developing an understanding of a LRS and provides rationale as to why a LRS is a critical component to an institution's efforts to support their students' educational experience.

Why Learning Resource Systems?

Career school and college leaders hold the ultimate responsibility for institutional performance. Stakeholders in the community want to know if enrollment has increased and if the institution is financially successful. Students ask about degree plans and faculty qualifications. Employers want to know if you are producing skilled workers. However, outside of an accreditation process, how often does someone ask: "What learning resource systems do you have to support your programs?"

The ACCSC Standards of Accreditation define learning resource systems as follows:

> A learning resource system includes all materials that support a student's educational experience and enhance a school's educational program such as libraries; texts; electronic resources; learning resource laboratories and centers; library consortia and interlibrary loan agreements; computers; internet access; research databases; and other similar resources and equipment. The learning resource system can be centralized or decentralized in organization but resources must be easily and readily accessible to students and faculty during and beyond classroom hours, regardless of location or means of delivery. Other necessary elements of a school's learning resource system follow.[1]

This definition is important because it sets the stage for understanding both the scope of expected resources as well as why the learning resource system in an ACCSC- accredited institution is important.

As an initial matter, let's explore why learning resource systems are important. Largely, it has to do with enhancing the student's educational experience and the institution's education programs as described in the above definition. Let's assume that students enroll in a particular course that requires a textbook for course readings, the availability of other texts for research, and a computer with internet access to journals and databases related to the research topic. Let's also assume that a few of the students have difficulty with the subject matter and need extra help to apply the information in the classroom. To support these students in this one course, your institution needs learning resources beyond the required textbook such as computers, internet access, access to specific resources electronically and /or in print, and other related texts and references.

By multiplying these course needs with the various needs of other courses and programs offered, and by the number of students who require access to these resources

throughout the institution, the critical role that the learning resource system plays becomes evident. A good learning resource system anticipates these needs and puts the proper resources into place in a comprehensive and accessible manner.

Without a comprehensive learning resource system, an institution may face challenging questions regarding faculty qualifications, the skill of the graduates, and the overall quality of the educational program. Without a comprehensive learning resource system, faculty would probably not have the learning resources needed to integrate external resources into the curriculum, and it is unlikely that students would have the necessary tools to help them to be successful in a broad employment market that places a premium on critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills. In short, the lack of appropriate instructional support materials and learning resources would result in ill-prepared students.

Every institution has a unique set of circumstances that defines learning resource system needs. Through the Standards of Accreditation, ACCSC promotes customizing a learning resource system to meet the specific needs of your institution. The next section of this brochure begins the journey of exploring the needs for your institution's system.

Taking Stock: Understanding Your Institution's Learning Resource System

An effective learning resource system will be as unique as its environment. Institutions offering differing programs of study will have similarities in their systems, yet each will have unique needs for information and resource materials. To understand your learning resource system, explore the system components and how they fit into the needs of the institution.

What is the mission of your institution's learning resource system and what does it seek to do? These are primary questions to address in the development and evaluation of an institution's learning resource system. Prior to the introduction of personal computers and the internet, a learning resource system may have been equivalent to a library with texts, journals, microfilms, and helpful librarians who provided reference assistance and checked out materials for loan. The development of the internet has created a crossover in demand for access to electronic resources and the information those resources can bring forth. Today, the computer, the internet, and the available access to electronic resources are all tools and should be part of a comprehensive learning resource system. Today's technology creates a demand for instant, abundant, and accurate information. Questions to consider include:

- How has your institution met that challenge?
- Have you created a true system of components that work well together?
- Has the learning resource system staff taken on new roles to accommodate information access needs?

The learning materials which augment the classroom environment should be viewed as a system and should contain the necessary elements which support the curriculum. These materials should be readily accessible by the student population, and should have enough potential use to justify the cost. Some broad component categories to consider in a typical system include:

- Facilities
- Resource Materials and Information
- Equipment
- Services
- Personnel

Later in this document, we will cover a process by which to evaluate your resources in these categories as they align with your institution's goals. First, we must consider how learning resource system goals are developed in alignment with the institution's mission, the educational process, and specific objectives of the institution's programs.

