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ABSTRACT

Because of a need for information about the structure, staffing, physical space, and types of activities of media service departments at colleges and universities, a study was conducted to gain a snapshot of media service programs at 4-year institutions with student enrollments between 5,000 and 10,000 students in 1992 and 1993. A 47-item questionnaire was mailed to media service departments at 141 institutions, and completed questionnaires were received from 90 colleges or universities (64 percent). A typical media service department would be housed in one location and administered by a full-time director with 6 to 10 years of experience. One additional professional and 10 to 15 students would comprise a typical staff. Typical support to instruction would include maintenance and circulation of a video and film collection, with associated services that could include video production and reception as well as photography and film processing. Recommendations are made for studying media services at other types and sizes of institutions. One figure and three tables present study findings. (Contains 5 references.) (SLD)

Characteristics of Media Service Departments at Mid-size Universities

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Characteristics of Media Service Departments at Mid-size Universities

Media administrators and their institutions benefit from having comparable information about the nature of similar media service programs. This study stemmed from a need for information about the structure, staffing, physical space, and types of activities of media service departments at colleges and universities of similar size and type, public institutions with student enrollments between 5,000 and 10,000 students. This data was used for long-range planning and decision-making. A survey research project was completed to gain a "snapshot" of media service programs at four-year state-supported colleges and universities, those with student enrollments between 5,000 and 10,000 students. The study was conducted during the Fall of 1992, and the data was collected and analyzed during the following Spring.

Related Literature. In recent years, few empirical studies of this type have been published. The most well known study was reported by Albright (1983), a survey of media centers at 196 public and private colleges and universities. Among the findings of this Association for Educational Communications and Technology sponsored study were:

* Generally media centers (65%) at public institutions were staffed by five or more persons in 1982-'83.

* Media centers were known by a wide variety of functional titles; 54 unique names were identified.

* 22% of the respondents reported activity in the area of instructional computing; distance learning efforts and involvement also appeared to be minimal.

McConeghy and McConeghy (1990, 1990, 1991) surveyed 240 post-secondary institutions, including technical schools, all with enrollments over 1,000. The results showed large variances in the levels for staffing, budgets, and the activities of the media service departments; a reflection of the broad scope of the population sampled. The McConeghys found that the mean staff size of their respondents was 6.9 persons; 1.5 administrators, 1 clerical person, 2 people for maintenance and distribution, and 1.5 persons in media production. This staff was augmented by a mean of slightly over nine student workers.

Albright's AECT study was conducted over a decade ago. Both it and the McConeghys' research covered a broad range of higher education institutions: public, private, and schools with varied student enrollments. Speculating that limiting the sample population might increase information accuracy, the researcher intentionally focused this study on a much more narrow group and type of higher education institution.

Methodology. One hundred and forty-one state-supported, four-year colleges and universities with enrollments between 5,000 and 10,000 students were identified in the United States (Wells, Henne, and Harrigan 1990). A 3-page questionnaire with 47 items was designed. After this instrument was developed, it was evaluated by three professional colleagues, two with media administration experience and the other with related expertise. They each provided

recommendations for survey revision. These content experts were at institutions outside the research population. The questionnaire form was then revised and mailed to media service departments and their administrators at each of the 141 institutions in the study population. One follow-up letter was sent to non-responders. Completed questionnaires were received from 90 colleges or universities (64%). Figure 1 shows the locations and enrollments of the institutions who responded to the survey.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Results. Respondents provided data on their media service operations, information regarding the organizational structure, the media staff, physical space allocation, and the types of instructional support provided. Those requesting survey results also provided administrator and media service departments titles. Eight distinctly different titles for the media administrator were reported, but "director" (66%) far surpassed "coordinator" (8%). The variety in department names extended to 34 different headings, with the highest ranking in occurrence being "media services" (21%) followed by "audio visual services" (8%).

