Building a Digital Repository for Accreditation through Courseware

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter highlights how a graduate program in library science structured a university's course management system to address the data gathering and document demands of accreditation. While examples in the literature revealed creative uses of content and course management systems, none specifically demonstrated ways to build a digital repository of accreditation materials. Design features of the course management system were found similar to content management systems but with distinct advantages. While both types of programs could address document storage without having to create separate Websites and to acquire dedicated Web servers, the course management system offers a way to communicate with colleagues, presents a mechanism to integrate specialized surveys within selected courses, and provides a way to compile and to save results from any survey or assessment technique. Faculty note ongoing challenges stemming from the use of a course management system but acknowledge viable solutions.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) is composed of 14 universities dispersed throughout the state of Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania State System, n.d). Clarion University (the University hereafter), founded in 1867, was a seminary before becoming a normal school, teacher's college, college, and, eventually, a university in 1983. The University, located two miles from Interstate 80 in northwestern Pennsylvania, services approximately 7,000 students with a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs, preparing them for professional careers in education, business, and science (Clarion University, 2012). Besides the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools university accreditation, Clarion University holds twenty-nine program accreditations, a distinction among the other PASSHE universities (Clarion University, 2010). Clarion offers academic programs through the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business Administration, the College of Education and Human Services, and Venango College. The Department of Library Science is located in the College of Education and Human Services (Clarion University, 2008).

The Department of Library Science (the Department hereafter) administers one of the twenty-nine program accreditations through the Masters in Science in Library Science degree program (MSLS). While the University offered undergraduate library science education since 1937, the master's program began in 1967 and became one of the American Library Association (ALA) accredited programs in 1974-1975 (American Library Association, 2012; Clarion University of Pennsylvania, 2010). The Department actually began as its own College in the very beginning of the program but, due to the first reorganization, moved to the College of Communication, Computer Information Science, and Library Science in 1990. When this College was dissolved in 1996, it was housed in the College of Education and Human Services (Clarion University, 2010) and has grown to accommodate one of the largest graduate programs on campus.

As with all ALA accredited programs, the Department must ensure that the MSLS program addresses six standards. Each standard outlines one of six areas, i.e., Mission, Goals, and Objectives (Standard I); Curriculum (Standard II); Faculty (Standard III); Students (Standard IV); Administration and Finance (Standard V); and Physical Resources and Facilities (Standard VI), with goals that must be evident in all programs (American Library Association, 2008). The Department is responsible for reviewing the program against these standards and for documenting its efforts with regard to program evaluation in light of mission, goals, and objectives, data collection and analysis for student composition, curriculum changes, assessment practices, faculty professional development, and changes in physical resources and facilities. The process by which any Library Science Department or