

July 18, 2008

From: University Library Council

To: University Senate
William Montgomery, Chair, 2007-2008
Reka Montfort, Director

Re: Annual Report to the Senate, 2007-2008

This document is the annual report to the Senate required by the bylaws of the ULC. The report is in three parts: (1) report on activities; (2) assessment of current state of library; (3) recommendations for Senate attention.

Part I: Report on Activities

Activities for 2007-2008

1. Funding and management of library collections

The greatest attention during the current academic year in the ULC focused on various dimensions of the crisis in the materials budget of the library. Following a charge from the provost in the fall, the ULC devoted two months to understanding and reviewing the budget structure and current decision making policies relating to the libraries' materials budget. Another four months (six hours of meeting time in the ULC as a body and additional time in subcommittees) were devoted to several proposals for revisions in this process. This work involved two directions: informing the provost and the campus community of the depth and importance of the problem, and reviewing the policies of the libraries to make certain that it was being a good steward of the resources provided and was responding properly to the crisis. Our work in the first direction resulted in the resolution calling for a Blue Ribbon Task Force (see below). Our work in the second direction resulted in an extensive report on management of acquisitions forwarded to the Dean of Libraries at the end of the year (see Appendix A).

2. Blue Ribbon Task Force on Libraries

The investigation in the state of funding levels for the libraries has reached the point where the status of the libraries as a research resource are in doubt (see "State of the Libraries" below), Given this well established underfunding and the changes that are taking place in access to scholarly resources, the ULC believes it is time to reenvision the appropriate library for the university's missions, to assess the current library system against this standard, and to contemplate alternative strategies to achieve this vision. In a resolution (see Appendix B), the ULC recommended that the provost "convene a task force including outstanding researchers and teachers from across the campus to envision the collection for the University of Maryland libraries appropriate to the research and teaching expectations of the university." The provost received the resolution positively and is currently forming the task force.

3. *Strategic Planning*

Through its chair, the ULC worked with the Dean of Libraries, the Senate Chair, the Provost, and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee to develop an acknowledgment in the strategic plan of the importance of quality libraries to a world-class university. The result is placement in the *Critical Enablers* section of the strategic plan. We believe this is an appropriate place for the libraries, emphasizing that it is a shared, essential resource for the excellence of the university.

4. *Other Activities*

- Co-sponsored with the libraries and the provost a “Town Hall Meeting” in October. (See the “State of the Libraries” section)
- Reviewed the need for an offsite storage facility for the libraries. The ULC acknowledged the intense need for this facility and endorsed the request that it be added to the facilities budget. (See Appendix C)
- Reviewed the integration of electronic reserves into the ELMS system. The ULC participated in a demonstration of the new system and provided advice to the libraries on implementation.
- Reviewed implementation of past reports of the ULC. (See update below.)

Update on Activities from 2005-2007

1. *Liaison Study*

In 2005-2006, the ULC submitted a report to the Dean of Libraries recommending major attention to the Liaison structure through which the libraries manage communication with academic colleges and departments. Although a task force from the libraries has made recommendations pursuant to this report, the ULC reported to the Dean that it was unhappy with the speed of implementation of the recommendations. The libraries have formed an implementation committee to supervise further work on this issue.

2. *New Programs*

In 2005-2006, the Council submitted a report to the provost on changes needed to improve the funding of appropriate library resources for new curricular and research initiatives. This report was staffed by the office involved in the Middle States review, so progress in implementation was slow. There are two critical dimensions to the report. The first was funding new program collections. Soft funds were provided to the library for some of these initiatives in FY07. Converting these to permanent funding did not occur. It is fair to say that to date the ULC’s

recommendations have not been followed fully in this regard. The other critical dimension was enhancing the process of evaluating the library needs of new programs. This process has, in fact, been implemented, but really through Associate Provost Phyllis Peres' work with departments and colleges through the PCC. Our recommendations should be fully implemented structurally so that they are woven within the institutions of PCC review rather than depending on the personal initiative of the administrator involved. An update of the PCC processes currently underway should accomplish that.

3. *Bylaws Revision*

In 2006-2007, the Council submitted revised bylaws to the Senate. These were approved by the Senate and the President. They were fully implemented in 2007-2008, including the seating of the Senate Chair-Elect (Ken Holum in 2007-2008) as an ad hoc member of the ULC.

Part II: Assessment of Current State of the Libraries

Current Strengths of the Libraries

In fall 2007, the ULC cosponsored, with the libraries and the provost's office, a town meeting that drew faculty from across the campus to comment upon their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the libraries. The meeting provided an expanded view of the issues revealed in the LibQual survey of user response to library services. The ULC heard a report on this meeting in January 2008.

The libraries generally received praise in the dimensions termed "Affect of Service" and "Library as Place." The former represents the service dimension of librarians' work, the latter reflects the improvements in the physical library. There is no doubt that the librarians who assist students and faculty with their library related tasks are a strength of the institution.

