

Notes from the Student Library Advisory Council Meeting
November 30, 2009

Members attending: Deirdre Bradford, Daniel Hest, Heather Levy, Lauren Mangano, Ashley McEnery, Brian McGlade, Lauren McLemore, Alka Menon, Ali O'Neill, Erin Penner, Amy Richter, Samantha Scott, William Spencer, Darla Thompson, Corey Wronski-Mayersak

Attending from the Library: Anne Kenney, Carl A. Kroch University Librarian; Jim LeBlanc, Director of Delivery and Metadata Management Services; Janet McCue, Associate University Librarian for Teaching, Research, Outreach and Learning Services, Maureen Morris, Reference and Digital Services Librarian; John Saylor, Associate University Library for Scholarly Resources and Special Collections; Ed Weissman, Assistant to the University Librarian

1) The New Library Catalog

Jim LeBlanc, Director of Delivery and Metadata Management Services, and Maureen Morris, Reference and Digital Services Librarian, talked about the reasons the Library chose to implement the new Library Catalog and mentioned some of the pros and cons of the new interface.

Among the pros: a) a broader scope—the Catalog includes articles as well as books; b) it provides single search access to materials that are available through Borrow Direct or interlibrary loan from other libraries because they are not available within Cornell—in fact, interlibrary loan request are up more than 90% since the new Catalog became the default on the Library web page; c) improved free-text searching, e.g., if you include initial articles in titles, you can still retrieve the catalog record for the title.

At the same time, some of the cons include: a) known-item searching (searching for a specific title) is less precise. Also, the Classic Catalog still provides a better searching experience for musical scores and sound recordings as well as legal materials; b) while the New Catalog contains 97% of the items available through the Classic Catalog, it still lacks title-level records for some large microform sets and for some sets of electronic resources; c) there are no records for items that are on order or that have been received but not yet cataloged.

Comments included:

- Not being able to search by call number is a big issue. **Response:** Unfortunately, this functionality is not on the current OCLC development schedule.
- Having the default search include not only Cornell materials but also materials from all of the WorldCat libraries often returns “too much” information. While Maureen showed that users can change this parameter on a session-by-session basis so that searches are run against Cornell held materials only, a straw poll among the Council members present showed a strong preference for setting Cornell only as the default search. **Response:** The Library will revisit this decision.
- New Catalog (WCL interface) versus the Classic Catalog: a straw poll among the Council members present showed a strong preference for retaining the WCL interface as the default Library Catalog over making the Classic Catalog the default choice.

- The new catalog runs more slowly and sometime even freezes up computers.
- Finding eBooks in the new Catalog is more difficult and eBooks seem less stable.

2) Library Strategic Planning Update

Anne Kenney listed some of the concerns she has heard about the Library's strategic plan that she submitted to the Provost. These include "I've heard that the Library is":

a) Consolidating library units into a few information hubs:

This was in the report as one of the most extreme options for consideration by the Provost and the senior administration but no decisions have been made. Nevertheless, we do expect fewer libraries, but not only four. Decisions on consolidating library units will be made in tandem with overall university strategic directions.

b) Selling books to support aggressive digitization:

This is not true. Duplicate books from the Uris Library collection were sold to the Tsinghua University Library for \$895,000. The proceeds from the sale will be used to compensate for the deep cut to the materials budget and to enhance access to library materials.

c) Did not give students the opportunity to buy these duplicate books before they were sold to Tsinghua:

In order to maximize the revenue from the sale, the collection was marketed and had to be sold as a whole. If books had been "cherry-picked" prior to the sale, we would not have generated as much revenue and we could not have completed the sale to Tsinghua.

d) Is planning to sell/permanently move off- site/just plain get rid of all books that have not circulated within the last five years:

This is not true. We are a major research library and we collect materials for the long term. At the same time, circulation or usage data may figure into what is moved from central campus to the Library Annex. We fill two miles of shelves with newly acquired books each year and there is only so much room on central campus. So we must move books to the Library Annex on a regular basis.

e) Moving to eBooks and in doing so passing off the cost of printing to students:

We are experimenting with eBooks primarily in the sciences. A Library task force recommended not buying eBooks as the first or only copy in the humanities and we are following this recommendation.

f) Is removing books to create more study space:

Anne is committed to maintaining the same number of books in the Olin and Uris complex as were there when she became University Librarian.

g) The Library is throwing away newspapers from the 1700s:

This is not true.