Goals of Your Learning Resource System

Career schools and colleges produce a final outcome for the organization: graduates with the knowledge and skills to succeed in their intended professions. The institution's mission creates a framework to support this desired outcome, while the educational goals and objectives of the institution are designed to produce it. The learning resource system should also have goals and outcomes that support, facilitate, and enhance this primary aim when integrated with the educational objectives.

The goals and objectives for the learning resource system should be based on various sources and levels within the institution. Examples of inputs to the development of learning resources system goals and objectives include:
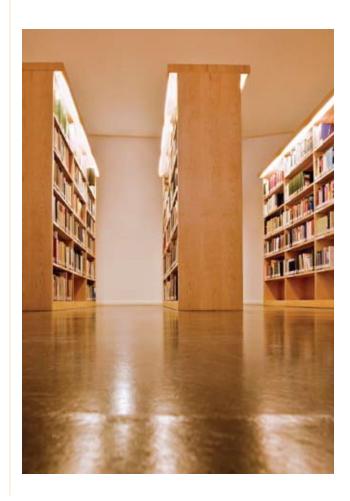
1. Organization mission and goals
2. Learning resource system mission
3. Education goals
   a. Program / Degree level b.
   Course level and type
4. Certification process requirements
5. Employer / employment related demands
6. Accreditation process requirements
7. Program Advisory Committee recommendations
8. Benchmarking or excellent practices study

Although the points of input vary, all learning resource system goals should support the institution's intended educational outcomes. Without this connection between the learning resource system and the desired learning outcomes, an institution suffers a lessened ability to meet the final outcomes.

Let's focus on the second source from the previous list: the learning resource system mission. If your system does not have its own mission statement, create one with the input of learning resource center staff, key faculty, and administration. Align the mission statement for the learning resource system with the organization's mission and educational objectives. The mission statement should answer the question "Is this something we should do?" for both existing and new activities, and should indicate:

- what the learning resource system is trying to accomplish;
- how the system is accomplishing this mission; and
- the value of the learning resource system as it relates to the organization.

If you have an existing mission statement, make sure that it is current, aligned with the organization's mission and educational objectives, and actively used in setting up systems and operations. Your mission statement will also help to keep you on the right path when reviewing and writing educational and program objectives.

Meeting Educational and Program Objectives

In all functional areas, your institution should have established goals and objectives that relate to the institution's mission statement. Your institutional assessment and improvement plan should state the goals to be met and measured. Review the plan goals and objectives from all sources to identify those that relate to your learning resource system.

Before we continue on with examples, let's define goals and objectives for the purposes of this document. At the institutional level, goals are broad, high level aims that affect the entire organization, or the organization level. Each of these broad goals would have various measurable objectives, or targets for performance, designed to meet the higher level goals. The objectives lie in the process level 2. The learning resource system may have goals that tie directly to the institution's mission and may also have objectives that come from educational goals or from one of the other sources listed.

Two examples follow to explain this first step further. The first example shows a goal and includes objectives from an improvement plan directly related to the learning resource system, specifically in this case, the library:

EXAMPLE 1:

Goal
Maintain a library that has high impact on the students' education demonstrated by a student library survey rating of at least 4 (on a 1-5 scale) within the next 12 months.

Objective
Obtain a 10% budget increase for library resource materials by January 31st.

Objective
Increase the book, software, and periodicals collection by 25% by December 31st.

Objective
Increase the company profiles collection to at least 30 profiles by May 31st.

EXAMPLE 2:

Another section of the improvement plan might originate from a course requirement. For example, let's assume that an institute offers an Art and Design program that includes courses in Art History. The Art and Design Department has a regular cycle of updating courses to take advantage of new resources. This results in a goal on the institutional improvement plan:

Goal
Update Art History II – ARH 272 by December 31st

The department writes several goals related to this objective. One area which the students have complained about is having difficulty in finding a good database for project research. This results in an objective:

Objective
Work with Information Specialist to find and purchase an appropriate database for Art History II – ARH 272 students.

This objective relates to the learning resource system. Accountability for this goal will lie with both the learning resource system personnel and the curriculum developer. Record goals for your learning resource system as the first step in your process.

