

## **LIBRARY COMMITTEE: REPORT AY2003-2004**

### **Part I: General Report**

Our chief accomplishment on the MU Library Committee during AY 2003-4 was the reorganization of the Committee itself. Traditionally, the Library Committee has focused on the Budget, particularly when serial cancellations seem imminent. Since the Budget oscillates with the larger economy, the Committee's agenda has tended to follow suit. Over the past fifteen years, however, many other issues have come within the prospective purview of this Committee, as the advent of digitization, the information explosion, the internet, changes in copyright law, and the crisis in scholarly communication (especially information monopoly and serials costs) have all transformed the character of research libraries. During my term as Committee Chair, I have made it a priority to direct the Committee's attention to these larger issues of information and intellectual property rights. During AY2001-2, and part of 2001-3, before the full brunt of the latest budget crisis hit, I saw that we had a brief window of opportunity to address these issues on a systemic, analytical level, before we had to revert back to 'crisis mode'. The culmination of these activities was the forum, sponsored jointly with the Library and the Provost's Office, "Why It Matters Where You Publish," 3/20/2003. A fuller account of this work can be found in my Report for AY 2002-3.

By the opening of AY 2003-4, however, the impact of the current fiscal crisis was fully upon us. I was determined that our need to focus on the budgetary emergency would not crowd out a continued engagement with the deeper structural issues and transformations, which were at work. There were, however, two further impediments that diminished the Committee's effectiveness during the Fall Semester: 1) The fact that the Committee membership was not finalized until October, and 2) The need to educate new members about the complex work that we do. By November, it became clear to me that we could not continue with 'business as usual'. During our November meeting, I sensed widespread frustration, as we had an insufficiently focused discussion that (agenda notwithstanding) ran on inconclusively from one subject to the next.

Upon reflection, in consultation with Library Director Cogswell, and with the full support of the Committee, I decided to break-up the full Committee into smaller subcommittees. Each subcommittee would focus on a particular set of issues, engage in the necessary discussion/investigation, and report back to the larger Committee, for action, in the spring. Thus, under the new structure there would be one or two general meetings in the fall to establish the agenda, and recruit the subcommittees. Then the subcommittees could work throughout the winter, and the larger Committee could re-assemble for action, in the spring. Needless to say, if circumstances warranted calling a general Committee meeting, at any time, during either semester, this could be done.

In addition to providing more time, and better focus, the subcommittee model seems to offer several further advantages 1) If care is taken that each subcommittee contain at least one new, and one returning member, we will be able to achieve continuity, and seamlessly educate the new member(s) in the complex issues at stake. In my opinion, the greatest impediment to Library Committee effectiveness has been the lack of institutional memory, as new

members/Chairs rotate in, and old ones rotate off. The issues facing contemporary academic libraries are very complicated, and inter-related. Together, they share a circuitous but revealing history. Nothing has done more to limit our Committee's effectiveness, than the periodic necessity of re-inventing the wheel. 2) Most of the work of the subcommittees involves hands-on collaboration with various sectors of the Library staff. The subcommittee structure allows us to create such flexible working groups. In addition, it allows us to draw on the interest and expertise of other faculty, staff, or students, who may not be on the Library Committee, but who have concerns related to a particular issue. Last year, in my report, I requested that the Faculty Council and University Administration enlarge the size of the Committee to address this problem. I never received any reply. Thanks to our subcommittee system, however, I feel that we have partly redressed this problem, on our own. Finally, let me hasten to add that this subcommittee reorganization in no way changes the 'constitutional' status of the Library Committee. Any formal recommendation to Faculty Council or the Administration will be discussed and voted upon by the entire Committee. Moreover, inasmuch as the work of any subcommittee impinges on matters of curriculum, pedagogy, internal library organization, etc., it must work co-operatively with the relevant committees or organizations, and confine itself to an advisory role.

## **Part II: The Work and Recommendations of the Subcommittees**

1) **Budget:** A standing subcommittee was formed to consider the alarming state of the budget. It consisted of Justin Legarsky, Daniel Longo, and myself. In early March, we met with Jim Cogswell and Bob Almony to go over the budget in detail. So serious did the situation then appear, that we re-convened the entire Committee to discuss the matter. We established a clear procedure for serials cancellations should these become necessary, that would leave ample time for faculty/student consultation. By all accounts (so far) these procedures were followed, and were found satisfactory. Fortunately, as the severity of the fiscal crisis eased, the Provost released more funds to the Library, and the journal cuts were rescinded. We do understand, however, that the fiscal situation is very uncertain, and that another round of cancellations might occur.

