

Notes from the Student Library Advisory Council Meeting  
October 19, 2009

Members attending: Andrea Armstrong, Deirdre Bradford, Omair Khan, Lauren Mangano, Ashley McEnery, Brian McGlade, Lauren McLemore, Alka Menon, Erin Penner, Samuel Perlmutter, William Spencer, Darla Thompson, Kelly Vaughan

Attending from the Library: Anne Kenney, Carl A. Kroch University Librarian; Pat Schafer, Director of Strategic Services; Ed Weissman, Assistant to the University Librarian

#### 1) Olin Library Renovation

Pat Schafer, Director of Strategic Services, briefed the Council on the status of the Olin Library renovation project. The Library was pursuing an extensive renovation plan that included life safety, environmental (heating and ventilation) and programmatic (power, data, user space) improvements but this has been cancelled due to fiscal constraints. However, the serious nature of the life safety issues in Olin led to the University's authorization of a feasibility study addressing life safety issues only. If approved by the Board of Trustees Buildings and Properties Committee construction could begin as early as the end of the spring 2010 semester but more likely in the summer and run into fall 2011. [NOTE: On October 22, the Buildings and Properties Committee of the Board of Trustees authorized \$1,925,000 for design and enabling work for Olin Library Fire Safety Improvements. The project will still have to undergo further reviews before construction is authorized.]

Fire safety improvements will be made throughout the entire building. Exposed sprinklers will be installed. The top shelves of the stacks on each floor will have to be removed. Work will be done on 1-2 floors at a time and these floors will be closed to the public, including the reading and seminar rooms, faculty studies, as well as staff offices. The Library is now working on the logistics for providing temporary homes for those with carrels and offices on the affected floors and will keep the Council informed of its progress.

Comments/questions included:

- Why was the University not required to take care of the life safety issues before now?  
Response: the University had to deal with life safety issues in dorms first and with that taken care of, can now address Olin Library.
- Is the Rare and Manuscript Collections area safe from fire? Response: Yes, when Kroch Library was built in the 1990s, fire suppression and safety issues were addressed.
- Are there other library units that have life safety issues? Response: We have lesser concerns in Uris Library and the Fine Arts Library but not to the same degree as Olin Library.

#### 2) Strategic Planning in the Library

The Library, like other academic units across the campus, submitted a plan to the Provost for responding to a 15% budget cut. The Library budget, excluding the Weill Cornell Medical College Library budget, restricted endowments, and sponsored funds, amounts to \$44 million, \$14 million for acquiring and licensing scholarly resources and collections and \$30 million for operations. Having already absorbed a 5% cut in the 2009-10 budget, the Library's plan

accommodates an additional 10% cut. Building on the recommendation of the Library Strategic Planning Task Force that the \$14 million collections budget be exempt from cuts, the Library proposed that the 10% cut to operations include reconfiguring the library around cross-college subject clusters and reducing the number of library facilities. The remaining library facilities would be reconfigured and upgraded to ensure that sufficient study space is preserved. The Library would also work with college and university administrators to help design and secure additional spaces within non-library buildings. The criteria for deciding on which facilities to retain include: the condition of the facility, the use of the physical collections, the percentage of the collections that are online, and the proximity to other library facilities. The nature of the clusters will need to be vetted by the deans and university administration and reflect the larger decisions yet to be made about the university's strategic direction.

Comments/questions included:

- Are the individual library units autonomous? How are they organized? RESPONSE: The funding streams vary. The contract colleges (CALS, CHE, Vet, ILR) manage their own library budgets. The Hotel School does the same. The Law School and JGSM libraries are "pass throughs," they receive an annual general purpose allocation from the University but the actual direct operating cost of running these libraries is charged back to the schools. The University Librarian is responsible for the management of these funds and also for the management of the funds for the other endowed library units (Olin, Uris, Kroch, Fine Arts, Engineering, Math, Africana, Physical Sciences, Music.)
- Could you remove books from some of the units and store them centrally so as to provide more study space? RESPONSE: We will look to set up information commons, with office hours for library subject specialists, to make up for some of the reduced library facilities.
- The number of study spaces needed varies seasonally. Floors 3-7 in Olin are mostly empty until near the end of the terms. Can you utilize the ebb and flow of demand for study space? RESPONSE: Our goal is to maintain the current number of study spaces as we reduce the number of facilities.
- Will the clusters be split between graduate and undergraduate use? RESPONSE: Definitely not.
- The current model is inefficient. A reduction of facilities along the lines you outlined could be beneficial for students. This might be a good approach to students.
- Another approach to students is that this moves things forward technologically.
- The disciplinary cluster approach combined with information commons makes sense. It might be good to have "thematic" information commons as a way to maintain identity.
- The library clusters should match the changes and clustering at the university level.
- Good to use the Cornell Daily Sun to disseminate the Library's message to students.

### 3) Issues/concerns/suggestions from members of the Council

- The new Library catalog is not working as well as the older "classic" catalog.  
  
This is certainly true for accessing e-books and emailing catalog records.

- The new program that the Library and the Graduate School are collaborating on to provide library access for graduate students who have completed their A exams but exhausted their funding without having completed their Ph.D. degrees is “fantastic.” Please consider expanding this to students finishing masters degrees.
- Is there a way to save links in the new catalog?

#### 4) Announcements

Anne announced that the Library is in the process of negotiating the sale of duplicate books in the Uris Library Collection to the Tsinghua University Library in Beijing. We are signing a memorandum of Understanding with Tsinghua later this month that will make us “sister” libraries. Tsinghua is building a new humanities and social sciences library. The Uris duplicate titles will serve as a core collection in the new facility.

The next meeting is scheduled on Monday, November 30, 5-6:30 PM in 703 Olin Library.