The shortcomings of the libraries were identified in the survey and in the town meeting as related to the quality of the libraries' collection. Part of this response is the inevitable difficulties occasioned by the transition to a more fully accessible electronic library. But in addition, it is clear that the erosion of the materials budget has created difficulty for faculty in teaching and research.

The Structural Problem with the Materials Budget

The most severe threat to the libraries is the state of the budget.

Dimensions and causes of the crisis The problem of funding in the materials budget is a result of several factors.

- Consolidation in the publishing industry. The consolidation of publishers and the inelastic

demand curve in library demand for published research have combined to provide a permissive environment for publishers to dramatically increase the prices of published material.

- The commercialization of research publications. The last decade has witnessed many professional organizations that once served as stewards of academic research negotiating publication rights to journal publishing houses. The arrangements, although often retaining some control of content, have subjected the pricing of journals to the market forces above.
- Problems with the US dollar. The diminished purchasing power of the US dollar and the acquisition of American publishing by European publishing houses has meant not only the inflation in the cost of international publications, but even for many American-edited publications.
- The availability of new electronic-driven products. As many print materials have been converted to electronic, minor one-time savings have been realized. But the electronic format has led to the development of significant new library products that employ the computer for ever more sophisticated indexing and cross-referencing. These new products greatly enhance research, but they also are products which a research library must acquire. Because they are new products rather than print-conversions they add significantly to pressure on the materials budget.

Together these four problems have resulted in inflation averaging ten percent per year for nearly two decades. Despite doubling the materials budget over the last eleven years, the university's funding now falls \$ 1.35 million *short of the annual maintenance budget required to provide the same library funded in FY97* (see Appendix D). Thus, the inability and/or unwillingness to match inflation in research materials has led to the current crisis.

Peer Institution Comparison. For many years, comparisons have been made between the university's libraries and those of its peer institutions as a measure of the state of our support. (Currently, we are the significantly smallest library, 46% of mean volumes of our peers and 67% of smallest peer; have access to the fewest journals, 42% of mean serial titles of peers and 75% of next fewest peer; only spend 68% of the mean expenditure of our peers for collections and 92% of our lowest peer.)

Such comparisons at this time serve only to hide the ugly truth: *the more informative comparison today is with an average research library, not our peers.* On this scale we are behind, but not hopelessly so. (Our collection is only 106% of the median collection size of ARL libraries; we own only 81% of the serials titles of the median ARL library; our expenditures for materials are now 95% of the ARL median; and our tenuous position of mediocrity is eroding since we are adding only 72% of what the median ARL library is adding.) The support being received for acquisitions in the university libraries is targeting us to be an average institution, not a world class

institution of distinction. (See Appendix E)

Faculty and student discontent with the resource level. The LibQual survey and the town hall meeting pointed to the state of serials collections and access to the content of academic literature as the focus of discontent with the libraries. Support for the libraries during the debate on the strategic plan is another indication of the concern. The faculty clearly and unequivocally perceive the growing insufficiency of our collections. Graduate students echo this judgment.

Impact on faculty and student research. Another troubling sign of the erosion of our collection is the dramatic increase in interlibrary loan activity. Requests to solicit material not in our collections from other libraries have increased 151 percent over the period 1996-2006 (to give force to the degree to which this is related to the state of our collection realize during that same period request to UM libraries from others libraries increased only 40 percent) and 68 percent in the three years since 2002 when recisions in the materials budget began. This increase obviously challenges the financial benefits of further cuts since expenses including copyright fees are involved for excessive use of interlibrary loan. *We are now cutting into the research so vital to our faculty and students that they are seeking this literature even with the delays inherent in interlibrary loan.*

There is a cruel irony that is increasing the frustrations of users with our collection. The electronic age is supposed to dramatically decrease the time from need to delivery for library resources. But limitations on our library space are pushing more and more of our collection into offsite storage with days of delay in delivery. And subscriptions, licenses, and volumes we do not own are pushing access into interlibrary loan that can lengthen days to weeks. Desktop electronic delivery (available only to faculty) eliminates the trip to pick up material but does not remove the lengthening delays.

The Centrality of the Libraries to Campus

The Council was gratified by the evolution of the strategic plan that identified the library as one of the *critical enablers*: “the essential conditions and tools required in order to achieve the University’s vision.” This speaks to the libraries’ role at the core of what makes a strong university. As an idea, the libraries are an efficiency device, a way for a university to pool its critical need for a connection to the accumulating fruits of research from across the globe. A common library avoids duplication of resource demands and encourages access to resources from other disciplines in the work of researchers. It follows that the libraries are not simply another school competing for the scarce resources of the university. Rather, it is a central institution provided by the campus for the benefit of all the colleges, and all students and faculty. It is that role that the strategic plan emphasizes for the libraries.