As you go through this process, your expertise and study of the system may lead to the development of new goals for the system. As long as the goals fit within the mission of the organization and can be supported financially, they are valid as part of the plan for an excellent learning resource system. When writing system goals and objectives, include action verbs like "improve," "maintain," "enhance," and "increase" followed by the desired outcome. Goals and objectives are best when they have measurable targets such as a percentage or numeric change. Goals, however, can be broad and not as specific – for example, a broadly stated goal might be "attract the best qualified students into our program." Follow up with more specific objectives and the action items to achieve them. Action items are specific as to what must be accomplished, by when, and by whom.

Record your goals, objectives, and action items in a format that fits within the culture of your organization. You can use an outline format, such as was shown in the previous examples, or a table or chart, such as the example shown below:

TABLE 1:

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	TIMELINE & DEADLINE	ASSESSMENT METHODS & TOOLS	RESULTS & ANALYSIS
Goal	Increase the impact of the library on the students' education demonstrated by a student library survey rating of at least 4 (on a 1-5 scale)	Jan. 30th & annual review each Jan. 30th	Student Library Survey	
Objective	A budget increase of 10% for resource materials for the library will be submitted for corporate approval	Jan. 30th	Compare approved annual budgets	
Action Plan Items & Responsibility	Negotiate pricing on new materials; *Assigned to Robert*.	Sept. 20th	Pricing documents indicating completion of task	
Action Plan Items & Responsibility	Prepare and submit budget request; *Assigned to Keesha*.	Oct. 30th	Check document – completed and submitted	

Goals indicate where your learning resource system should be focused. In practical terms, how do the goals translate into establishing a new system or maintaining an existing learning resource system? This is the subject of the next section.

Implementing and Managing Learning Resource Systems

Strategically, developing a five-year plan for implementing and managing your learning resource system according to your goals will result in the opportunity for cohesive management and continuous improvement. In this section, we will review critical elements of the five-year plan and how to implement those elements.

STEP 1:

Create / revise your mission statement as described in a previous section of this brochure.

STEP 2:

Assess library learning resource system needs.
Needs assessment is the difference between what is happening now and what is needed in the future. Examine the needs of all stakeholders, internal and external, through interviews, questionnaires, and recorded data. Your needs will be driven by the development and implementation of programs of study which serve as the framework of the institution. Work with those involved in program planning and development to identify learning resource system planning needs.

STEP 3:

Determine your long-range and short-range goals.
a. Five-year goals – These might include long-term planning for facilities, budgeting for major equipment or material collections to support new degree programs or institutional growth. For example, a five-year goal might be to increase the availability of personal computers in a learning resource center by 40%.

b. Two-three year goals – Mid-term goals allow you to check progress on your five-year plan and to adjust your interim goals and objectives as needed. For example, you might find that you have implemented the new computers by only 10% in two years and consequently, need to revise your goals for the next three years to meet the goals identified in the five-year plan. In this timeframe, ensure your plan is specific as it serves as a precursor to the implementation of new services, facilities, and large purchases. Considering that many projects planned at the five-year stage may still be in process, securing budgeting commitments will prove to be critical in this phase.

c. Current-year goals – In the annual goal cycle the question becomes, "What can I do this year to make progress to the long-term plan?" Develop very specific objectives and action items. These goals and objectives will include more immediate changes including implementing new services, purchasing materials and collections for the year, hiring and training necessary personnel, and making changes in areas which require improvements. Going back to our example, your goal for the year will specify how many computers to purchase and install during the year.

STEP 4:

Evaluate progress to goals and make adjustments.
This document covers the evaluation process in a later section of this brochure.

Identifying Learning Resource System Components

Earlier in this document, you were asked to "take stock" of your learning resource system components. Now we will discuss in further detail the components of the learning resource system, around which you will develop your five-year plan.

Facilities and Space planning

Space planning should occur in your long-range plans. If space needs are significant, it will require a longer timeframe to secure resources. Smaller scale facilities projects, such as moving to an existing space, may occur in a shorter planning timeframe.

Depending on the size and set up of the institution, you may have one area to house a library and a computer lab, or you may have separate facilities, such as a small learning resource center with a few computers, and a larger center with tutoring and other services available. A larger institution might have several areas for learning resource materials which reside in their program areas.

