Research Article

Current Condition of Michigan Curriculum Materials Centers and Collections in Academic Institutions

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Abstract

A 2005 sabbatical study revealed 24 unique curriculum materials centers or collections (CMCs) in Michigan colleges or universities. The focus of the study was to investigate the number, characteristics, and quality of these centers and collections supporting education faculty and students. A follow up 2014 study asked how or if the Michigan curriculum materials centers and collections changed due to the economic and academic changes that have occurred since 2005.

Introduction

In 2005, the focus of my sabbatical was to investigate the number, characteristics, and quality of curriculum materials centers and collections in academic institutions in Michigan. At that time, I found 24 unique centers or collections. My 2014 study asked how or if the Michigan curriculum materials centers and collections changed due to the economic and academic changes which have occurred since 2005.

Curriculum materials centers (CMCs) are specialized centers and collections developed to support teacher education programs within colleges and universities. The CMCs are usually located in libraries or education buildings. Instructional materials used in preschool through high school classrooms are found in the collections. Many centers also have educational equipment found in school systems such as binding machines, laminators, poster printers, and die cuts, to name a few.

Henry Harap (1932) is given credit for coining the term curriculum laboratory. He used it to describe centers, specialized libraries, or collections set aside for education faculty and students. The term curriculum laboratory was widely used until the 1960s, when center became the preferred designation. The publications of the seven editions of *Directory of Curriculum Materials Centers* have referred to these collections and facilities as centers since 1981.

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While some CMCs may still use the term laboratory, such as Michigan's Oakland University's Educational Resources Lab, many colleges and universities use center, library, or collection when referring to their education curriculum materials and/or equipment. Carroll (1961) found the variation in terms (laboratory, lab, center, collection, library, etc.) to be one reason for the confusion and misunderstanding when researchers study CMCs. My 2005 sabbatical study of Michigan CMCs confirmed Carroll's observations of name confusion. When initially contacted in 2005, education librarians or education staff or faculty did not understand that I was interested in not just curriculum materials centers. I was also curious if education faculty and students had access to curriculum resources that may or may not be located in centers or libraries. Survey respondents would often say something to the effect that they had curriculum materials and/or textbooks located in the library but no machines, which are common in CMCs. The term 'centers' seemed to confuse the respondents (Kohrman, 2006).

Literature Review

The first major study of CMCs located in the United States was by Beatrice Leary in 1938 and revealed 35 facilities located in academia. Frances Drag's 1947 study reported 145 centers or collections. In 1981, Lois J. Lehman and Eva L. Kiewitt described 187 CMCs. The 2009 directory published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) reported 204 centers or collections. An Ad Hoc Committee was appointed in 2014 by the executive board of the Education Behavioral Social Sciences, a division of ACRL, and was charged to compile information for an updated directory. The 2015 directory survey elicited 161 responses (Gregor, Kohrman, Lueck, Teel, & Walker, 2015), a 21% drop since 2009 and even lower than the 1981 Lehman and Kieweitt 187 CMCs (13%), possibly confirming the anecdotal reports of CMC closures. The 2015 decline found in the CMC directories confirmed my 2014 study.
There were major changes in Michigan's academic CMCs since 2005 due to financial fluctuations within higher education because of the economic downturn. This was not surprising when remembering how much the 2008 economic struggles (stock market loses, Bernard Madoff investment fraud, etc.) affected many individuals and organizations, even Michigan colleges and universities.

Methodology

In 2014 as in 2006, the Education and Curriculum Interest Group (ECIG) membership roster provided the initial contact list. ECIG is an organization of education librarians and CMC personnel found in Michigan colleges and universities. Also consulted was the Michigan Department of Education website for a current list of approved education preparation programs. The college/university's education, library, or CMC websites were located and reviewed for contact information. Telephone contact was made with education faculty, staff, librarians, or CMCs personnel gleaned from the websites. Personal visits were made whenever possible. Interviewees answered a set up questions regarding changes since 2005 to collections and other resources, as well as space. Open-ended questions allowed a sense of informal conversations.

Findings

The 2014 Michigan study revealed six other collections or centers of curriculum materials that were not included in my 2005 study. Two CMCs were not counted in the 2005 study (Madonna University and Northern Michigan University), due to incorrect information given to me at the time. Four colleges opened CMCs since 2005 (Baker College campuses at

Allen Park, Cadillac, and Muskegon and Miller College). University of Michigan had a curriculum materials center in 1955 (St.Cyr, 1955), but closed it just prior to the 2005 study due to financial constraints (M. Freeland, personnel interview, June 2005). It was not a part of the 2005 sabbatical study as it did not exist when the study commenced. Kalamazoo College was in the process of closing their CMC at the beginning of the 2005 study and was included. Statistics for the 2014 study were drawn from the 26 CMCs that were operational in 2005.

