



## Preparing for an Accreditation

Friedrich K. (Fred) Brose MLS, MA

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**ABSTRACT.** Based on e-mails gathered from listservs, a variety of sources are suggested for preparing for an upcoming accreditation: the previous accreditation report of one's home campus, published literature, the national library peer comparison tool as well as statistical sources, the U.S. Office of Postsecondary Education's website of accreditation agencies, how to obtain recent sample accreditation reports from your home state, how to obtain supporting survey documentation forms, insights from colleagues who served on accreditation teams, as well as what questions we can expect to be asked from the visiting accreditation team. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

**KEYWORDS.** Accreditation libraries, accreditation community college libraries, accreditation

E-mails posted on the [cjc-1@gpc.edu](mailto:cjc-1@gpc.edu) and [ccc-lib-lrc@listserv.ccnnext.net](mailto:ccc-lib-lrc@listserv.ccnnext.net) listservs in June 2005 suggested the following sources in preparing for an upcoming accreditation.

The previous institutional accreditation report of one's home campus is of primary importance; it is something to build and elaborate on. But how about some new and fresh ideas from off-campus sources? First,

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Friedrich K. (Fred) Brose, MLS, MA, is Associate Professor of Library Services, Riverside Community College District, Moreno Valley Campus, CA (E-mail: [fred.brose@rec.edu](mailto:fred.brose@rec.edu)).

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there is published literature. For example, the American Library Association distributes the comprehensive though somewhat dated (1998) *Library and Learning Resource Programs: Evaluation & Self-Study*. It is available from the ALA bookstore.<sup>1</sup> This book pre-dates the most recent ACRL standards, while Bill Nelson has a workbook on applying the new ACRL standards, *Standards and Assessment for Academic Libraries: A Workbook*, published in 2002 that is also available online.<sup>2</sup>

The Learning Resources Association of California Community Colleges distributes a number of accreditation related books including, *Measuring What Matters: A Library/LRC Outcomes Assessment Manual*.<sup>3</sup> In order to measure specific outcomes, and also useful for preparing student satisfaction surveys, the California State Universities made available a Checklist of Information Competencies for lower division college students.<sup>4</sup>

Also recommended was, *Developing Research & Communication Skills: Guidelines for Information Literacy in the Curriculum*, distributed by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education: <http://www.msche.org/> and click on Publications, and then, Guidelines for Institutional Improvement. This book was recommended for assisting colleges in meeting new accreditation criteria, and it addresses an audience of non-library faculty and administrators. This MSCHE website also distributes such books as, *Regional Accreditation and Student Learning: Principles for Good Practice* and *Regional Accreditation and Student Learning: Selected Bibliography*, both prepared by the Council for Regional Accrediting Commissions.

Besides published literature, it might be useful to check the Library Peer Comparison Tool<sup>5</sup> that was developed by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Comparing your library with others may provide supporting arguments for requesting additional resources. Also, every state might compile statistics as, for example, the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges in its Annual Library Data Survey.<sup>6</sup> Again, you can compare your library against others to support requests for additional resources.

Next, it may be useful to check what community college library colleagues in your state have done recently. Their accreditation reports may provide ideas of how to better handle one's own accreditation work. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, has on its website<sup>7</sup> a list of regional institutional accrediting agencies. As an example, let us use the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges: <http://accjc.org/>. On the left side, check "Most Recent Comm-

ission Actions” where numerous colleges are listed under various categories, including those recently accredited or re-accredited.

We can now either directly contact colleagues at the colleges listed and ask them for their accreditation web pages, or ask colleagues on a regional listserv to give us more detailed information. Alternatively, we can search in Google by name of the college plus “accreditation.” Some colleges have websites with internal search engines that will also give us access to their accreditation reports. Here are three colleges selected at random: Mt. San Antonio Community College<sup>8</sup> with the library is listed on pages 117-125. Next, Ventura Community College<sup>9</sup> with the library having its own web page.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the City College of San Francisco posted its draft report of Summer 2005 on its website, the Library being listed on pages 105-116, while the actual print pages are 109-120.<sup>11</sup>

Important supporting documentation for accreditation reports are surveys of patron satisfaction. Rather than writing and testing your own questionnaire, listservs are well suited for asking colleagues from other colleges for samples of questionnaires they already have tested. For example, Walt Lessun at Gogebic Community College Library in Michigan has a variety of surveys, including for students, department chairs, and faculty. In fact, surveys of students and faculty represent the most frequently used supporting documentation. They are also available from Phil Roche at Lake Tahoe Community College, and Peter Sezzi at Ventura College, both located in California.

A few community college libraries are posting their survey forms online, like Lake Land College Library in Illinois,<sup>12</sup> and Pasadena Community College in California, in the latter case mostly of statistical nature.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the Bay Area Community College Information Competency Assessment Project has a proficiency examination with 47 questions that lends itself more to a classroom setting.<sup>14</sup>

Some fascinating insights on accreditation visits can be gathered from listserv postings. For example, Mary Ann Laun, Assistant Dean of Library Services at Pasadena City College, published a paper, “You have been invited to serve ... Reflections on the accreditation visiting team experiences,” *Community & Junior College Libraries*, 13:1 (May 2005) p. 45-50. This paper is based on notes posted on her website, [www.paccd.cc.ca.us/library/Admin/WASC.html](http://www.paccd.cc.ca.us/library/Admin/WASC.html).

