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# The Gettysburg Experience

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# The Gettysburg Experience

## **Abstract**

In February 1994, Gettysburg College launched an ambitious experiment that joined computing and the library into a new organization known as Information Resources. Gettysburg College, one of the first liberal arts colleges to undertake such a merger, sought, along with only a handful of other institutions, a level of integration so complete that all vestiges of the traditional library disappeared. This is the story of that merger and why it failed despite the best efforts of many. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Information Resources, academic libraries, Gettysburg College, merger, organizational merger, information technology, IT

## **Disciplines**

Educational Leadership | Information Literacy | Library and Information Science

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

# The Gettysburg Experience

ROBIN WAGNER

In February 1994, Gettysburg College launched an ambitious experiment that joined computing and the library into a new organization known as Information Resources.<sup>1</sup> Gettysburg College, one of the first liberal arts colleges to undertake such a merger, sought, along with only a handful of other institutions, a level of integration so complete that all vestiges of the traditional library disappeared. This is the story of that merger and why it failed despite the best efforts of many.

To ensure the successful merging of computing and the library the chemistry must be right. First of all, there must be compelling reasons to integrate. Those involved must plan the marriage carefully, enlist grassroots support, and then create a flexible new structure. Most importantly, those involved must be realistic about what can be accomplished and have the flexibility to change the recipe if things do not jell. Arnold Hirshon's 1998 CAUSE publication, *Integrating Computing and Library Services*, provides a textbook on how to do it right. In the chapter titled "Making the Decision," he outlines the readiness indicators for integrating and presents an equally impressive list of poor reasons for coming together.<sup>2</sup> Gettysburg College could claim just two of the essential readiness factors—an institutional mission and desire to expand service. However, Gettysburg College could claim nearly all of the negative factors.<sup>3</sup> Had Hirshon's guidebook been available in 1994, the results of the Gettysburg experience might have been different. Unfortunately, from the start Gettysburg College had the ingredients for an unhappy union resulting in misunderstandings, staffing departures, and ill will.

I joined the newly formed information resources unit seven months into the experiment, near the completion of the planning phase. I participated on three different teams during the three-and-a-half-year union and served as team leader from 1996 until the redivision of information resources in July of 1997. In trying to understand what happened at Gettysburg College, I examined the written record (what little remains), relied on my own notes from this period, and collected the stories of current and past employees who experienced the merger.<sup>4</sup>

My evidence suggests that there were many explanations for the failure of the merger. Some were linked directly to the leadership of information resources. In this essay I will concentrate on three areas: the planning process, the organizational structure itself, and the cultural differences between the library and the computing staff. From the beginning, a leadership that seemed to have little interest in libraries or books and did not understand the culture of libraries defined the culture of information resources. Leadership had minimal contact with the rank and file. A perpetual disconnect seemed to exist from the everyday needs of staff and from the responsibilities of managing an organizational change of this size and character. Based on my experiences, the leadership preferred to dream the big dreams rather than to deal with everyday realities.<sup>5</sup>

## BACKGROUND

The Gettysburg College community learned of the merger via e-mail from the provost in January, 1994. The provost presented the merger as an accomplished fact. The college had just been through a strategic planning process, and the college leadership explained the merger as a way to meet critical technology goals, specifically "to develop the best possible computer-based information resources and programs."<sup>6</sup> The need to consolidate resources and eliminate redundancy was also emphasized. The unofficial but commonly held explanation took a slightly different spin: the library had lagged technologically and had more money than it could spend well in a given year. The computer center positioned itself on the cutting edge—but lacked the budget or staff to do the innovative experimentation that would put Gettysburg College on the map.

Almost immediately following the official announcement three important events occurred. The college joined the library and computing administratively, and the new unit took on the name Information Resources. Nearly everyone from computing moved into the library, a building too small for the number of people it would now house. A reengineering process began, entailing advice from consultants and the establishment of a four-person core planning group. This group ultimately proposed a flat, process-based organizational structure. Overall, the changes effected in early 1994 were dramatic and far-reaching; they also proved to be unrealistic and in the end, unworkable.

With the marriage announcement, the partners took up residence together and began sharing the same checkbook. The new vice president for information resources, who had been the director of the computer center prior to the merger, held the checkbook. This individual had had a meteoric career at Gettysburg College. In his brief tenure as head of computing he had been credited with networking the campus, advancing technology, and working effectively to integrate computing into the curriculum. Some considered him a visionary and others hailed him as a miracle worker. He had hired an able staff and had revitalized computing on campus. His staff went to the merger with a positive attitude.

