WIU Library Assessment

Sociology

Fall 2013

The vision of University Libraries is “to serve as a portal to the information landscape.” In implementing that vision, our mission is to identify, collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to information resources and services in support of the values of Western Illinois University. One way to assess the quality of resources and services is to examine library support for each academic program periodically. To insure that an examination of library support occurs on a timely and consistent schedule, the WIU Libraries evaluates its support for each WIU department during its program review, which is mandated by the Illinois Board of Higher Education every eight years.

WIU’s sociology programs educate students about “human societies, their structure, and the ways individuals and groups relate to one another” and are founded on the idea that “sociological knowledge is vital to the understanding of contemporary issues and topics.” According to the department, the B.A. in sociology has a curriculum that “emphasizes everyday issues and the workings of society in general,” making the degree “useful in a great variety of occupational fields and positions.” The Master of Arts degree program in sociology is “designed to meet the needs of students having interests in several substantive areas including criminology and deviance, modernization and demography, social change and collective behavior, the family, organizations, stratification, and race and ethnicity” and readies students for jobs in government, human service agencies, and business, as well as for teaching at the community college or adjunct level. The Master of Arts degree can also be a step on the path to obtaining a Ph.D. degree in sociology.

The University Libraries plays an active role in the education of sociology students at WIU. This role is outlined below.

Services

The University Libraries consists of the main Malpass Library, three branch libraries—Music, Physical Sciences and Curriculum—on the Macomb campus, and library at the Moline campus. The main library is open 96.5 hours a week during the regular semester, and synchronous reference services are available 6 hours per week. Both general open hours and reference hours are adjusted for branch libraries according to needs. In addition to face-to-face meetings, library users with reference questions may contact library faculty and staff by phone or via text or instant messaging during scheduled reference hours. Also, email may be used at any time. Library faculty and staff also provide help targeted to specific groups such as graduate and international students.

The University Libraries also offers instructional services, which are designed to develop WIU students’ research skills. Instruction sessions may be scheduled by any University teaching faculty member. By working with classroom faculty, librarians are able to design these sessions to meet specific curricular needs of the course. Requests by the faculty may be submitted on the Web at any time. The
number of requests by the Sociology faculty has varied in recent years from semester to semester, from high of 5 to a low of 2. For each session, the librarian creates a library guide to help assist students with their research. For examples, see http://wiu.libguides.com/browse.php?o=s#23420. In addition, the library liaison has also made classroom visits and constructed stand-alone library guides for courses in situations when a full instruction session will not fit into the semester schedule.

Another vital library service is the Liaison Program. As liaisons, librarians help fulfill the mission of identifying, collecting, and providing access to information in support of teaching and research at Western Illinois University. The Library Liaison Program helps establish and maintain an open channel of communication between librarians and the 43 academic departments. In addition, the liaison appointed to an academic department works with that department’s library representative or library committee to insure that the library is purchasing materials that will best serve students and faculty. For more, see Personnel below.

Since WIU does not have sufficient funds to purchase all of the books and periodicals that sociology graduate students and faculty may use, those constituencies depend on interlibrary loan services provided by the University Libraries. Patrons make book and article requests online and are alerted by campus email when the desired item has arrived. Scanned journal articles are posted online for retrieval at the convenience of the requester. Books may be picked up any time the library is open. Many books are available from the 81 other member libraries of the state consortium, CARLI. Journal articles, harder-to-find books, and other materials may be requested using a central interlibrary loan management system, ILLiad. It is understood that interlibrary loan requests are subject to copyright and privacy regulations. Between 7/1/09 and 8/1/13, sociology faculty and students made 91 ILL requests. Note: Since some requesters identified themselves with the entire department “Sociology & Anthropology,” some part of that figure is likely comprised of anthropology requests.