The Library (and the University) have now gone through three years of fiscal stringency, as serious as any within memory. To the best of my knowledge, we have weathered this crisis without losing any access to the contents of a single journal. This is a considerable achievement, but it has come at a real cost. In FY 2003, the library staff avoided outright cuts by consolidating subscriptions. Where journals were being received in multiple formats, either the print or the digital versions were eliminated. Although this process seems to have gone smoothly, in most instances, there was a breakdown in communication and consultation with at least one department, which has led to misunderstanding and discontent.

These circumstances illustrate the importance of complete transparency, when dealing with *any* form of journal cancellation. I see now that the procedures, which the Library Committee developed for faculty consultation in 2004, were even more urgently needed in 2003, when journal *content* was saved, but a significant degradation of *service* occurred (i.e. some journal articles now had to be ordered from library staff). Under these circumstances, it is essential that both faculty and library staff be involved in navigating these uncharted waters. The library staff

needs to know exactly how faculty use journals, and what specific trade-offs they are willing to make. Conversely, faculty members need to be aware of the budgetary constraints facing the Library. They need to know that final decisions about cancellation are not being made in secret, and that the Library is trying to accommodate their specific needs.

It may be that the budgetary crises of the future will confront us with something different from journal elimination, in the traditional sense. Rather, we may be witnessing the slow erosion of library use rights and user access to intellectual properties that are digitally archived, and monopolistically controlled. This will be a new battle, which will have to be fought in a different manner, with faculty participation and involvement at every stage. We are the producers of knowledge. Yet these intellectual products are routinely alienated to information oligopolies, which sell them back to university libraries at huge mark-ups in price.

2) **Information Literacy:** In our fall 2003 discussions it became evident that many faculty are concerned about this issue -- the issue being *not* computer, but *information* literacy. We all have the experience of students who give us papers based on materials drawn from the internet, without any consideration paid to the origins or reliability of the source. This frustrates both faculty and librarians, who have developed complex systems of peer review, publishing, classification and archiving, to separate reliable, scientific findings, from the morass of junk, falsification, rumor and propaganda that surrounds us everywhere on the electromagnetic airwaves. During AY 2003-4 Ingolf Gruen and April Langley began to work on this issue with the Library Instruction Committee, to develop a survey to send out to the faculty, so as to determine how serious the problem is, and how it might be resolved. Some concerns also emerged about electronic reserve. We all understand that these issues are pedagogical and curricular and, therefore, beyond the Library Committee's purview. Nevertheless, we see no harm in collecting data, analyzing it, and working with the library staff to improve service.

3) **Institutional Repository.** One of the consequences of the confluence of digitization, publisher monopoly, and restrictive copyright law is the inability of academic libraries to keep up with, and to acquire much of the latest cutting-edge academic scholarship, on which our entire research/academic enterprise depends (see Budget section of this Report). Over the past decade, many solutions to this problem have been attempted, none of them with very much success (see my Report for AY 2001-3). The latest model is called the 'Institutional Repository'. It involves the creation of virtual knowledge spaces, outside commercial publishing, within the university, that will be open access, and directly managed and perpetually archived by the university librarians themselves. Several such repositories have been created by leading institutions, such as Berkeley and MIT. Others are in the works at many other places, including many of our big eight and big ten peer institutions. A subcommittee, consisting of Marilyn James-Kracke, and Dean Yarwood has been created to work with Director Cogswell, the Provost's Office, interested researchers in the biological sciences, and the Library Technology Committee to develop a prototype for such an Institutional Repository at MU.

Many serious questions about this entity have been voiced: What sort of materials would it contain? How would research published there be counted towards tenure and promotion? How would peer review be incorporated into the system? Would it attempt to supplant or supplement

the existing system of specialist peer-reviewed journals? After listening to many sides of this discussion, my own opinion is that the Institutional Repository must be phased in slowly, in a modest, prudent, and non-confrontational way. To leave the impression (as sometimes happens) that this new mode of scholarly publishing will replace the existing system of specialist journal scholarly publishing is ludicrous. Such imputation can only serve as a lightning rod to attract a firestorm of opposition, which would fatally disable the project before it begins.