On the other hand, as many interviewees recalled, the library staff seemed uncooperative and resistant from the outset. According to one member of the library staff, reaction to the merger and the choice of leadership was "mixed, though heavily weighted to anxiety and dread of what was to come." She wrote,

I, myself, was more hopeful, since I believed that the library could benefit greatly from moving to a position of more technical strength. I was naive

enough to think that [the VP] would be moderately reasonable once he'd settled himself into his new position, and second, that the workers in the library would see the advantages to upgrading the technical aspects of their jobs and finding ways to improve them. I felt [VP] should be given the benefit of a doubt, and be allowed to at least try a few changes.

As one can tell from the tone of these comments, the leadership failed in the end to ameliorate these concerns and to change attitudes. A hostile work environment set up for failure resulted.

## PLANNING MISTAKES

In looking back, three major problem areas can be identified that collectively led to a breakdown of cooperation and the end of the merger. First, the planning process failed to include a majority of the staff in a meaningful way. The lack of cooperation appears to be an inevitable result of a process more exclusive than inclusive. A small and select group, meeting almost daily with consultants or with each other, designed the reengineered organization. The vice president and three close advisors comprised this team. No librarian served on the core team.

Librarians played a modest role at the next level, the extended team, in serving as intermediaries between the core designers and everyone else in the organization. The extended team had eight members, and, according to an interviewee (a librarian), many quickly labeled it the "rubber stamp team." This librarian had served on the extended team and described the role of intermediary as awkward and frustrating, observing:

The consultants worked with the highest ranking work group [core team] to form the teams. I think it became clear after a while that [two individuals] were the masterminds behind the new structure. There were meetings of smaller groups, and of the whole of information resources to discuss the options, but nothing that was said in those meetings seemed to have been taken into account when the teams were formed. The few group meetings that did occur were called "all hands" meetings—as in "all hands on deck". Some ridiculed these meetings as pointless. Others labeled them as "mass indoctrination sessions."

Commented a long time library staff member:

Officially all of us were part of the planning process. Only it wasn't planning, it was more like reeducation. We would all march off to these silly meetings in Pennsylvania Hall, led by the consultant hired by [the VP] who was around twenty-four years old [the consultant], and didn't know anything about libraries. We pasted circles on priorities like "perform selection on a more efficient basis." All this stuff was obvious. Who isn't for efficiency and excellence?

Library staff members commented over and over that they felt estranged from the planning process and troubled by the fact that the consultants seemed not to understand the library environment.

Reengineering planning continued for eleven months, mostly behind closed doors. Library and computer staff, still not united on teams, occupied the same cramped space and saw each other every day. However, leadership made little effort to bring these groups together in any meaningful way. Everyone

waited anxiously for the plan to be unveiled. Conditions created a perfect environment for suspicion and innuendo to flourish. This, therefore, was a critical time to encourage dialogue, cooperation, and joint planning, but no one did. The vice president and his advisors missed an important opportunity.

Staff remember this as an uneasy period. Each side viewed the other with suspicion. Computing staff felt like barely tolerated visitors in their new home. Library staff described themselves as having been "conquered" by an occupying force. Librarians and computing staff continued to identify with their original group in spite of working side by side for eleven months. The core team had placed the integration of staff further down on the "to do" list and did not acknowledge or even recognize that the time to start working on these issues was the very beginning of the marriage.

In this secretive climate, fears took precedence over hopes. Some people feared they might lose their jobs. Others feared they might lose their offices (some did). Others feared they might lose their status as manager (most did). Finger-pointing and blame became the operating principles. Rumors raged. Tempers flared. The core team continued meeting privately. By the late fall of 1994, when the core team unveiled the new plan, many staff on both sides of the house felt disenfranchised.

Leadership presented the new structure in two volumes entitled *Business Renewal Project, Final Report*.<sup>7</sup> They told people to go home and read it over Christmas vacation because they would become teammates in January. Staff expressed uniformly negative comments about the planning process and final report. They spoke specifically about the lack of meaningful participation, the negativity directed toward library staff, the use of incomprehensible language in the final report, the overt business orientation, their inability to understand the value of the new structure, and their difficulty relating to the organization's new goals. One member of the support staff later reflected:

We were always being told we had to keep up with the future and that what we were doing was NOT the future. The planning sessions all dealt with corporate America like GE and Ford. Never higher education or libraries. I felt as if every week we heard jargon from the latest management book on the *New York Times* bestseller list. It was exhausting.

