

Notes from the Student Library Advisory Council (SLAC) Meeting

February 3, 2014

Attending: Ashton Conner, Avik Dutt, Abigail Duvall, Devra Flatte, Susie Forbath, Jason Haider, Darragh Hare, Emad Masroor, Curran Muhlberger, Samuel Ritholtz, Sheena Thomas, Peter Wissoker

Also: Anne Kenney, Carl A. Kroch University Librarian; Zsuzsa Koltay, Director, Assessment and Communication; Mary Beth Martini Lyons & Maureen Morris, co-chairs, Discovery & Access Implementation Team; Ed Weissman, Assistant to the University Librarian.

1. Discovery and Access

Mary Beth Martini-Lyons and Maureen Morris demonstrated the beta version of the Library's new web site and search interface. The web site and unified search will likely go into production at the end of the spring semester. Comments about the site and search interface were very positive. These included:

- Appreciate the “responsive design” which means that the site looks the same regardless of the platform being used—computer, tablet or phone.
- Like the consistent look across all the pages (as opposed to moving from WorldCat Local formatted pages in the catalog to Summon formatted pages when looking for articles, etc.)
- Suggest incorporating results from non-Cornell websites into the unified search results.
[Thanks to those members of the Council who participated in usability testing that took place on February 25.]

2. What the Library Adds to Student’s Cornell Experience

Zsuzsa Koltay asked the students to help the Library make its case to college deans and administrators about why it is important to students. Comments included:

- Helps me be more efficient in my graduate work—electronic access provides me with articles and pieces of data instantly and seamlessly on my computer.
- Learned about great tools—arXiv.org, Passkey, citation management software from the Library.
- Appreciate the physical spaces to do work—comfortable chairs and tables with good lighting-- but also the social aspect of the space. Helpful to be studying with others who are studying.
 - Lack of books in Carpenter Hall (Engineering) has been detrimental to the experience though.
 - Same is true in the Statler Hall (Hotel School.) The books help maintain the proper decorum for studying. Noise level is much higher now.
 - Glad to have some spaces that are not totally quiet—I need some distraction but not too much. Total silence is not good for me.
 - Library provides “misery loves company” space—it’s good to see others staying up all night to finish a paper just like I am.
- Libraries are fundamental to the student experience. Lib café is the de facto student union. Willard Straight Hall doesn’t “cut it.”
- Librarians are great. Had very rudimentary search skills but they helped me find wonderful resources in my field.
- The breadth of the collections are “amazing.” I learned my discipline through the Library.

- Foreign language materials are wonderful. Fiction in my native language by authors I know from home is very important to me.
- I like leaving the Law Library from time to time to be with graduate students from other disciplines in the new graduate student reading room (Olin 5th floor.)
- I like studying in libraries that focus on disciplines other than my own.
- The Library helps me relax. 80% of the books I check out have nothing to do with my classes. I'd love to know who else has read the book and it would be nice to have professors talk about their favorite books.

3. Comments and concerns

- Olin Media Center is underutilized. Lighting is dim; ear buds sometimes too loud.
- Mann Library has health foods. Lib Café does not have vegan or locally sourced foods.
- Talking among the staff at the Olin Circulation Desk is sometimes too loud.
- A.D White Library would be a great browsing library. But now the books are mainly in the LC class Z—boring stuff.
- Need better PR and promotion for Passkey. It's a great service but many people who would benefit from it don't know about it.