Students and faculty also look to the library for computer access and support. If users have trouble connecting to the wireless network, scanning, or accessing a printer, Malpass Library currently offers 74 hours of computer support per week, including some evening and weekend hours. The support includes hardware, software, and peripherals. The Library Computer Services Unit also maintains all equipment housed in the libraries. In addition, there is support for digitization, maintenance of electronic resources and web services. When the Computer Services staff is not available, users can turn to the Reference and/or Access Services desks for support.

Learning Outcomes

WIU librarians work with students every day, at reference desks and in the classroom, to promote academic excellence. Librarians work with professors to design assignments for instruction and work closely with them to refine library instructional sessions from semester to semester. University Libraries provides the opportunity for any professor to schedule library instruction sessions. Over the past eight years, instruction librarians have worked with several sociology faculty members to design assignments
and library guides that help develop the information literacy of their students, as mentioned above under Services.

In addition to formal library instruction sessions, the University Libraries offers one-on-one reference assistance at the main Reference Desk, the Government and Legal Information Desk, in Archives and Special Collections, and at the branch libraries. User guides are created for academic topics and are available through various library Web pages. The Instruction Unit has also created instructional videos on many basic library-related tasks to further help students.

Access

Western Illinois University Libraries provides access to many resources, both physical and virtual. Users can identify materials that are owned by WIU or for which WIU has a subscription through an online catalog that may be used anytime and anywhere. In addition, through participation in a statewide consortium, all library users have access to holdings at 81 other member libraries. Through other resource-sharing tools, users can also view and request bibliographic and holdings information for items at many other libraries worldwide.

For access to journal articles and other documents, University Libraries subscribes to many databases that provide citation information and abstracts of journal articles. Many of the citations also have links to the full text of journal articles. These tools are generally online for easy and continuous access. Most relevant to the sociology programs is Sociological Abstracts. In the past academic year (FY13), students and professors conducted over 7952 searches in Sociological Abstracts. The trend appears to be downwards during the review period (from 1280 searches in 2009-10), but may be explained by the acquisition of Sociological Abstracts by ProQuest in Summer 201 and the subsequent adoption of a different statistical rubric.

In addition to journal databases and online archives, the University Libraries subscribes to a number of online resources that deliver online primary source materials to students. They are Black Thought and Culture, the Gerritsen Collection (full text of 4,700 books, pamphlets and periodicals about women), Harpers Weekly, Historical Chicago Tribune, and Women and Social Movements.

Among general databases that also cover topics in sociology are Proquest Dissertations & Theses, InfoTrac, Academic Search Premier, LexisNexis Academic, and Access World News. Through literature guides and aids created by the library faculty and staff, students also have access to many Web resources from professional organizations, federal and state governments and other technology-related agencies.

The library Web site may be accessed by anyone. The library also provides a proxy server so that users in off-campus locations have a way to authenticate themselves as university-affiliated and therefore access any library resources that are restricted due to licensing. To further facilitate off-campus use, there is a guide for distance learners available on the library homepage. For assistance in finding resources specific to sociology, the library liaison to the department has created a guide for students and faculty: http://wiu.libguides.com/soc_anthro.
Collections/Resources

The University Libraries provides a learning environment where the infrastructure and available resources are sufficient to meet the curriculum and research needs of students and faculty. The Libraries’ main book collection includes many titles on the topics of sociology, social problems, communities, social movements, and other related subjects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>LC Number</th>
<th>Titles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences (General)</td>
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<td>Social History &amp; Conditions</td>
<td>H 1-995</td>
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<td>Communities</td>
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<td>Social Pathology. Social &amp; Public Welfare. Criminology</td>
<td>H 1-9960</td>
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<td>Socialism. Communism. Anarchism</td>
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Since the early 1990s, the University Libraries Reference Unit has spent thousands of collection development dollars on sociology dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks. At present the reference collection has around 650 print items in Library of Congress (LC) call number ranges H, HM-HN, HQ, HS-HT, HV, and HX. Sociologists also have access to online sociology reference tools that are included in SAGE Reference Online and Gale Virtual Reference Library. For more information visit: [http://www.wiu.edu/libraries/databases/?erefCollections=1&showeref=1](http://www.wiu.edu/libraries/databases/?erefCollections=1&showeref=1).