Of the 26 CMCs, 62% (N=16) of Michigan CMCs remained static or stayed open and had not undergone any major changes since 2005. Seven CMCs (27%) either closed completely or were in the process of closing their facilities and giving their collections away to students or faculty or relocating the collections to the academic libraries. Four (15%) had their collections or centers dramatically reduced in square footage and deselected their resources. One facility (4%) merged with the second center located near the College of Education. A smaller print collection at the main library serves the content faculty and students located on the larger campus approximately 14 miles away. After deselecting their collections, six centers (23%) relocated either all or a portion of the collections to the main library.

A variety of reasons for the changes were given by the ten CMCs which either closed, reduced their square footage, or merged with another existing CMC. The two main explanations for the dramatic changes were budget costs (80%, N=8) or needing the space for other purposes (80%, N=8). Four (40%) CMCs cited the cost of staffing as a third reason for the changes. Low usage was given as an explanation by two (20%) CMCs. One (10%) CMC would no longer offer an education degree/certification program; therefore, the reason for a center was no longer applicable.

Since my 2014 study, two CMC personnel contacted me directly to report updates. Central Michigan University at first had reduced their Kromer Instructional Materials Center from approximately 9,000 square feet to approximately 900 square feet, when a new education building was constructed. Most of the K-12 textbooks and the juvenile and young adult literature collections were moved to the University's Park Library. With the implementation of the CMU Reading Clinic, many textbooks and children's reading materials were relocated to the clinic for utilization in their K-8 reading workshops. The CMU Reading Clinic is housed in the College of Education and Human Services (R. Alford, personal communication, September 21, 2015). The Kromer Instructional Materials Center has broadened their focus by providing "appropriate resources and service . . . with manipulative materials, kits, games, puppets, charts, maps, models, and other resources that can be used in many educational settings" (Central Michigan, n.d.a, para.4). The Center has turned towards a focus on technology that applies to areas that benefit all departments and centers at CMU. Kromer still provides access to limited educational equipment such as die cuts, binding machines, and laminators. Other centers within the CMU's School of Education have opened which provide more of a laboratory learning environment for in-service and pre-service teachers (Central Michigan, n.d.b).

Calvin College's Curriculum Center was originally closed in 2014, with more recent and popular materials moving to the Hekman Library. Since then, the education faculty and the education librarian have visited other local CMCs to evaluate the cost and viability of reopening a smaller curriculum collection at Calvin College within the library. A materials budget has been allocated and a new location has been designated within the library better suited to meet the browsing needs of the education students. (L. Dye, personal communication, August 6, 2015).

Other changes since 2005 offered interesting possibilities or transitions for CMCs. Miller College and Kellogg Community College (KCC) currently share campus grounds. They have an

agreement where KCC provides library services and resources to Miller College faculty and students. Miller College education department has a small K-5 elementary collection which has slowly decreased in size due to non-return of materials or portions of the kits (M. Dodson, personal communication, August 6, 2015). KCC library has a small collection of early childhood materials (K. Frost, personal communication, August 6, 2015). A cooperative venture would allow the two colleges to share education curriculum materials and expand the collection for optimum student benefit.

Sharing resources is not a new concept in librarianship. The sharing of curriculum materials may be one way for colleges and universities with education programs to provide these necessary materials and services to students and faculty. A successful cooperative alliance between University of Washington – Bothell and Cascadia Community College (now Cascadia College) has been operational for a number of years (D. Rowland, personal communication, August 6, 2015). Both institutions are located within walking distance similar to Miller College and KCC. Carr and Lewis (2012) emphasized the importance of networking or "the creation of new partnerships and collaborations . . . [between CMC librarians,] teacher education colleagues and their primary clients" (p. 241). Many other colleges and universities should consider cooperative programs that share resources.

Another example for CMCs to consider is to share their resources with those not affiliated with the institutions. Public patrons, such as in-service teachers, homeschoolers, religious organizations, or businesses, are known to visit Cornerstone University's Curriculum Materials Center and Grand Valley State University's downtown Curriculum Materials Library to use their resources (G. Bolger, personal communication, August 13, 2015; D. Oster, personal communication, August 12, 2015). An example of this type of outreach being taken to a higher level is at the Teaching Resources Center Outreach Office (TRC) of East Carolina University. The TRC, in support of the Walter and Daisy Carson Clinical Schools Network in East Carolina's School of Education, offers access to an Educator Library Card to approximately "564 schools with over 22,500 teachers who participate in partnership efforts" (East Carolina University, College of Education, n.d., para.3). K-12 educators in a 36 county region of eastern North Carolina have "free access to the materials in Joyner Library, to increase awareness of the resources and materials in Joyner Library and to show our commitment and support to the area educators (East Carolina University, Joyner Library, n.d.a, para.4). The TRC also holds a "networking summit that provides a variety of roundtable discussions on current topics for K-12 school media personnel" (East Carolina University, Joyner Library, n.d.b, para.6). These examples of expanding outreach beyond the intended academic audience and the confines of bricks and mortar are ways CMCs show commitment, support, and viability of their centers and collections to all educators - both pre-service and in-service.