In any case, good space planning will ensure greater access, and can make the libraries, centers, and labs more effective. Space used effectively enhances the ability of the organization to meet its goals, while space used efficiently means wasting fewer resources. Organize the layout so that the users can focus on finding information and materials. Anticipate use patterns and create easily accessible high use areas. Place related materials, equipment, and services adjacent to one another. In a library or large center, high use areas should be near the entrance. The space should be easy to access from the outside as well [3].
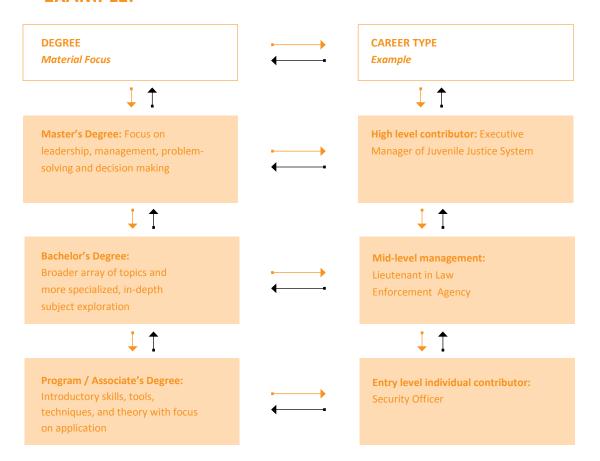
Resource materials and Information

In the five-year plan, you may state a goal for which the collection of materials and equipment is headed, according to the institution's programs of study. In the shorter timeframes, identify specific materials and resources for acquisition.

Resource materials include information in written, electronic, and multi-media formats, including relevant and current texts and periodicals, research journals and databases, standard works of reference, and other resource material necessary to adequately serve the student body. For ACCSC accreditation, the learning resource system must include materials commensurate with the level of education provided and appropriate to the program of study [4]. Institutions granting degrees must ensure that the learning resource system supports the particular needs of those programs. Using an example of a school which offers several levels of Criminal Justice programs, the pyramid chart below shows how the focus of the materials changes for each of the degree levels.

Materials Focus by Education Level with Criminal Justice Example

- **EXAMPLE:**

DEGREE *Material Focus*	→ ←	**CAREER TYPE** *Example*

Master's Degree: Focus on leadership, management, problem-solving and decision making	→ ←	**High level contributor:** Executive Manager of Juvenile Justice System

Bachelor's Degree: Broader array of topics and more specialized, in-depth subject exploration	→ ←	**Mid-level management:** Lieutenant in Law Enforcement Agency

Program / Associate's Degree: Introductory skills, tools, techniques, and theory with focus on application	→ ←	**Entry level individual contributor:** Security Officer

As the program and degree levels ascend the pyramid, the need for materials change. The topics in a non-degree program or an Associates degree program would be fewer, more narrow, more introductory and application- oriented than at the higher levels. A Bachelor's degree requires a broadening in the number of topics requiring materials, yet more specialized and in-depth materials on specific degree concentrations.

A Master's degree builds on the Bachelor's with an emphasis on leadership and management materials. Further, master's degree material must lead to mastery of the technical, professional knowledge, and theories of a career fields. This model can be generalized to many institutions' programs by degree level and used to plan access to the required resources. Special care must be taken to build a pyramid of knowledge for the learners.

The electronic age and the internet have opened up a world of information to students pursuing all available education levels. Framing the information in the most efficient and effective manner can present challenges for the learning resource system manager. In many cases, the availability of information in print, electronic, and virtual formats creates choices on how to store and organize information: in hard copy, on older technology formats, or databases and electronic versions to access the same information. Each learning resource system manager must base decisions related to information storage, organization, and access on the organization's goals, available space, available funds, and durability and life expectancy of the formats.

Librarians should gather and analyze statistics on the use of library materials to provide an explanation for the fiscal limitations of your learning resource system to faculty and students. Institutions should request demonstrations and trial periods on materials, especially for electronic materials, and should understand licensing agreements for these products before a decision is made to purchase. Managing materials over time should involve a record keeping system to show the level of use. The data collected will help with decision-making for eliminating items or for ordering duplicate materials [5].