David Drake, Library Director at the American Inter-Continental University in Houston, wrote on April 27, 2005 on the [cjc-1@gpc.edu](mailto:cjc-1@gpc.edu) listserv, “I can attest that the reason you often get a sympathetic ear from the librarian on the visiting team but no action (or even a mention)

on the final report is because any such action or mention requires the full consensus of the visiting team—and remember, the rest of the team are not librarians . . . the other members of the visiting team, most of whom are presidents, vice-presidents, and deans . . . look at the library very differently than we do . . . In other words, the visiting team members—other than the sole librarian—tend to think just like your administrators do, and they tend to overrule the librarian on the team.”

Lil Clary from Allan Hancock College, however, thinks there are ways to influence the other committee members on the visiting team, as she wrote on September 2, 2005, on the [ccc-lib-lrc@listserv.ccnex.net](mailto:ccc-lib-lrc@listserv.ccnex.net) listserv. “Demonstrate your support for the team’s visit by being well versed in the *entire* self-study of the college you are visiting; there’s nothing worse than being a ‘one-issue’ team member . . . have a good grasp on student outcomes . . . nearly every president I dealt with on visiting teams told me that ‘librarians always complain about the collection.’ Your focus might be aging materials, the inability of the institution to provide equity of access . . . get your team members into the library to look at the place even if you have to take them by the arm & drag; point out something that you feel symbolizes the plusses or minuses . . . be ready with some kind of comment when you hear (as I guarantee you will) comments about librarians. I nearly quit *before* my first visit because the WASC training person made the comment ‘well, you know how those librarians are.’ Response: ‘No, actually I don’t. Let’s hear how they are.’ But never put your profession down and don’t apologize.”

Fred Brose asked Dr. David Wolf, former Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges during a meeting at Riverside Community College on September 10, 1999 about the role of community college libraries. In giving his personal opinion, the Director replied (1) he does not pay much attention to the ALA standards, (2) that the number of bound books in a library may not matter much in the future, and (3) that the Association of College and Research Libraries published standards that shifted the emphasis from books to electronic resources.

Finally, Bonnie Gratch-Lindauer from the City College of San Francisco posted comments on the [ccc-lib-lrc@listserv.ccnex.net](mailto:ccc-lib-lrc@listserv.ccnex.net) listserv on September 5, 2005, “WASC standards are now heavily evidence-based and we used a variety (multi-methods approach) of evidence including: (1) library and learning assistance center use data, (2) library and learning assistance center user opinions/perceptions about services and resources, (3) campus-wide service satisfaction from students,

faculty, staff; (4) collection analysis with data to support inadequate acquisitions budget in selected areas; (5) research skills/information competency learning opportunities with use data and user satisfaction with workshops and online course, (6) pre- and post-test scores for online information competency course, and (7) tracking of student completion of student success courses and information competency courses with retention and GPA.”

The above selected and shortened quotations may give the flavor of e-mail correspondence among librarians on listservs. They are useful in rounding up everyone’s preparation for an accreditation.

Last not least, what are accreditation team members looking for during their visitations? They certainly try to verify that our self-studies are correct. In doing so, they have guidelines for specific questions that are posted on the web. For the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, there are two sites: <http://www.accjc.org/documents/Guide%20to%20Evaluating%20Institutions%20Aug%202004.pdf> and <http://tinyurl.com/bw2ds>. Studying the questions we can expect to be asked will enable us to look forward to the accreditation team visitation with confidence.

## SOURCES

1. <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/nonserialtitles/librarylearning.htm>.
2. <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/nonserialtitles/standardsassessment.htm>.
3. <http://www.lraccc.org/html/publications.html>.
4. <http://www.calstate.edu/LS/SystemwideResources.shtml>.
5. <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/compare/index.asp?LibraryType=Academic>.
6. [http://www.cccco.edu/divisions/esed/aa\\_ir/llrp.htm](http://www.cccco.edu/divisions/esed/aa_ir/llrp.htm).
7. [http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation\\_pg7.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg7.html).
8. <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/admin/accreditation/>.
9. <http://www.venturacollege.edu/accreditation/>.
10. <http://www.venturacollege.edu/accreditation/2004/standard-2c-1.htm>.
11. [http://www.ccsf.edu/Offices/Research\\_Planning/pdf/accreditdraft2.pdf](http://www.ccsf.edu/Offices/Research_Planning/pdf/accreditdraft2.pdf).
12. <http://www.lakeland.cc.il.us/library/Forms/survey.cfm>.
13. <http://www.paccd.cc.ca.us/library/Pages/AdminP.html>.
14. <Http://topsy.org/ICAProject.html>.

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