## STRUCTURE PROBLEMS

The new structure, which seemed unwieldy and illogical to constituents, presented the second problem. Implementation began in January 1995. The new information resources had at its core six self-managed (leaderless) teams organized by process, not function. The philosophy behind self-managed teams was that natural leaders would "bubble up" and assume leadership roles. Instead of bubbling up, they boiled over. On some teams everyone wanted to be in charge. On other teams no one wanted to be in charge. Leaderless teams proved unworkable, and after a year team leaders were appointed.

The process-based structure proved equally problematic. Departments like acquisitions, circulation cataloging, reference, and interlibrary loan ceased to exist. Instead, teams arranged work-around a process—for example, the process of delivering a book or a computer or an overhead projector or a piece of electronic mail to a user. The delivery process became the basis for the delivery team.

The leadership also viewed ordering as a singular enterprise, whether one ordered a journal, software, telephone service, pens, pencils, or the weekly supply of coffee. Ordering was ordering! Therefore everyone who did any ordering should sit together and be on the same team—in this case, the selection team. Expertise was not a factor.

Six teams served as the bedrock of the new information resources. The core team conceived these teams as planets orbiting around a central customer. The teams had names meant to clarify the process, but members of the community, faculty members in particular, never managed to unravel the team structure or to make sense of the language. The teams included: planning, response, delivery, selection, training, and new initiatives. People did not know which team to call for assistance. The confusion, real or imagined, translated into misunderstandings and a perceived decline in service.

The planning team had responsibility for allocating resources, creating an evaluation system, organizing communications, and staying on top of public relations. Other members of information resources quickly labeled this team as “a group of people operating in a vacuum.” Not on the front lines and not dealing directly with constituents, they were seen as decision makers with little knowledge of the rest of the organization, much less of the essentials of providing user services. I served on the planning team for a time and feel comfortable in saying that this perception is fairly close to the truth. The planning team earned this wrath, deserved or not, by remaining separate from the other planets. Salary inequity became a sore point. The planning team had to deal with the disparities of income on supposedly egalitarian teams, which made this team the lightning rod for general discontent—a situation exacerbated by the limited increases available for salaries.

The response team acted as the chief customer service unit. It consisted of former help desk employees and reference librarians who staffed a new, joint information desk—part reference desk, part clinic, part complaint bureau, and part repair shop. “One stop shopping” became the buzz phrase. The rationale for this combination went something like this: The “process,” in this case, consisted of answering short-duration questions. All the following fell in the “short-duration” category: What is the population of Botswana? The printer is jammed. What does “fatal disk error” mean? Where is the bathroom? In theory, difficult, complicated questions would be referred to other teams. Harder questions would be handed off to the training team, for instance, which was supposed to contact the faculty and invite them in for a training session with their class. (This presupposed that all class assignments generated all reference questions.)

Reference librarians scoffed at the notion that all they did was answer short, simple questions. They pointed out that reference service often involved time-consuming research, complex search procedures, and sometimes follow-up days later. Librarians despaired that their jobs had been reengineered and their service restricted to answering simple questions. Anyone who had ever worked as a reference librarian found this approach to reference service confounding.

In the original plan all “library people” would learn enough about computing to respond to basic questions and the computer staff would learn enough about the library to answer reference questions. This required a shared base of minimum knowledge, and everyone spent hours in training sessions trying to get to the lowest common rung. Librarians often felt inadequate when dealing with technical questions they believed either they could not answer or

were not their responsibility. They wearied of dealing with problems related to student telephone bills or dorm hookups.

Likewise, response team members with a computing background felt out of their element when users came shopping for statistics, literary criticism, or the text of the latest congressional hearing. Try as they might (and they really did try), the library staff never felt comfortable, let alone competent, making "house calls" to offices and dormitory rooms to troubleshoot computer problems—any more than former computer help desk staff felt comfortable fielding reference questions. Users grew impatient.

The leadership's lack of understanding of the training and experience necessary to perform as a reference librarian proved even more problematic. The core team continually downplayed the importance of professional credentials. The core planners viewed all library people as the same. Paraprofessional library staff assigned to the response team included the former head of circulation, a serials check-in clerk, staff from reserve, support staff from media services, and other paraprofessionals from the library who had never worked at the reference desk. The core team planners expected these diverse members to act as seasoned reference professionals when, in fact, they had not answered any more than the most rudimentary of reference question in the past. Running the reserve book room does not qualify one as reference librarian, no matter how positive one's customer service attitude is.