Media administrators were asked about their academic preparation. Forty-five (50%) responded that their highest degree attained was the Masters, while 19 (21%) had earned a Doctoral degree. But 56% of the respondents reported that they did not have a degree in an instructional/educational media or technology

program. Administrators also indicated the number of years they had been at their job assignments. Twenty-four (27%) had been their department leader from 6 to 10 years, 21% for 3 to 5 years, 13% from 10 to 15, and 14% had been at their position for over 25 years.

Respondents defined the organizational structure of their media service departments. The highest occurring pattern was 34 cases (40%) reporting to the director of the library. In 29 instances (32%), the media department was aligned under the academic vice-president or dean. The majority of media administrators (59%) stated that their assignment was an administrative position, with 17% having joint administrative and faculty appointments. An overwhelming majority (79%) of departments were housed in one location on campus, with 38 institutions (42%) listing another media support department outside their department. In those instances, the most common types were telecommunications centers and library centers separate from media services.

Information on media department staffing in four different categories was collected. The findings were summarized on Table 1. For three personnel groups: professional, technical support, and clerical/secretarial, statistics of central tendency were reported on the basis of full-time employment or the equivalent (FTE). In the grouping for student workers, hours-per-week was used because those positions are generally part-time assignments.

Insert Table 1 about here

In the professional staffing group, the most common of the 31 "additional" positions reported was a telecommunications engineer, followed closely by audiovisual/media specialist and television producer or director. Only 11 institutions (12%) had a part or full-time instructional designer. Leading titles for "other technical support" staff were audiovisual or media technician, electronics technician, and supervisor of a service area such as production, materials circulation, or equipment distribution. Of the 29 "additional student personnel" reported, the main assignments were as maintenance technicians, video producer/directors, and supervisors. Interestingly, responses showed that student workers were almost as likely to be assigned to a media production or clerical position as they are to be working in equipment circulation and delivery.

Respondents indicated the floor space used for various media department operations, indicating space in graduated 250 sq. ft. (23.2 m^2) increments. Table 2 summarizes the returned data.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 3 shows the reported levels of instructional support or activity. The data is shown as a percentile conversion of the number of respondents in each

category. Combining figures in both the first and second columns provides a total percentage of respondents who support that activity within their media service department. The responding media administrators generally reported that their departments supported materials production in three levels or means: facilitating self-help, job-order, and instructional design. The data indicates that the adoption of computer technology for production of materials was near the 50% level overall, that media departments are still relying heavily on more traditional production methods. In contrast, the table also pointed out that some activities were not typical. These included (1) a non-print materials collection other than film and or video, (2) operation of a print shop or duplication service, (3) photographic support for a print shop, (4) the development and processing of photographic color slides, (5) the production of computer assisted instruction (CAI), and (7) the origination of distance education programming.

Insert Table 3 about here

Conclusions. One method to summarize the survey data was to describe a "typical" media services department for a university within the study population. That description was based on the most commonly reported situation in each category. The typical department would be housed in one location. It would be named media services and administered by a full-time director. The media administrator would have been in their position from 6 to 10 years and have

completed a Masters degree. The degree would not likely be in instructional media or a closely related technology or media field. The administrator and department would be structurally aligned within the university library administrative system. Department staff would most likely include one additional professional (either an assistant director or media specialist), two technical support people (possibly equipment maintenance and production technicians), and one secretarial or clerical person. The department staff would also include 10 to 15 student workers, covering 100 to 150 work-hours each week. The "typical" departmental support to instruction would include: (1) the maintenance and circulation of a video and film collection, (2) rental of additional titles from outside sources, (3) the local production of media materials, (4) photographic support for instruction, (5) video production, and (6) satellite video reception. Photographic services would include location photography, copywork, and B&W film and print processing. The department also would have its own television studio, but supports video field production and editing.

The study outcomes were statements of what existed or was perceived to be the case by the respondents and the researcher. Although an argument might be ventured that some of the information spoke to the quality of media service programs, actually the data reflected what was "out there" instead of what should have been or how it should have been. The results are generalizable to a specific group of media service departments. Though the information gained provided a

benchmark and basis for future actions, the data should not be mistaken as an optimum way for organizing and delivering media support.