As the libraries are a critical enabler, so it follows that they can be critical disablers when the resources are insufficient for achieving the university’s goals. It is that danger that we now face. The insufficiency is documented in the Lib-Qual survey of library users, affirmed in the Town Hall

meeting, acknowledged in the self-study completed in spring 2007 for the Middle States review, and now the strategic plan puts those demands in a context that says inattention to the libraries critically threatens the university's goals to become a world-class university.

Addressing the crisis in requires a repositioning of the libraries as a shared common resource that all on campus call upon as we improve the university, even if our call on the libraries may differ from discipline to discipline. The thinking that the libraries are competitors of the colleges rather than a shared resource for them is a part of the failure of will on this campus in regards to the libraries. Of course, a dollar spent on libraries cannot be spent on hiring teachers or increasing salaries in the colleges. Yet, there is a vast difference between the enhancement of a shared, essential resource, and the zero-sum game of competition among the colleges.

Leadership in the Libraries

Dean Lowry's decision to resign as Dean of Libraries came after the ULC's final meeting of the year. So the ULC did not discuss this eventuality. I am certain that the ULC would have expressed its deep appreciation for Dean Lowry's twelve years of leadership of the libraries. His stewardship will forever be marked as the time when the libraries moved into the electronic era. That very difficult transition has taken place with a sure step and a speed that has facilitated research on the campus. His leadership has made the University Libraries a more responsive and effective institution.

Attention turns inevitably to selecting a new Dean of Libraries. Among the many issues faced in 2008-2009, this will be another that promises to have a long term impact on the quality of the libraries as a shared resource contributing to the teaching and research of the university.

The Prospects for 2008-2009

The next year promises to be a turning point for the funding situation in the libraries. A long series of events will climax this year. Over a three year period we have seen: (1) the Middle States self-study with its identification of addressing the libraries as essential to the campus's progress, (2) the ULC review of the acquisitions budget during the current academic year, (3) the strategic plan's identification of the libraries as a critical enabler to the success of the campus, (4) the Blue Ribbon task force now being appointed by the provost, and (5) the visit of peer library directors planned for the next academic year. Perhaps the search for a new Dean is the sixth element in this chain. The attention of the Senate and the executive committee to issues related to the libraries during 2008-2009 will be crucial to the trajectory of the library for many years to come.

Part III: Recommendations for Senate Attention

1. *Working through the coming reviews with the provost.* If this is a crucial year for the libraries, it is imperative that the Senate continue to monitor the review being conducted

within the provost's office. The Senate and its executive committee are a powerful voice for campus priorities. In its role as a participant in the dialogue about priorities, the council calls upon the SEC to help support a continued focus on the library resource crisis and to help with its resolution. The ULC is continually in contact with the provost concerning these issues, but its focus on library issues gives it far less force in communicating the impact of the erosion of the libraries on faculty and student research than can be provided by the SEC.

2. *Addressing the changes in dissemination of scholarly material.* The last two provosts have observed, quite rightly, that a large portion of the difficulty in providing appropriate resources through the library was the inflation in research materials that has averaged 8-10 percent over the last two decades. Changes in the way in which scholarship circulates in the academy impacts the economics of publishing. The senate needs to get a handle on these changes. Developing a solution to the libraries crisis will undoubtedly involve an awareness and central response by the faculty. This response certainly involves education of faculty on the changes taking place in different configurations and with different pace in the various academic disciplines that compose the modern university. Two years ago, the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee considered a resolution, similar to that passed at many other universities, calling for an awareness of the behavior of researchers on the economics of the publishing industry. The senate leadership failed to take these issues to the Senate floor. The time for attention to these issues is long overdue. Inaction in the face of the current crisis is eroding the quality of the university by narrowing the quality of its connections to the emerging explosion of research productivity. As the next year proceeds, the Executive Committee should work with the provost's office to provide the leadership in the Senate necessary to effect any solutions proposed for the funding crisis.

Conclusion

The academic year 2007-2008 has been a frustrating one for the University Library Council. The great difficulty in addressing the crisis in the materials budget within the context of difficult economic times has been obvious to the council. The ray of hope is the curve now in place toward addressing the structural problems that have created this crisis. We very much appreciate the support of Chair Montgomery, Chair Elect Holum who has served as the Senate's ad hoc member of the ULC, the Senate Executive Committee, and the Senate Office in our endeavors.

Respectfully submitted by the 2007-2008 University Library Council

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Appendix A: Review of Management of Acquisitions Budget
Appendix B: Resolution Calling for A Blue Ribbon Task Force
Appendix C: Resolution on Offsite Storage Facility
Appendix D: Changes in Library Budget, FY97-08
Appendix E: Power Point on Comparison of UM Libraries with Peer Institutions

Copies: Nariman Farvardin, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
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