Indeed, core team planners cited attitude and personality as the most important traits for response team members. The *Business Renewal Project Final Report (II)* included a "Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Matrix" that enumerated these personality traits: pleasant, outgoing disposition, patient, adaptable, personable, customer-service oriented. Authors of this report defined essential knowledge as "basic knowledge to be able to respond to the majority of user requests for information and service."<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, many staff felt ill equipped to deal with the depth and breadth of questions, not to mention the variety. Staff remarked that they felt set up to fail.

Opinion also remained divided about who should sit at the response team desk. The computer center traditionally employed many students on its help desk and saw no reason to discontinue this practice. While technically able, these students lacked preparation to assume the role of reference librarian. Librarians chafed at the presence of students at the desk and felt it represented the ultimate denigration of their role.

The one clear process to come out of the response team was a method of logging, responding, and tracking information desk calls. Considerable energy and resources went into developing this process while the team put other business on hold. Reference statistics during this period suggest that many users stopped thinking of the information desk as a place to come for library help. With only two bona fide librarians on this team, a reference load once shared by many on a rotating basis fell on a few.

This process-based model also destroyed the reference-bibliographer model of library service. The structure no longer permitted reference librarians to engage in collection development or bibliographic instruction. The reference librarians' involvement in collection development enables them to respond to user needs with greater knowledge of the collection. Conversely, they become aware of patron requests and are able to recommend purchases that will improve service on the front lines. Knowing what materials have just come in and



1 recommending new sources for a particular class make it possible to do a better job as a reference librarian. The inauguration of the narrowly defined, process-based response team broke the natural, logical circle of reference bibliographer. Selection became a matter for another team; teaching became a responsibility for yet another. Reference librarians could only recommend to colleagues in training, the readiness of class x for an instruction session and then could only hope that someone in selection had enough information to purchase the sources required to perform well on the front-lines. The situation became demoralizing.

Of all the teams, the training team probably worked best. Librarians and information technologists had already worked collaboratively before the merger, and the area had many intersections. Yet the rigidity of the model soon led to the resignation of the librarian on this team. This individual did not want a steady diet of bibliographic instruction and, as she said in parting, had not gone to library school "to teach umpteen classes in e-mail and Netscape." Without the opportunity for a more varied day's work, entailing selection and reference duties as well as instruction, this librarian soured on Gettysburg College and accepted a more traditional position at another college. At this juncture, the training team became a unit of two and library instruction took a back seat. The team limped along trying to keep up with the demand and had difficulty recruiting new members. Indeed, it had become reduced to a team of one by the time the organization collapsed.

The selection team served as the purchasing agents for information resources. This team became home base for many former library support staff workers, a telecommunications administrator and several catalogers. In addition to books, journals, videos, supplies, and phone and cable service, this team had responsibility for the purchase of all desktop computers, software, and hardware. During the first year of the reorganization no one on selection possessed a strong computing background. The team spent a lot of time trying to get up to speed, never had the expertise needed to perform well, and often floundered. Observed a long time support staff member and experienced cataloger:

I was a member of the selection team. I truly feel that we were the people they planned to dispose of and replace with computing specialists. We were expected to be involved in the ordering of computer software and eventually hardware, as well as library items and telecommunications stuff. Can you imagine? Of course it didn't work out, we were set up to fail!

If the selection team lacked expertise, the delivery team had more than enough experts to go around. In what became popularly known as "IR-speak," core team planners created the delivery team to "add value to new and existing resources, maintain these resources and ensure resource availability for the college user community."<sup>9</sup> Delivery processes were delivery processes—no matter what system was involved! It included such endeavors as the delivery of cable television, the campus network, the online catalog, telephone service, electronic mail, circulation, reserves, a cart with a VCR, and an overhead projector. Many of these processes, of course, had no relation to each other. Moreover the delivery team had great disparity of education, expertise, and background within it. Network engineers and stack assistants made up the team. They had vastly different goals, expectations, interests, and salaries. Members of this team found they had little in common and as a result became frustrated with the philosophy of the organization that lumped them together as a unit.