Recommendations. This research points to several other areas for investigation. The characteristics of media service programs at other types and sizes of educational institutions should be assessed, which then could lead to contrast and comparison. The study of technology utilization within media services could be expanded to a wider range, including examination of the adoption and use of CD-ROM, computer-based inventory and circulation systems, desktop presentation systems, and voice, video and data networks. Further investigation is needed of the attitudes of media administrators, the department staff, and their faculty and clients. This research also provides recent baseline data that could be used as a benchmark for measuring future changes in size, structure, and technology.

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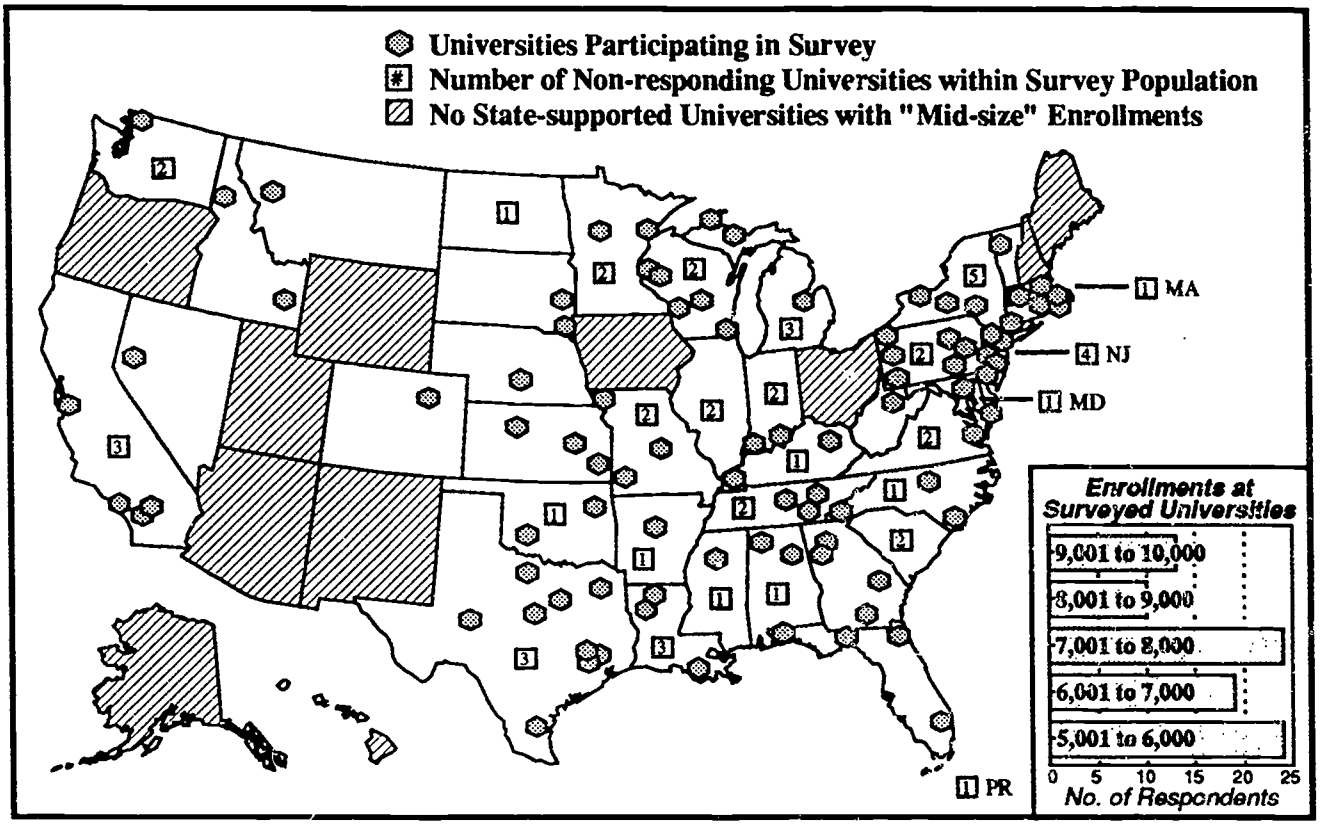
Universities Participating in Survey
Number of Non-responding Universities within Survey Population
No State-supported Universities with "Mid-size" Enrollments
1 MA
4 NJ
1 MD
1 PR
Enrollments at Surveyed Universities
9,001 to 10,000
8,001 to 9,000
7,001 to 8,000
6,001 to 7,000
5,001 to 6,000
0 5 10 15 20 25
No. of Respondents

