

Notes from the Student Library Advisory Council Meeting  
April 6, 2009

Members attending: Melissa Hardstone, Heather Levy, Christine McEnery, Alka Menon, Erin Penner, Tal Rusak, Corey Siegel, Darla Thompson

Attending from the Library: Anne Kenney, University Librarian; John Saylor, Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Resources and Special Collections; Leah Solla, Coordinator, Physical Sciences Library; Ed Weissman, Assistant to the University Librarian

1).Physical Sciences Library

Anne Kenney and Leah Solla provided background on the decision to close the Physical Sciences Library at the end of 2009. The decision was precipitated by the budgetary issues now facing the Library and the University and it is based on an examination of gate counts, the circulation of books and other physical materials, the percentage of the collection available online and other factors. A survey of other university libraries around the country shows that many are consolidating the number of libraries on their campuses and/or limiting the footprints of these units. This is particularly true of libraries focusing on the sciences. At Cornell, the Library is committed to maintain subject expertise in the departments and disciplines that are the core constituencies of the Physical Sciences Library with emphasis on enhancing online access to critical resources through electronic subscriptions and book digitization. The Library will also continue to provide research and instruction services for faculty and students. Physical space onsite and at other libraries for studying, research consultations, access to print collections, and other needs will also be investigated as part of the transition. Representative groups of faculty and students from the College of Arts & Sciences, including the departments of Physics, Chemistry and Astronomy, and the College of Engineering will work with the Library in developing a transition strategy to ensure that their needs continue to be met.

Comments and issues from the members of the Council included:

- Communications about this was not good. Students should not have heard about this first in the *Cornell Daily Sun*. Even after the article, there was no information provided on either the Physical Sciences Library web site or the CUL web site. Also, this should have been presented as a "consolidation" rather than a "closing."
- Concerned about the impact on space, especially if the Olin renovation gets underway. There is special concern with regard to graduate students if more undergraduates are forced to use the reduced space in Olin and Uris libraries. Anne responded that the Library is working with Robert A. Buhrman, Senior Vice Provost for Research, who "owns" the space being freed up in Clark Hall to ensure that study space for students is planned for.
- Based on the experience in Duffield Hall, don't think that an atrium set up in Clark will work well for studying, certainly not for individual study. Duffield is way too noisy and there are not enough outlets for plugging in laptops.

Anne will invite Leah back to in the fall to brief members of the Council on developments.

2) Working with the Columbia University Library (2CUL--TooCool)

Anne reported that the Cornell University Library (CUL) is investigating a close alliance

with the Columbia University Libraries (also CUL). The goal is to build an enduring and transformative partnership between the libraries that will see a deep and broad intergration of resources, collections, services and expertise and that will enable both to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness and to address new challenges through combined forces. This collaboration will return savings to the respective institutions while increasing productivity and minimizing redundancy of library operations, improve the quality of collections and services offered to campus constituencies, redirect resources to areas of emerging needs, make each institution more competitive in securing government and foundation support, and generate additional revenues. Initial investigative work is being done in three areas: technical services operations (acquisitions, cataloging and electronic resource management), building strong global resources/areas studies collections, and digital infrastructure. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has invited a proposal to support this innovative partnership.

### 3) Strategic Review of the Library

Anne reported on the strategic review of the Library that is getting underway. In light of budgetary challenges facing the university, the Provost has asked each of the Deans to establish task forces to make recommendations about current and future priorities and opportunities for cost savings and revenue enhancements. These task forces will consider the impact of a 15% reduction in funding. By the end of two years, the Cornell Library must be prepared to operate its programs and services with a much reduced budget. We are facing a time of major change and the Library will make substantial cuts in some areas, protect others, and support growth in new areas.

The task force will consider all aspects of library operations, activities, services, and funding models. Because the library system is uniformly strong, tough choices will have to be made, and the task force is being asked to prioritize those aspects that are exemplary, highly efficient, non-duplicative, can not be provided via other means, and whose impact is most broadly felt by faculty and students. It will also consider how planning decisions could be implemented, what difficulties might arise, and what resources and support will be necessary to achieve change. The Library will invite faculty, administrators, and students to assist the task force and review the initial recommendations.

The task force will be meeting weekly in May and June, with July and August devoted to research, assessment, and consultation. The draft report is due to Anne in August, and its recommendations will be shared with library staff, the academic deans, as well as faculty and student groups. The final report will be submitted to the Provost in October. A link to the group's charge is at <http://www.library.cornell.edu/staffweb/docs/StrategicPlanningTaskForce-Charge.pdf>.

### 4) Issues from SLAC members and suggestions on how the Council can function more effectively

Comments and issues from members of the Council included:

- As stakes go up, it is important to bring issues to the Council early. e.g., the Physical Sciences Library closing. use the Council list to do this.
- Keep better track of time allotted to each topic so that topics later in the agenda are not shortchanged.

- Would be good to have the Council discuss the implications and impact of the conversion from print to digital
- Concerned that with a growing proportion of the collection going digital that printing and the associated costs are being foisted on the students
- Would like to hear/discuss how the Library might contribute to intervention strategies that encourage graduate students to complete their degree programs

5) Anne thanked the members of the Council for their participation and the advice they provided. She asked anyone current members who would like to serve on the Council next year to let Ed Weissman know.