The vice president and his close advisors never clearly defined the remaining team, new initiatives. Staffed by one—the former library director—it ceased to exist when he left Gettysburg.

In its operation the process model had many conceptual flaws. Cataloging provides a good example. The wisdom of the day considered copy cataloging a selection team process because one “selected” a record from the database to download. But the core team considered database maintenance, the act of correcting mistakes in the online catalog, withdrawing records, or practicing authority control a value-added service, hence a matter for the delivery team. Catalogers had to decide if they wanted to be selectors or deliverers. In addition, many catalogers believe they quickly lose their edge, if not their sanity, if forced to spend eight hours a day doing copy cataloging. However, in the new organization, trained catalogers who elected to stay on the selection team (some selection team members did some original cataloging) were no longer permitted to fix database problems. Catalog maintenance fell into the hands of people on the delivery team—with little catalog training.

The library's one professional cataloger resigned and left the college, as did a support staff cataloger assigned to the delivery team who found herself running the circulation desk (value-added service). A second paraprofessional cataloger resigned, and a new professional cataloger left after only nine months on the job. The former head of acquisitions, working as a member of the selection team, left after two years of trying to oversee purchasing with an ever-diminishing staff. An acquisitions assistant from the selection team and a delivery team assistant, both former library employees unable to meet job expectations, resigned. Because of the dearth of professional and paraprofessional expertise, information resources ended up outsourcing nearly all cataloging to a vendor at a price tag that far exceeded the cost of the employees who had resigned.<sup>10</sup>

A parallel situation in interlibrary loan further amplifies the flaws of a process-based model. As with cataloging, the reengineering document outlined an interlibrary loan split along selection and delivery team lines. The document defined the borrowing aspect of interlibrary loan as a selection duty since one had to find the record online and select the institution to which the request would go. Lending, on the other hand, it defined as a delivery task; because the item must be retrieved and mailed. An awkward division of service and imbalance in the workload resulted. The selection team member faced a crushing workload. Meanwhile, the delivery team person had so much spare time that the team had to struggle to find other tasks for her to perform within the range of her skills and capabilities. This particular example illustrates the folly of a process-based model that removes experienced staff from tasks they perform well and places them in situations where they are left feeling underutilized and incompetent or completely overwhelmed.

One individual who left the organization reflected on the awkwardness of the process-based model:

The reasoning behind the idea that the library and computing services should be combined into one organizational unit seems to be as follows: (A) computing services is in charge of acquiring, installing and administering computer hardware and software and the network on which it runs, (B) the library uses a lot of computers, therefore (C) the library and computing “do the same thing” and, furthermore, should be merged to eliminate redundancy and

increase efficiency and effectiveness. This makes about as much sense as saying that because the admissions office uses phones and fax machines a lot, it should be merged with or run by the department which installs and maintains the campus telephone system. The fact that one department is a frequent user of the tools installed and maintained by the other does not mean that the two departments "do the same thing."

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

The third problem relates to the cultural differences between the library and the computing staff. Not recognized initially as an important factor, these differences should have been addressed in order to build a healthy and harmonious new organization.

When the computer center and library merged they found themselves in close quarters. With space on campus at a premium, leadership made a decision to move computing into the library. Musselman Library, built in the early 1980s, had an open floor plan. Little space had been set aside for offices and barely accommodated the twenty-five members of the library staff. With the merger, an additional twenty members of computing and assorted student assistants required lodging.

Extensive and, in most cases, cheaply orchestrated renovations became necessary to make everyone fit. Some of these renovations impacted the heating and ventilation systems. Staff found themselves in cramped makeshift offices with no air conditioning in the summer and no heat in the winter. Stacks had to be consolidated, and all carefully measured collection growth space disappeared. "Go electronic" and "buy fewer books" became the message. Renovation plans turned student study areas and open stacks into newly fashioned labs and offices. The library became a perpetual construction site. The renovations cut technical processing space in half.

With the identification of teams, private offices all but disappeared and communal workspace became the arrangement of the day. Large shared offices were integral to the new organization's philosophy. The core team planners believed housing team members together in close quarters would facilitate innovation, foster creativity, and encourage the "bubbling up" of leaders. In reality, the large communal workspaces more closely resembled overcrowded bedrooms shared by squabbling siblings. Almost everyone got one or two roommates. One team office had nine inhabitants. People used to a quiet environment found it hard to concentrate.