Table 1. Staffing of Media Service Departments

A. Professional Personnel

Category	*No.*	*%*
Director/administrator	83	92
Assistant administrator	29	32
Instructional designer	11	12
Other professionals	31	34
Mean	*2.05 FTE*	
Median	*2.0*	
Standard Deviation	*1.49*	

* FTE represents a full-time worker or their equivalent in part-time work hours.

B. Technical Support Personnel

Category	*No.*	*%*
Graphic artist	26	29
Computer graphics	27	30
Photographer	35	39
Equipment maintenance	53	59
Video production	40	44
Other technical support	35	39
Mean	*3.71 FTE*	
Median	*2.05*	
Standard Deviation	*4.82*	

C. Clerical/Secretarial Personnel

Category	*No.*	*%*
Admin. secretary/clerk	60	67
Additional secretary	14	16
Additional clerk	12	13
Other office personnel	6	7
Mean	*1.11 FTE*	
Median	*1.0*	
Standard Deviation	*1.12*	

D. Student Personnel

Category	*No.*	*%*
Equipment circ., delivery	57	63
Media production	67	74
Clerical, office	58	64
Other student personnel	29	32
Mean	*147 Hrs/wk*	
Median	*98*	
Standard Deviation	*151*	

Table 2. Floor Space Used for Media Services

Function/Activity	*% with None*	*Median*	
		Square feet	*m^2*
Administration	3	251-500	23.3-46.4
Equipment storage	3	501-750	46.5-69.7
Non-print materials	7	251-500	23.3-46.4
Maintenance area	7	101-250	9.4-23
Materials production	7	751-1,000	69.8-92.9
Additional space	76		

Table 3. Types and Levels of Instructional Support Activities

Activity / Function * Data listed as percentage	Media Ser. Provides	Both MS & Another	Another Provides	Contract Outside	No Provision
Media Materials					
Video & film rental from outside agencies	51	14	18		17
Maintain, circulate video & film collection	58	14	17		11
Maintain, circulate non-print materials (other than film & video)	39	7	33		21
Production Levels					
Facilitate self-help production	58	17	3		22
Provide job-order production	72	7	4	1	16
Instructional design	57	14	2	3	23
Materials Production					
Transparencies via traditional techniques	73	12	7		8
Computer assisted instruction	21	26	22	2	29
Print materials (print shop, duplication)	14	14	50	4	17
Signs, posters & displays	38	22	22	3	14
Computer Graphics					
Forms	25	18	29	1	27
Signs	33	23	20		23
Charts, graphs	40	22	13		24
Laser prints & transparencies	46	17	14	2	21
Desktop publishing	27	22	28	1	22
Color transparencies	36	10	16	4	34
Film Recorder slides	36	10	14	3	36
Photography					
Location photography	44	12	18	4	21
Studio photography	42	6	15	6	31
Photographic copywork	61	8	11	2	18
Darkroom, photolab	50	10	18	4	18
Black & white film, print processing	49	10	15	7	19
Color slide development, processing	37	6	12	23	22
Photography support for print shop	22	8	29	4	37
Video Production					
Limited video production, wo editing & studio	35	16	7	1	41
Studio production	44	10	14	4	27
Field production with editing facilities	50	11	11	3	24
Distance Education					
Satellite, teleconference reception	53	11	11	1	23
Program origination, distribution	24	10	13		53