As a Federal Depository Library Program participant, WIU Libraries selects 65% of all federal publications from that program – selection rate comparable to that of large research libraries. Students of sociology therefore have a wealth of government resources and documents at their disposal related to various aspects of society: poverty, demographics, health, housing, and social institutions, to name but a few.

In addition to resources owned by WIU, University Libraries’ membership in a state-wide consortium with 82 members allows access to holdings of over 36 million items. Except for limited circulation items such as reference or archival materials, all of those items may be requested by WIU library users. The requested items are transported via a statewide courier system that ensures delivery within a few days. When time allows, library users can also use interlibrary loan services for materials identified through other sources such as WorldCat, which is international in scope.

The University Libraries directly subscribes to 36 journals selected by the sociology department faculty. But this number is only a small part of the journals available through the University Libraries’ periodical databases and online archives. The University Libraries’ subscription to JSTOR, for instance, provides access to 102 scholarly sociology journals and many more in related areas, such as criminology, religion, political science, and area studies. Since January of 2010, WIU students and faculty have downloaded over 40,682 full text documents from the discipline collection of sociology.
In addition, WIU subscribes to several general “aggregator” databases that provide full-text articles for many journal titles; WIU Libraries has a total of approximately 60,000 journals in electronic format accessible through the Web. Our SFX citation link software facilitates quick access to full-text articles by linking the citations found in any database to our various methods or platforms of access. As preferred, these articles can then be printed, downloaded, or emailed as attachments for further use.

Facilities

The University Libraries consists of the main Malpass Library, three branch libraries—Music, Physical Sciences and Curriculum—on the Macomb campus, and library at the Moline campus. The main library is open 96.5 hours a week during the regular semester. The library on the Moline campus is open 63 hours per week. Hours are curtailed during semester breaks and expanded during the final exam week. Physical space is about 200,000 sq. ft. for Malpass Library with seating for 1,300 people, and 2,000 sq. ft. for the riverfront campus in Moline. The Physical Sciences Library is 4,417 sq.ft. with seating area for about 100. The Curriculum Library has an area of 6,134 sq. ft. with seating for 70.

All of the library buildings support wireless access. There are over 100 computers for use in Malpass Library. There are two computer classrooms in Malpass that may be scheduled for instruction. Also available are several other computer clusters with specialized software and general use computers. The Digital Commons area in the main library houses 2 dual-boot computers with space dedicated for collaborative work with large displays and other specialized hardware. This area is the demonstration model for other university buildings. Each branch library has computers for public use. The library also provides computer support, including some evening and weekend hours.

Library Governance, Finance and Administration

The Dean of University Libraries reports directly to the Provost and participates in university governance at the same level as Deans of the four Colleges of WIU. Budgeting and administration of the libraries are carried out in similar manners as the colleges, under the same institutional and state regulations governing higher education. Details and proposed changes and adjustments of governance, finance and administration are all described in the annual plan that the Dean of University Libraries submits to the Provost.

Personnel

There is liaison from the library faculty assigned to work with each academic department. That person is responsible for communication between academic departments and the library, including collection development issues. The current sociology department liaison holds Master’s Degree in sociology from WIU. She oversees the selection of library materials for the University Libraries’ book and media collections in tandem with a library representative from the sociology faculty.
In addition, there are reference librarians and other staff members available at various service points during scheduled time when the libraries are open. The liaison and other library faculty serve as instructors for scheduled library sessions when requested by sociology department faculty.

Evaluation

This narrative presents an evaluation of library support for the sociology B.A. and M.A. programs, which are under review. The University Libraries is eager to participate in the evaluation process and is available to provide follow up information regarding this review if necessary.

(Krista Bowers Sharpe, September 2013)