# Notes from the Student Library Advisory Council (SLAC) Meeting
**March 7, 2013**

Attending: Lara Bertoia, Camille Cole, Brian Cuddy, Allan Delesantro, Dan Goldberg, Darragh Hare, Diana Hamilton, Curran Muhlberger, Katsuri Saha, Kat Schuhmacher, Indrani Singh, Dan Temel

Also: Anne Kenney, Carl A. Kroch University Librarian; Wendy Kozlowski, Science Data and Metadata Librarian; Dean Krafft, Chief Technology Strategist and Director of Information Technology; Ed Weissman, Asst. to the University Librarian

1. Privacy versus customization

Dean Krafft provided a brief overview of the issue: Traditionally, libraries in general and the Cornell University Library in particular have been extremely careful to preserve the privacy of our users. Once you return a book, we delete the fact that you ever checked it out. We don't save your search strings, and we don't try to create a profile of the kinds of materials you are likely to be interested in. These are the same policies that we've had for decades, and they are enshrined in library policy and culture.

The rest of the world's approach to tracking your use of information resources is very different: Amazon knows all the books you buy; Netflix knows all the movies you watch; Pandora and Spotify know all the music you like; and Google knows all the searches you perform on the net. Each of these companies uses this information to customize your experiences on their sites, guiding you to information resources that might be of interest. Other companies also take advantage of the things they know about you to present other kinds of customized experiences.

Dean then asked: Where do you think the Library should fall on the spectrum of privacy versus customization? Should we be keeping more information about what you do so that we can take advantage of it to give you better recommendations and a more customized experience?

Comments/questions included:
- Good idea to personalize and customize services but the information should be used to improve services within the library systems and not sold or distributed to others for marketing purposes.
- Most commenters favored providing opt-in or opt-out for this with opt-in preferred. Some wanted opt-in on case-by-case basis depending on the specific service rather than a comprehensive opt-in.
  - Opt-in because people don't think about possible unintended consequences down the road.
  - Opt-in even though opt-out would mean a system with greater overall value. But more people would object.
  - Opt-out, but make sure everyone knows about it. People are used to data-sharing.
- Would be nice if individuals could control the information that the library retains about them.
- One downside is that individuals will have to log-in every time for customization to work.
- Could you provide these kinds of services without tying them to individuals?
- I don't necessarily want my classmates to know what materials I'm looking at for my classwork.
- Regarding library pages customized based on characteristics like college/major, course enrollment, etc.--If really have in-depth knowledge of a field then less helpful. Better for areas you don't know much about.
- Initially this "freaked me out" but as I think about it, the first thing I do is go to Amazon to find the "most popular" book, so this might save a step. (More valuable for non-fiction than fiction, which is much more personal.)

- May be better experience if combine information with peer institutions
- What is opportunity cost for developing this? *Dean responded that for gathering the data the cost is reasonably low but for building a useful system the cost is not known.*

2. Electronic lab Notebooks

Wendy Kozlowski provided an introduction to/demonstration of Electronic Lab Notebooks (ELNs.) ELNs are intended for use in classrooms or lab settings for storing, organizing, sharing and publishing lab data. All types of content can be added.  You can control who has access to your notebook.  ELNs maintain records of all changes made to the data, who made the changes, and provides a way to revert to older versions.  It is FERPA and HIPAA compliant.  ELNs can replace software like Google docs m(which do not encrypt data) and Blackboard (for classroom use.) Cornell is providing a trial version for use through June and as of early March 260 individuals have signed up for accounts.  Then interface is intuitive so it is easy to use for basic functions.  Making optimal use of the product is trickier. While this is a short-term trial, if there is interest from enough faculty and students, Cornell will sign a site license.  Should that not occur, it is relatively easy to export the data to an offline notebook or print the data out. Interested students can contact [labnotebook-l@cornell.edu](mailto:labnotebook-l@cornell.edu) for more information.

Comments included
- My lab would find this useful but this is the first I heard of it.
- Better publicity needed—send to graduate student lists in physics, etc.

3. Comments and concerns about the library
- [Passkey](#) is hard to use on mobile phones. *With the new version of the Library's discovery and access system being implemented, it will allow us to build enhancements for this in the summer/fall.*
- Concerned about the lack of access research papers because of high subscription prices for journals. What options do we have for publishing so that our works available more universally?  *The Library has been advocating for and working to enhance open access for a number of years.  We'll discuss Open Access at the April meeting.  In the meantime we are leading an initiative to spark discussion at Cornell about alternatives to traditional scholarly publishing models.  [See the announcement of the discussion sessions distributed to SLAC-L on March 6.]*

Edward Weissman
Assistant to the University Librarian