From the library perspective, these new roommates brought "a lot of stuff" with them—messy stuff with wires, draping cords, and loose parts. They needed work space and storage space—both in short supply. In a house too small, housekeeping quickly became a flash point. No one had anticipated the differences in culture, much less had worked to channel those differences into positive energy. The new roommates did not know each other very well, but they soon learned that they had strikingly different habits, values, goals, and even reasons for coming to work.

I have talked to colleagues who contend that cultural difference is an overplayed issue. They argue that people in computing and those from a library background are really more alike than not—all have customer needs at heart. They

maintain that the "difference in culture problem" is exaggerated. Based on my Gettysburg experience, I disagree. Based on conversations with staff on both sides of the house, I believe that many, though not all, viewed each other with suspicion, much of it based on circumstances. They entered the merger with many stereotypes about their new partners—stereotypes that had a large grain of truth. Instead of recognizing these differences as a potential problem and dealing with them to build a stronger organization, some used stereotypes in a destructive manner—to create an IN (cooperative) group and an OUT (uncooperative) group—which contributed to an overwhelmingly negative climate.

At the time of the union, while believing themselves understaffed, busy, and innovative, some in computing viewed the library as overstuffed, underworked, lacking innovation, and resistant to change. Said a colleague in computing, "[The library staff] didn't seem to work very hard. We were there at all hours running from office to office on campus. Helping everyone. There was never enough time, never enough people for all the demands. We never went home on time."

Indeed, arrivals and departures became a point of contention. Some library staff believed that computing staff hung around the building all the time, "playing with their gadgets." Said a library staff member, "They wore it like a badge, how they could never leave, had so much to do." On the other hand, many library staff members left each day at 4:30 sharp. Some computing staff viewed this as a lack of commitment. As one library staff member explained, "This is a job for us, not a career. It doesn't make us less dedicated."

Gender and status also became factors. The library staff consisted of predominantly older female workers. The library employed greater numbers of hourly workers than did computing. Both librarians and staff earned substantially lower salaries than their counterparts in computing. Despite the perception of being uncommitted, library staff consisted mostly of long-term employees of the college. By contrast, computing employed a higher percentage of younger males and had many more administrative staff than hourly employees. Compared to the library, they were high earners. Computing staff had more fluidity among its ranks. With more opportunities in the private sector, computing had a higher turnover than the library.

The library had been operated on a hierarchical basis prior to the merger, and many had a difficult adjustment to a flattened organization. Library staff had been comfortable with hierarchy and welcomed authority and direct supervision. Library employees also held affiliation as a primary value. People came to work partly to enjoy the friendships. They had close personal relationships with each other and had many "ceremonial" occasions as a group—recognizing birthdays, births, anniversaries, and so on. Breaks were a regular part of the workday and staff gathered like clockwork in the staff room at set times. By contrast, computing had a flatter, more egalitarian structure, with more employees at the same level. Some computer staff joked that everyone wanted to be the boss, which resulted in everyone being a director of something. Computing staff viewed themselves as more businesslike, and the regular breaks and celebrations of the library staff baffled them.

Both groups found they had habits that irritated their new partners and occasionally escalated beyond annoyance to open argument. The library had a long-standing food ban in public spaces. Computer staff ate and drank in the open, took soft drinks to the information desk, and ordered food for their student

workers. Members of the library staff often brought a brown bag lunch and ate in the staff room. Computing staff felt unwelcome in the staff room and ate lunch at their desks. The smell and sight of open food created vocal complaints from librarians, concerned about the consequences of food in the library. Computing staff could not understand the librarians' perceived obsession with banning food.

Other differences ranged from security to spending habits. The library staff was security conscious, carefully locking outside doors and parceling out keys on a limited basis. The vice-president issued master keys to everyone on the staff. Some computer student workers had access to the master key; and those who did not occasionally propped the back door open when the building was closed. While the computing staff tried to monitor their student employees, library staff perceived computing as lax.

The library never overspent its budget and seldom requested or got major enhancements. The library was technology poor, complained about it, but remained in this state for years. Librarians spread spending throughout the year in keeping with the publishing cycle. By contrast, computing, being more action-oriented, adopted the philosophy of spending everything whenever receiving a new allocation and then looking for additional funding later. They could not fathom the library staff sitting on a pile of money and measuring it out slowly. One former library employee wrote:

I believe that the culture of computing, with its rapidly changing knowledge base and hardware options, resulted in the attitude of patch-it-together. It is good enough for today because everything will change tomorrow anyway. [This] is so diametrically opposed to the library culture of preservation, thoroughness and attention to detail, that it takes a great deal of effort and a lot of tolerance from both sides to bridge the gap.