Some Michigan CMCs are expanding or re-imagining their facilities with an eye on educational technology and technology sharing. Albion College and Oakland University have placed greater emphasis on technology found within the K-12 environment. During the 2005 study, Albion College's Ferguson Center for Technology-Aided Teaching and Learning was temporarily closed due to remodeling. Since then the facility has reopened with even more emphasis on technology. A few examples for technology at Ferguson Center includes students' use of iPads and swivel devices to aid in recording for flipped classroom lessons, creation of websites or Webquests, use of interactive whiteboards, and creation of e-portfolios using WordPress or Weebly (G. Cox, personal communication, September 15, 2015).

Oakland University's Educational Resources Lab (ERL) continues to find ways to collaborate with local school districts and to integrate currently used technologies into the ERL's collections. They work with education faculty who teach methods courses and students in field placements to support learning and strategies for technology integration into the lesson planning, while not ignoring the use of print curriculum resources available at the ERL (B. Campbell, personal communication, August 17, 2015). A well-balanced CMC should look to the local community and school districts as well as schools of educations to determine the characteristics and skills for a marketable in-service teacher.

Recognizing the escalating costs of curriculum materials, CMC/education librarians and staff should investigate the availability and variety of curriculum e-books, including K-12 e-textbooks and open education resources (OER). CMC staffs need to stay abreast of the variety and types of educational technology and apps and how to evaluate their usefulness as more K-12 schools are venturing into virtual learning. A concern is how CMCs, faced with the ever-shrinking budgets and staff, are to manage the continual changing nature, upkeep, and costs of technologies. While some CMCs may not be able to include technology within their collections, being aware of the International Society of Technology in Education Standards (ISTE) for teachers and students will enhance and guide the CMC mission, vision, services, relevance, and viability.

Judy Walker (2001) stressed the supportive nature of CMC personnel when assisting education students to understand and find appropriate technologies for lesson planning. This allows the student teachers and the classroom students to become "competent in the operation and use of all instructional technology" (p. 161). The final sentence in her chapter on technology within CMCs speaks volumes: "These services may or may not be available within the confines of the CMC; but, regardless of their location, the CMC staff should be able to promote them to students and faculty" (p. 161).

Discussion and Conclusion

Although some of the above CMCs seem to be outside of the traditional images of CMCs, they fit perfectly with the ISTE standards. If one paraphrased the ISTE standards, the CMCs should 1) facilitate and inspire learning and creativity, 2) design and develop learning experiences and assessments, 3) model work and learning, 4) promote and model citizenship and responsibility, and 5) engage and encourage student teachers in professional development and leadership (ISTE, 2008). When CMCs should provide a variety of services beyond the usual education equipment (die cuts, laminators, binding machines) by making available, promoting, using, and evaluating education technology, software, and apps, then students see how ISTE's Standard 1 can facilitate and inspire learning and creativity. When CMCs model the endless opportunities for instructional design experiences and assessments (ISTE Standard 2), they are promoting and demonstrating responsible citizenship and professional development (ISTE Standard 3 & 4). Reaching beyond the CMCs walls to collaborate with and serve other academic departments, institutions and communities, validates the leadership potential that teachers have in and to society (ISTE Standard 5).

CMCs must continue to adapt to the changing nature of education as seen in emerging technologies, resources, services, instructions, and collaboration beyond the CMCs walls (Brisco, 2012). Budgets, space, staffing, usage, and mission must keep up with the changes occurring in education. How CMCs looked in 2005 and in 2014 is guaranteed to change by 2025. The questions and needs will constantly change. Staying relevant is necessary. Adapting and

transforming is the key. This is the transformative nature of education. This is the transformative nature of curriculum materials centers and collections.

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Appendix

Curriculum Materials Centers and Collections in Academia in the State of Michigan
2014-2015

College/University	Changes Since 2005					Reasons for Changes**					New Since 2005
2005 Study	Static	Closed	Reduced	Merged	Relocated to Library	Budget	Space	Staffing	Low Use	Mission	
Adrian College	1										
Albion College	1										
Alma College	1										
Andrews University	1										
Aquinas College			1		1	1	1				
Calvin College		1			1	1	1				
Central Michigan Univ.			1		1		1	1			
Concordia University	1										
Cornerstone University	1										
Eastern Michigan Univ.		1			1	1	1				
Ferris State University	1										
Grand Valley State Univ.		1	1	1		1	1	1	1		
Hope College	1										
Kalamazoo College		1				1				1	
Marygrove College		1			1	1	1				
Oakland University	1										
Saginaw Valley State Un.		1			1	1	1	1			
Siena Heights University			1			1	1				
Spring Arbor University	1										
Univ. of Detroit-Mercy	1										
UM-Dearborn	1										
UM-Flint	1										
Wayne State University	1										
Western Michigan	1										
*Madonna University		1							1		
*Northern Michigan Univ.	1										
Since 2005											
Baker College-AllenPark											1
Baker College-Cadillac											1
Baker College-Muskegon											1
Miller College/Kellogg CC											1
Changes since 2005	16	7	4	1	6	8	8	3	2	1	4
	62%	27%	15%	4%	23%	80%	80%	40%	20%	10%	
*Operational in 2005 but not in orginial study.				**Based on the 10 facilities which closed, reduced, merged or relocated to libr								