



Volume 50 | Issue 2

Article 5

2007

Preparing for ABHE Accreditation: Suggestions for Essential Elements 7 and 11

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Recommended Citation

Reid, Carol (2007) "Preparing for ABHE Accreditation: Suggestions for Essential Elements 7 and 11," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 50 : Iss. 2, Article 5.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol50/iss2/5>

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Preparing for ABHE Accreditation:

Suggestions for Essential Elements 7 and 11

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Based upon a panel workshop
presented at ACL Conference
2006.

Start now! Even if your visit is nine years away, begin to do now what you can to prepare for accreditation.

What can you do to bring your library up to the ABHE Standards for Accreditation? At the 2006 ACL Conference, a panel of librarians (Patty Agee, Tony Garrett, and Carol Reid) looked at two essential elements of the requirements to see how our libraries measured up. Our areas were the library's relationships with the faculty (essential element number seven) and with the information technology personnel on our campuses (number eleven). After examining the new *Library Guidelines for ABHE Colleges and Universities*, which are posted on the ACL website as a member benefit under the Bible College section link, we graded ourselves and talked about the supporting evidence that we could present to a visiting team.

Here are some of our suggestions about these areas.

1. Start now! Even if your visit is nine years away, begin to do now what you can to prepare for accreditation. If you work on one or two essential elements each year, you can make great progress toward being fully prepared for the accreditation team when the time comes.
2. Library committees and their minutes are very important. Even if you meet via e-mail or phone, keep track of your conversations and leave that paper trail of evidence of your collaboration. Short "nickel" surveys may quickly target faculty opinions on library issues as well.
3. Make sure that both your collection development policy and your faculty handbook reflect the faculty's role in building and evaluating your collection. You may also consider some course-by-course assessments, including syllabi and other bibliographies, as evidence of this collaboration.
4. The new guidelines *assume* that your library has technical resources. If your library is stuck in the last century, wake up Rip Van Winkle and get moving.
5. Meet often with your Information Technology (IT) people and/or grow your own. Bake brownies, if necessary, and make friends with those who know more than you do about

computers and networks and all those acronyms. Cultivate student workers who can help.

6. Have written goals and objectives about library technology. These should reflect your network, your computer support, and your web page. Even if you don't have these things all in place, your planning documents should reflect that you are working toward them.

7. Learn about web pages – at least enough to say, "I like this. I don't like that." It is not wasting time to go to other libraries' web pages. This is essential. Your page is out there in the near future and you're going to have to learn. If you don't know how to build a web page, hire an assistant or a clerk who does.

8. Your library will be graded on the campus network, whether you have any control over it or not. Ideally, you should be involved in decisions about the network. At least, you should have written policies about how to respond to problems.

9. To meet the minimum standards, your library should have four or more computers (or ports) for every one hundred students. You should at least have evidence in your planning documents that you're working toward that.

10. Have written goals and evaluation procedures in place for the technical support for your library's computers. You may not be the one in charge of the tech support, but you can at least have the procedures in place.

With the new *Guidelines*, we can know exactly what the evaluating team will be looking for. When you examine these guidelines, you may find that your library is a long way away from a perfect score. Don't panic: plan! Begin now to work toward being prepared. Confer with other librarians to know how they are approaching the various elements. Showcase the good things about your library and make plans to improve the not-so-good. Produce the evidence of your planning and communicate your progress toward your goals. Lead the way in your institution for exemplary status in your library work. ☩