What happens when you marry two groups with different habits, motivations, and perspectives? Without proper counseling and preparation, small matters are likely to grow into major incidents. Small misunderstandings turn into major grudges. Minor suspicions become major issues of mistrust. Instead of acknowledging difference and channeling it in a positive direction, difference becomes a wedge. Difference soon became not only an impediment to full integration but also the basis of much ill will. A highly respected library support staff member reflected:

Originally we had a culture of benign neglect under a regime which offered little leadership but which encouraged civility and fellowship. Bad behavior was seldom rewarded; consequently there was little incentive for people to practice treachery, deception and those other refined arts we've come to know so well. There was little or no sense of careerism among the [library] staff. Emphasis was on collegiality, nurturing, and so forth. Long-term staff pretty much understood that they had traded any prospect of salary or promotion for a pleasant work atmosphere. When computing moved in it was like an occupation. Suddenly there were two groups of people, immediately labeled first class/valid/good people and second class/invalid/bad people. The library staff was second class. Indeed we were forbidden to even use the word "library."

With this shift, the reward system for behavior changed radically. People who wanted to be identified with the privileged first class, or who wanted to escape

stigmatization as part of the second class, discovered that they would now be rewarded for behavior which would previously have been discouraged. The new environment encouraged and rewarded careerism; lack of compassion became a virtue. For many, the whole social values system seemed turned upside down.

## SEPARATING INFORMATION RESOURCES

Eventually faculty and other employees noticed the change. Fewer and fewer of them visited. When they did, they often came with complaints. They had questions but could not always find the team with the answers. Indeed, the team concept confused them. They talked about us behind our backs and to each other. They said we were disorganized, dysfunctional, unhelpful, and chaotic. Many of the members of this dysfunctional, newly blended family left home. Teams soon had vacancies that they could not fill and more work fell on those who remained. A nearly complete organizational breakdown followed. In February 1997, the faculty began a barrage of public e-mails related to problems in information resources and publicly criticized the organization and its leadership.

Department chairs weighed in, urging a vote of no confidence at an upcoming faculty meeting. While this vote did not occur, the college administration altered reporting relationships shortly thereafter. Information resources came under the academic wing of the institution, reporting directly to the provost. Soon afterwards the vice president for information resources left Gettysburg. In July 1997, the college separated information resources. At the time of this restructuring the library professional cohort consisted of only three librarians and an archivist—an all-time low.

The most interesting story, perhaps, revolves around the events of the past two years, as the Musselman Library and our information resources colleagues (we kept the house, they kept the name) have struggled to build new, separate organizations and identities and win back the goodwill of our constituents. We still live together, awaiting availability of new quarters for information resources, but we address space and turf issues more openly. We also have begun to identify the natural intersections of our two units and move in the direction of collaboration when it makes sense. A joint effort to design an "electronic classroom" in the library for both sides of the house to use is the first example of the collaboration. We have been talking about joining forces for freshman orientation. Such efforts are still awkward at times, and many resentments linger, particularly on the part of library staff members, but we are doing better.

"No!" Each interviewee almost always responded when I asked, "Was there anything good in it from your perspective?" However, some staff members did acknowledge that the library moved forward technologically as a result of the experience. Said one former employee, "It was easier to get more state-of-the-art computer equipment for library staff and librarians. We were always at the end of the line for new equipment [before the merger] and we did move pretty quickly into purchasing electronic products." Everyone agrees that library users have benefited from the highly networked environment. They now have wide choices of electronic journals and indexes, document delivery, electronic reserves, online tables of contents, Web catalog and electronic ordering and claiming. Some of our outsourcing arrangements and our approval

plan, made in desperation, have worked well for us and we have kept them with modifications. These are positive outgrowths of the merger. A library staff member offers this observation:

I think, as an organization and as a college, we are stronger for having survived this. Also, we were forced in the library to rethink what we were doing in our jobs, which wasn't all bad. The cost was too great, though, and we'll be years getting over it.

The challenge for the current leadership is to help the staff put grievances aside and move on to build a strong new library for the next century.