I believe that for the Institutional Repository to work, it will have begin modestly. Initial efforts should be concentrated in areas (perhaps the biological or social sciences) where its benefits are likely to be most readily appreciated. The Repository should be offered to the faculty as a helpful option, and as a means of keeping control of their intellectual properties. It should, however, not be forced on them as a new means of policing or University review. Peer review should be gradually phased into parts of the system. However by relying on the inherent quality of our faculty, the Repository should be open to all tenure track professors, as a place where they can circulate more speculative pieces such as working papers, data-sets, teaching materials, or general public service publications that are appropriate for the work of a public university. In my view, all such publications should be considered in tenure and promotion, but the weight that they are given should vary with all the relevant circumstances in any particular case. Department chairs should advise junior faculty in this matter. These, I hasten to add, are my own opinions. They are, however, the fruits of several discussions with interested parties, and I believe they raise the issues and objections, which the Institutional Repository will have to face.

**4. Books, Space, and Ellis Resources.** As libraries become more and more 'virtual' institutions, and as new information is increasingly disseminated in digital form, they are re-evaluating their traditional functions as places where books and printed materials are archived. Given the accelerating inflow of ever increasing new materials (both print and digital), and the severe limitations on library space, massive quantities of older, and less frequently circulated materials are constantly being shipped out to remote storage facilities, where they can no longer be directly accessed or browsed. For those faculty and students in the humanities and historical sciences, this is a very serious matter. For us, Ellis Library serves a dual function 1) Like other constituencies, we rely on it for access to the latest scholarly publications, but 2) The Library is our research lab, where we go to get primary sources, government documents, old journals, newspapers, statistics, monographs, and antiquarian works, on which we base a good deal of our own research.

There is a sad irony here: As our acquisitions budget precipitously drops, in relation to our peer institutions, the standing of the MU libraries has steadily eroded, with regard to function 1. We are currently ranked in the lower quarter of U.S. research libraries, in new acquisitions. On the other hand, our older holdings remain superb. Thus, we have vast, and underutilized resources for function 2. In my own field (British History) I am quite convinced that we are in the top thirty (and perhaps even in the top twenty) libraries in the United States. Yet, as these materials get shipped out to remote facilities, their value diminishes. From this vantage, the closing of Tate Library was very regrettable. The best that can be said for the inaccessible, non-browsable Remote Depository (UMLD, where most of these older materials are now housed) is that a) it is physically located in Columbia, and b) electronic retrieval has reduced the turn-around time to about twenty-four hours, between request and delivery.

Now, however, the Library is facing another, even more severe, space crisis, as more and more new books and materials flow into Ellis, and as the UMLD itself has rapidly filled-up. The UMLD is projected to reach capacity, sometime in early 2005. At that point, many of the older materials, still in Ellis, will have nowhere to go. By all accounts, the optimal (realistic) solution would be to build a new module for the UMLD -- a clone of the existing one -- which would double its capacity overnight. Building costs for this secure, but barebones facility would be about \$4 million -- very inexpensive by construction standards. Unfortunately, this is money that the Library does not have. Various 'temporary' expedients are being considered, in particular, a plan to ship this material out to a cave in Springfield, where archiving and retrieval would be outsourced.

A Library subcommittee, consisting of myself, Marcus Rautman, John Zemke, and Anne Stanton, was formed to consider the least unpalatable options in this looming disaster. There was a great deal of skepticism about the cave. It was pointed out that the only humanities/historical materials left in Ellis are our core collections, since most of the less used material have left long-ago. The four faculty (from separate departments) all agreed that circulation figures are a poor measure of use, since the whole point about these materials is that they are frequently used on site. The practical (and political) dangers of moving Ellis materials to an out-sourced facility in Springfield were noted. Director Cogswell was sympathetic to our concerns, but he obviously feels great urgency to solve the space crisis, which is almost as great as (and clearly related to) the fiscal crisis.