Personnel Staffing and Training

The staffing and training needs for an institution's learning resource system will follow the lead of the other components of the system (i.e., size, scope, format, access, etc.). Larger facilities or the addition of facilities, a growing collection of materials and equipment, and new services offered, all fueled by institutional growth, may demand more staff and will dictate the scope of the necessary training.

The Standards of Accreditation state:

[A] school's learning resource system must be managed by qualified school personnel with sufficient experience to provide oversight and supervision. Schools that offer a baccalaureate degree or higher must have a learning resource system coordinated by an individual holding a Master's degree in either the library science or information specialist fields [6].

Smaller institutions may not have the budget to hire a full-time, degreed librarian. Larger institutions offering baccalaureate degrees may consider placing a librarian as the system manager, or may consider them as equivalent to a faculty member. ACCSC accreditation requirements call for qualified school personnel to orient, train, and assist students and faculty in the use of the learning resource system in a manner that supports learning objectives. To expand on this, system staff may need the following skills:

- Reference skills – interviewing, listening and follow-through, finding and transferring information in person, over the phone, and via email
- Instruction skills – recognizing and teaching to various learning styles, using interactivity to teach system information access and designing instruction (if this is a function of your learning resource system)
- Technical competencies – knowing the databases in the system, being comfortable with a variety of database search tools and techniques, personal computing skills, troubleshooting for hardware and software, and understanding networking and proxy services
- Public relations skills – advertising to patrons to let them know what you have and how they can access it through posters, flyers, email newsletters, table tents, and other means [7].

In addition, the person in the role of system manager would require additional skills including:

- managing change
- leadership
- strategic planning
- communication
- managing people
- managing resources
- financial management [8]

The size of your institution and your learning resource system determine whether you will need to hire a single librarian or resource manager who has all of these skills, or to hire additional staff to handle these responsibilities. The equipment, materials, and services offered affect the needed skills and size of your staff as well. Your budget for learning resource system personnel controls the allowable size of the staff. Balance financial support with your needs for a system, the system components, and the staff to support it.

Services Offered

Services can be planned long-range so that appropriate staff and resources can be put in place to conduct the activities. In other circumstances, available resources and staff can create an opportunity to implement more immediate service needs. Questions to consider include:
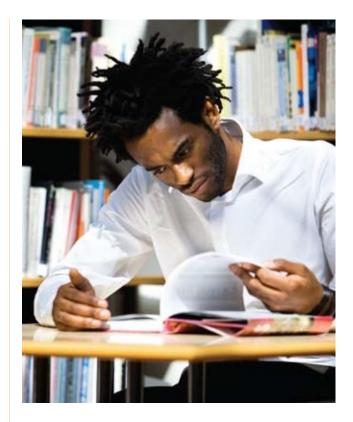
- Is your learning resource system a place to check-out books and materials, and to search for information?

- Does the system offer traditional library-type services like interlibrary loans?

Depending on the components of your system, the services could include:

- check-in and check-out procedures for materials,

- sign-in sheets to use equipment,

- assistance in searching for materials and information,

- assistance in using technology and equipment,

- library / resource center orientation, and interlibrary loans.

As the role of learning resource systems in larger institutions expands, the system might take on instructional service roles including:

- involvement in distance learning,

- self-paced instruction,

- information literacy programs,

- bibliographic instruction,

- basic skills,

- vocational instruction,

- college survival skills, and

- computer literacy[9].

The institution's mission, goals, and educational objectives will dictate the approach.

A special service issue requiring attention concerns the hours services are available. The institution should anticipate common use patterns by the campus population, and must ensure that the hours of operation occur during and beyond classroom hours. The schedule of the typical student who needs access to a physical resource should be accommodated as much as possible. For example, a traditional college-age population living nearby the institution might want late night hours available for computer or library resources. An older commuter population might be more concerned with access to information online and at any time. Online information resources which can be accessed remotely are a consideration for an anytime, any place resource for students and faculty.

Equipment

Typically, equipment needs require mid-term planning due to the expense involved and space needed. Primarily, learning resource system equipment includes computers, peripherals, and other means of accessing information, some related to materials held in outdated forms of storage. Your system may include equipment for needs specific to the programs of study offered. The learning resource system personnel must be trained on how to operate and troubleshoot equipment to help users. Equipment that exists in your learning resource system will require interaction and assistance from your internal or external supplier or help desk, depending on how the institution is organized. When the problems are too great to solve, have information readily available to contact technical support personnel.