## CONCLUSIONS

What lessons can be learned from this episode in Gettysburg College's history? Many institutions have been curious about the Gettysburg experiment, and in the early days we hosted dozens of delegations from various colleges and universities who were considering merging their library and computer center. Few, however, adopted our model; few sought a level of integration so complete that most vestiges of library culture disappeared. Nevertheless, many colleges and universities have merged services and found a comfortable middle ground.

The Gettysburg experiment began with a great deal of optimism on the part of its planners, but they could never forge an effective partnership between library and computing personnel. The vice president for information resources and his close advisors became caught up in reengineering—the management rage in mainstream business at the time. They trusted outside consultants who lacked the necessary understanding of how libraries function. The organization of the project left key constituencies, from the college's administration to the faculty, out of the loop.

The team structure quickly became unwieldy as teams became too large and remained unorganized for more than a year while the vice president and his advisors continued to insist on self-management rather than team leaders. Teams spent too much time in definition—trying to figure out their role and defining their boundaries vis-à-vis other teams. The organization lost a critical moment to establish clear, unified service. Beyond the problem of leaderless teams, an organization arranged around process and the logical rhythms of work ground to a halt. An organization that could not function effectively resulted. Morale diminished, as did the quality of service. Once patrons began to expect the worst, it became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Moreover, we saw that vocabulary does make a difference. Clear definitions of teams and work groups are essential considerations when serving an academic clientele and contemplating changes away from a traditional model. Gettysburg faculty wanted to know who to call with a specific problem and they did not want to think about whether it was a delivery team or a selection team matter. The business language became an impediment to academic users who felt uncomfortable with language such as “value-added services” and “goals measurement matrix.”

Quite real, but not insurmountable, cultural differences existed between the library and the computer center staff. Recognizing the differences and working with them constructively would have made a world of difference. Had the

vice president and his core team engaged from outside the college some skillful trainers, experienced in working with organizations and change, instead of trying to manage the transition completely in house, many flash points might have been avoided. Allowing people to work together for a time, collaborate on projects and get used to each other, before throwing everyone into the same house and imposing a new structure would have been a more measured and possibly more successful approach.

Gettysburg College tried to do three things at once—merge administratively, move into the same space, and throw away the old framework and reengineer a new one. The new structure was not sensible, and the rank and file staff on both sides did not feel invested in the pursuit. Overall, a dubious project was undertaken, with little consultation with those who would be responsible for providing patron services and making information resources operate effectively. These errors, and the error of trying to merge instantaneously proved fatal to any hope of a successful merger.

## NOTES

1. Gettysburg is a four-year, non-sectarian liberal arts college founded in 1832. The college enrolls 2,200 students and has 160 full-time faculty. At the time of reorganization the combined organizations had fifty-two employees.
2. Arnold Hirshon, *Integrating Computing and Library Services: An Administrative Planning and Implementation Guide for Information Resources*, CAUSE Professional Paper Series 18 (Boulder, Colo.: CAUSE, 1998), 6-9.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. Hirshon's list of poor reasons for integrating include climbing on the academic bandwagon, improving a weak operation by marrying it to a stronger one, saving money, saving space, eliminating an ineffective administrator, eliminating faculty status for professional staff or reducing compensation, and reducing the number of direct reports to the provost or president.
4. In addition to oral interviews, staff were sent a questionnaire with eleven questions related to the merger. All names have been omitted in this essay.
5. An example of this disconnect—"dreaming the big dream"—was a public meeting in which the vice president for information resources suggested that we give our book budget to Cornell University, let them use it to buy books, and let Gettysburg College borrow anything we wanted, whenever we wanted, thereby increasing our collection size dramatically by having access to all the volumes available at Cornell. Faculty members present at the meeting did not endorse this idea.
6. Gettysburg College, Information Resources Division, *Business Renewal Project: Final Report, Part I: Executive Summary and Recommendations*. December 6, 1994, p. 3.
7. Gettysburg College, Information Resources Division, *Business Renewal Project: Final Report, Part I: Executive Summary and Recommendations* and *Part II: Deliverables*. December 6, 1994.
8. Gettysburg College, Information Resources Division, *Business Renewal Project: Final Report, Part II: Deliverables*, December 6, 1994, p. 81.
9. *Ibid.*, 91.
10. By 1997, information resources had lost most of its cataloging and acquisitions staff. What few staff members remained spent most of their time checking the work of the vendors and supervising students. During the merger we initiated an approval plan with Yankee Book Peddler and established a contract with an excellent independent acquisitions jobber, Siena Library Company, and continue to use their services.