Unable to dispose of this matter, the subcommittee referred it for general discussion with the entire Committee. This meeting was also attended by Mary Ryan, Head of Ellis Library Reference Services. She prepared and presented a very helpful document, which lays out the criteria to be used by library staff for targeting materials for removal from Ellis. She also offered assurances that faculty consultation will be built into the process, and adequate time will be allowed for faculty review. This document relieved many of the worst fears of Committee Members. Unfortunately, good procedures can only alleviate the negative effect of the Ellis 'book drain', and the crisis of space remains unresolved.

**5. Scholarly Communications.** Since the Committee had so many specific issues to confront in AY 2003-4, I did not activate this subcommittee. Nevertheless, I have continued to keep my eye on the changing landscape of scholarly communication. I attended the Library workshop on copyright law, and continued discussing general trends with Jim Cogswell, during our periodic lunches. I have also been following the mixed fortunes of the Public Library of Science. If circumstances warrant, I will activate this subcommittee during AY 2004-5.

## CONCLUSIONS

I apologize for the length of this Report. It is justified only by the complexity and diversity of the issues which we are confronting. The Library is no longer a musty repository of dead documents. It is a contested site, on which some of the 'hottest' debates over public access, intellectual property, and technological transformation are being fought out. Moreover, there can

be no firm conclusions on any of these issues, since each of the subcommittees is still very much in the midst of its work. The story will have to be continued next year.

Absent a conclusion, however, I would like to offer one possible connecting thread. As I observe the current crisis in public education, and the collapse of state support for MU, I am concerned about the way in which too many institutions of higher education are competing, in an unseemly scramble, for too few public dollars, in a chronically under-funded state. Under the circumstances, I think it behooves us to do everything in our power to preserve our *de-facto* flagship status, even if prudence dictates that we avoid the word.

I believe that the Library plays a critical role in what makes us the *de facto* flagship campus, and points to many of the things we must do to preserve and enhance that position. The work of all of our subcommittees attests to this point:

- 1) **Budget:** The MU Library experiences a specially acute fiscal crisis because it is expected to bear the full cost of acquiring the vast panoply of specialist serials in the research disciplines, without any budgetary adjustment to defray this additional expense. It would be nice if the state recognized our flagship status by properly funding this huge expense. Its failure to do so, however, silently registers the *de facto* flagship reality, which saddles us with an enormous, unfunded mandate
- 2) **The Institutional Repository:** If properly constructed, this virtual space could be used as a showcase for our research accomplishments, and as a further vehicle for securing our status as Missouri's only real public Research I University. It could also afford a way of enhancing our outreach to the general population, and of re-invigorating our open access values, and public service role.
- 3) **UMLD, Ellis, and Print:** As more and more Missouri academic and specialist libraries have been depositing their print materials in the Columbia UMLD, we have silently, without fanfare, been accumulating the foundation of what is quickly becoming the premiere public collection of research materials in the state. It is, in fact, though not in name, a Missouri State Research Library. The fact that this facility is only about twenty miles up Route 63 from Jefferson City, is another happy accident. Moreover, since all the UM campuses are joint participants in this facility, they would have a vested interest in supporting such a claim to State Research Library status. Let us be clear, we are talking about an archive of print materials, most of which will never be digitized in the foreseeable future, and will, *ipso facto*, become increasingly valuable and rare.

The key to keeping this option open, however, is for the UM and/or MU Administration to lay out the modest \$4 Million needed to build the new storage module, at the existing UMLD, which will continue to attract more (increasingly valuable) print materials from many libraries, all around the state. At a time when it is deemed politically propitious, we might convince the State Legislature to officially rename this the Missouri State Research Library, and provide it with a separate line of funding, to open reading rooms, improve delivery, and enhance access, browsability, etc. For those of us in the humanities and historical sciences at MU, the benefits might be immense. We would be able to offer our graduate students 'laboratory resources', on

(or near) the Columbia campus, that far exceed the capabilities of any other library (public or private) in the state.

However, if we close off the UMLD to future deposits, and if we send out *our own* magnificent print collections to be consigned to some Springfield cave, I shudder to think what will be the consequences, in ten years time, when SMSU makes another, more rationally justified bid to become Missouri State University.

Respectfully submitted,  
**Ted Koditschek**  
Chair, MU Library Committee