In all of the component areas of your learning resource system, keep in mind accessibility to those with disabilities. Review government regulations and recommendations to provide access to all. Implement the recommendations to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

This document does not propose to list every item for consideration in your learning resource system. While systems across career schools and colleges will contain similar elements, your institution will have unique needs driven by the programs of study, degrees offered, location, size, and student population. Developing and maintaining your material collection takes work and should be governed by learning resource system policies and procedures.

Creating Plans, Policies, and Procedures

The institution's assessment and improvement plan must include written policies and procedures for the ongoing development of its learning resource system. Accreditation also requires a demonstration of sufficient support and budgetary allocation. Guidelines on what to include in your policies and procedures include:

- goals of the learning resource system;
- general description of the system components;
- intended users of the learning resource system;
- priorities, limitations, and criteria governing selection of materials;
- the collection organization scheme, including types of materials;
- the process of eliminating items which are out of date or seldom used;
- material formats;
- procedures for request and approval for additional materials;
- procedures for special services and functions;
- policy on access and fair use of materials, information, and equipment.

Your institution's policies and procedures should be customized to your learning resource system and your institution's characteristics. Establishing and maintaining a system requires careful budgeting and justification for that budget. We address this topic in the next section of the brochure.

Establishing Budgetary Support

Career schools and colleges may have varied methods of budgeting and may account for the learning resource system in various parts of its budget. In most instances, it will be appropriate that the learning resource system has its own allocations within an institution's budget because educational objectives of any kind cannot be met without the necessary expenditures and resource allocations. Think of running your system as you would a department in a business. Justify your requests for resources by any means possible. Show the benefit of the system to the bottom line of the institution when possible. Demonstrate the contribution of the system to the institution's goals and outcomes and show how future improvements to the system will contribute to these goals.

Learning resource system leadership that is actively involved with decisions at various levels of the institution will gain acceptance and more readily achieve budgetary approval. When a new course or program requires additional materials, the learning resource system should have a process by which to request and assess the value in purchasing new items or finding them accessible in

some other manner. One example exists in the availability of books through interlibrary loans as an alternative to purchasing them. The process would explore whether the books will be in high enough demand to warrant a purchase, to determine if they are affordable, and establish if these books will be in high use over time versus allowing students to request them for occasional use through the interlibrary loan system.

If you are beginning a new system or adding a facility or major equipment purchase, use your long-range planning to carefully analyze the needs of the institution. Prioritize your budgeting needs. Request what is necessary and critical; find ways to manage other areas more inexpensively and tout your efforts. A financial administrator making budgetary decisions wants to see responsible budgeting and good management of that budget. The administrator will also want to relate to a request that makes sense as a contribution to the financial state of the institution rather than as a support cost to be absorbed. Use the components of the learning resource system as your guide for the types of items that will occur in your budget and customize it to the budgeting system at your institution.

Integrating learning Resource Systems into the Curriculum

Working with educational goals and objectives provides the first step to integrating learning resources into the curriculum. To fully integrate into the educational process, the learning resource system manager can benefit from partnering with key departmental personnel, becoming an active participant in program meetings and in new course development, keeping up with developments in curriculum areas, and forming a faculty advisory committee for the learning resource system. Create processes for involvement at all levels and develop a process for meeting the requests of key personnel and the faculty advisory committee as part of the learning resource system policies and procedures.

It is important that there are opportunities for instructional staff to recommend resources that will enhance the curricula; suggest ways to implement or improve integration of new and current resources; and sharpen instructional skills. Learning resource

administrators should actively collaborate with faculty to ensure that the necessary resources are available and aligned with the topics covered in the classroom[10].