Comments included:

- eBook technology is still not good enough. As a graduate student I can't rely on the current search systems to ensure I find what I need.
- eBook readers are not sufficient. Physical scientists feel the same way.

- eBooks are good for certain things, for example finding problems sets but you can't study using eBooks.
- As an undergraduate I use Google Books to find what I need and then check out the physical books from the library.

Anne listed the principles she is using to guide budget-cutting decision-making:

- A. Guarantee access to scholarly journals
 - Protect collection budget
 - Maintain parity across humanities, social sciences, and sciences; recognize needs differ
 - When a tough choice has to be made, choose more distinct/unique titles over fewer titles with duplicate copies
 - It is better to partner with leading research libraries to ensure access to deep collections than go without
 - Be conscious of hidden or passed-along costs (as with eBooks)
 - When physical collections aren't stored on campus ensure good document delivery
 - Maintain the same number of physical items in Olin and Uris libraries for duration of my term as University Librarian
 - Digitization is not funded by the sale of books
- B. Maintain physical libraries as academic hubs
 - Recognize distinct needs of faculty, grad students, undergraduates
 - Provide space for individual and group work and access to collections and services
 - Library consolidations/closings should consider academic priorities of the university; ultimate decisions rest with Provost
- C. Meet emerging needs (data curation, digital preservation, new media art) and facilitate cross disciplinary work.
- D. Contribute to academic success of undergraduate and graduate students thru services and programs

Comments included:

- How does the Library define parity across disciplines? The number of students varies greatly. There are more science than humanities graduate students. Scientists are concerned about the loss of access to key journals. Are resources being fairly divided? **Response:** There is a balance in terms of funding for science, social science and humanities materials. Support for the purchased of monographs has remained relatively steady over the years—in the upper 30% range.

Anne asked Council members how best to reach out and engage students about this process.

Suggestions included:

- Use the *Cornell Daily Sun*. Just as President Skorton writes a periodic column, perhaps the University Librarian could do the same. Use the column to dispel rumors.
- Run student evaluation surveys, perhaps once or twice a semester. The beginning and middle of the semester is better than the end. Offer prizes for participation.
- Target specific student groups, for example the Society of Engineers. There is a list of these groups on the Dean of Students web site.
- Include content in the weekly bulletin the Graduate School sends out to graduate students.

- Conduct polls on the Library web site about specific issues, e.g., the Library Catalog.
- Set up a bulletin/message board with updates from the University Librarian.
- Provide a link on the Library home page called “What’s going on.”
- Use the digital sign for “Rumors you may have heard.”
- Create a library blog or use twitter.

3) Your concerns and how the library can better assist you

- Would like to see library-to-library delivery of print journals. Becomes more important if libraries are consolidated.
- Make sure that if there are further consolidations the communication is better.
- What happens to librarians if libraries are consolidated? **Response:** The Library is committed to maintaining subject expertise but staff size will decrease. 85% of the Library’s operating costs are staff costs.
- Will the Latin American bibliographer be replaced? **Response:** The individual in this position opted for early retirement. We’re still working on a solution.
- When library units close the Library should get back credit for the valuable space it returns to the university.
- As transition from a library unit to an information commons, books should still be delivered to the location.
- Would like to see the new collaboration between the Library and the Graduate School that provides library access for graduate students who have completed their A exams but exhausted their funding without having completed their Ph.D. degrees library apply also to masters degree students..

This is the last meeting of the fall semester. There will be three meeting scheduled during the spring semester.

Edward Weissman
 Assistant to the University Librarian
 Cornell University
 201 Olin Library
 e-mail: esw3@cornell.edu
 voice: 607 255-5754