In building an integrated learning resource system, key concerns must be discussed with the instructors, learning resource personnel, and administrators on an on-going basis, including:

Operational hours
For example: during class hours, before classes, after classes, 24-7 access, and virtual access

Resource materials
For example: textbooks, trade journals, professional journals, and internet resources

Staffing
For example: staff competencies, availability of staff, availability to students, and level of staffing

Space
For example: tables, chairs, book shelves, computer access, printers, web access, online-subscriptions, technology, learner comfort, and lighting

Cost
For example: furniture, technology, subscriptions, staff training, and databases

Strategic Goals
For example: technological advancements, changing workplace, curriculum changes, laboratory equipment changes, and facilities

Faculty Needs

The diversity of faculty needs for the learning resource system will vary based on the type and size of the institution. The bulk of the material will include trade journals, books, field-related manuals, and career-oriented electronic resources. Institutions offering degree programs will require a more general set of materials to cover the general education course needs as well as more research-oriented material. As needs for new materials and sources of information arise, faculty can request these directly using the appropriate procedure, through meetings on courses and curricula, and through a faculty advisory committee to the library if one exists.

Creating Relevant Systems

Today's dynamic student population dictates the need for a wider variety of materials and ways to access information. Leaders of any career school or college must take full advantage of the differing characteristics of the student body to facilitate the best program outcomes. The attendance of non-traditional students, older students, more commuter students, and more students attending school on a part-time basis creates a demand for easy, fast, and ready access to information. Distance learning has followed this trend; if students are taking courses off-campus and through the internet, they want to be able to access information off-campus and on-line. Today, students come from more diverse backgrounds, and there are many international students whose first language is not English enrolled in higher education institutions. This calls for services that accommodate these students so they can perform to their full potential. In some cases, a learning resource member relies on a staff member who speaks the predominant non-English language of the area to communicate more effectively with the students. Students come into programs with varying and sometimes insufficient reading levels, and with varying levels of information literacy. A dynamic learning resource system will offer instruction to assist these students. In order to help students get the most out of their educational experience, changes in learning resource systems are expected to continue in the future.

Balancing the educational objectives with the needs of the student population within the constraints of the learning resource system challenges the system manager. Considerations when building a relevant, balanced system include:

- suitability of material to educational outcomes and to students;
- ability to access titles from indexes and databases;
- language appropriate to reading level and language abilities;
- availability to all students and faculty on or off campus;
- reputation in the field of the materials;
- life expectancy for the materials;
- number of students and frequency of material use;
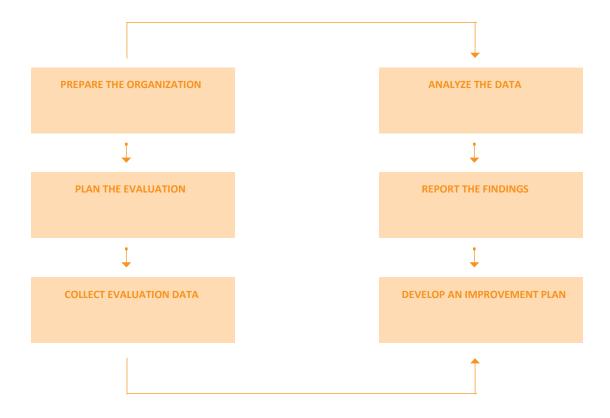- faculty needs; and
- cost.

The effort in developing your system within these criteria will pay off in a better integration into the curriculum. If you have selected the appropriate materials and offer the right services for the curriculum, your learning resource system will supplement the curriculum in producing positive learning outcomes. Although you cannot directly produce or measure the outcome based solely on the materials, a course evaluation could be conducted on a course which has significant use of learning resource materials. The evaluation of the effectiveness of your system based on the mission and goals of your institution is covered in the next section of this brochure.

The Self-Evaluation Process

■   **FIGURE 1:**

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Learning Resource Systems

With a learning resource system in place, ongoing self-evaluation becomes your tool to continuously improve. Refer back to your five-year plan and /or your institutional assessment and improvement plan for your goals and objectives for the year. Conduct a self-evaluation of your performance to those goals using the self-evaluation process below:

PREPARE THE ORGANIZATION	**ANALYZE THE DATA**
↓	↓
PLAN THE EVALUATION	**REPORT THE FINDINGS**
↓	↓
COLLECT EVALUATION DATA	**DEVELOP AN IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

If this is your first formal self-evaluation, you will need to spend time in preparing the organization for what you are about to do. Preparation is geared toward showing your commitment to improve and will facilitate participation in the self-study and buy-in to the process from staff, faculty, and the institution's administration. Let's focus on the second and third steps, Plan the Evaluation and Collect Evaluation Data. Create a plan to collect data using appropriate sources. These might include taking inventory, conducting faculty and student surveys, and using other tools to measure where your institution's learning resource system stands in relation to your institutional goals. Plan who will be involved in collecting the information and how it will be collected. Implement the self-study plan and analyze the data. Remember the table in the objectives section? You can now fill in the blanks, as shown in the example below, to organize your results.

▪ TABLE 2:

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	TIMELINE & DEADLINE	ASSESSMENT METHODS & TOOLS	RESULTS & ANALYSIS
Goal	Increase the impact of the library on the students' education demonstrated by a student library survey rating of at least 4 (on a 1-5 scale)	Jan. 30th & annual review each Jan. 30th	Student Library Survey	Score of 3.85
Objective	A budget increase of 10% for resource materials for the library will be submitted for corporate approval	Jan. 30th	Compare annual approved budgets	Completed Jan. 27th. Increase of 7% received.
Action Plan Items & Responsibility	Negotiate pricing on new materials; *Assigned to Robert*.	Sept. 20th	Pricing documents indicating completion of task	Completed Sep. 20th
Action Plan Items & Responsibility	Prepare and submit budget request; *Assigned to Keesha*.	Oct. 30th	Check document – completed and submitted	Completed Oct.17th

In your situation, compare your actual data collected to the objectives. Did you find that the learning resource system meets the established goals and objectives? If not, does the data tell you why? What are the weak areas? How can they be improved? The areas where you find you are not meeting the stated objectives become the development point for new learning resource system goals.

The focus of this brochure has been on creating and maintaining a learning resource system that meets the goals of your organization. Periodic and regular self-evaluation closes the loop on any unmet goals and turns them into new goals to keep you on the track to serving your mission.

The Road to Continuous Improvement

The goal of every organization, school, business, or nonprofit organization is not only to survive and exist but to thrive and improve. Continuous improvement is the philosophy and practice that will move your school past surviving and on to thriving and improving. As a philosophy, continuous improvement guides both long-term leadership and daily performance. Putting that philosophy into practice means an ongoing cycle of planning for success, putting that plan into action, evaluating performance, and making improvements. Continuous improvement, accountability, integrity, and community are the core values of ACCSC. As long as your organization has a valid mission and carries out its mission with integrity and accountability, aligning the continuous improvement cycle with this mission will facilitate the best opportunity for a quality educational institution.

The ACCSC Monograph Series are targeted to provide performance tools to help you along in the cycle of continuous performance improvement. Each topic in the series contributes a unique aspect of continuous improvement processes. The topics currently published include:

- Self-Evaluation Processes and Practices
- Institutional Assessment and Improvement Planning
- Faculty Improvement Planning/Implementation
- Learning Resource Systems
- Program Advisory Committees

Full-color PDF versions of the Monograph Series Brochures are available as a free download at www.accsc.org

Notes:

Notes:

Endnotes

1   ACCSC (2014). Standards of Accreditation. July 1, 2014.

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About the Authors

Sage Performance

Jeff M. Allen, Ph.D.

Jeff Allen is a distinguished teacher and scholar in the field of performance improvement. His research includes over 30 publications in the area of performance improvement, including the edited book titled, *Leadership in Career and Technical Education: Beginning the 21st Century.* He consults and teaches in the areas of performance improvement, career and technical education, and research methods. At the national level, he provides leadership in numerous professional organizations and serves as a reviewer for nationally and internationally referred publications. Jeff currently serves as the Interim Department Chair of Learning Technologies at the University of North Texas.

Denise C. Allen, M. Ed.

Denise Allen conducts the daily operations of Sage Performance. She is a business and education consultant in organization performance, training, instructional design and development, business and educational writing, and work-life balance programs with 20 years of experience in manufacturing, high-tech, service, and marketing environments. Denise's experience spans large and small scale projects, working with individual contributors, management and executives in various occupations.

Edited by

Michale S. McComis, Ed.D., ACCSC
Christopher D. Lambert, M.Ed., ACCSC
Karen R. Marcinski, M.S., Ed.S., ACCSC