



University Committee on Libraries
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October 26, 2004

Academic Council
Office of the Provost
300 Main Building
University of Notre Dame
CAMPUS

RE: University Committee on Libraries, Annual Report, 2003/04

Dear Members of the Academic Council:

As it has for the past few years, the 2003/04 incarnation of the University Committee on Libraries (UCL) continued to struggle with reconciling Notre Dame's rising scholarly ambitions with declining library resources.

The Committee has informed the Academic Council several times of the special plight of the library, which experienced not only the recent budget cuts familiar to most units on campus, but also disproportionate additional and cumulative erosion of resources owing to the well-documented hyperinflation of costs for library materials worldwide. Substantial *Colloquy for the Year 2000* allocations both advanced the library and met inflationary demands from 1995/96 through 2000/01, partially insulating Notre Dame from the emerging crisis in scholarly publishing. We are now losing ground, however, as the University budget cuts, decreased endowment funding, and a disadvantageous exchange rate of the Dollar against the Euro have produced a grand total effective decrease in library materials funding and purchasing power of approximately 14%.

Budget Cuts in Collections and Personnel

Symptomatic of the library's difficulties are the multiple waves of serial cancellations that have been documented for the Council in this annual report over the past few years. Details are available at:

http://www.library.nd.edu/colldev/library_budget_cuts/

In brief, hundreds of previously-available journals are no longer available on campus. While print cancellations in prior years targeted seldom-used titles and duplicate copies of titles available in electronic formats, essential titles not available in any other format have now been cancelled. Book purchases have also been sharply curtailed, creating significant collection gaps that will only get more expensive to fill as time goes by. Prior discussions of the wisdom of investing in electronic versus paper copies of library materials have been obviated by the reality that subscriptions in duplicate format are

unaffordable. Similarly, serious debates are underway about canceling subscriptions to the ejournal packages with resubscriptions possible only for a small number of those titles. Fiscal 2003/04 saw almost \$1 million in reduced commitments for book and serial purchases. The budget cut of FY03/04 resulted in the loss of 12.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, necessitating a reduction of hours at selected service points. Bibliographers have been stretched to the limit during this period.

Access to knowledge resources has declined steadily in the past few years. The productivity of scholars has been put in jeopardy campus-wide. That Notre Dame is not alone in this dilemma is cold comfort for faculty and students striving for academic excellence.

The Committee commends the library for its outstanding use of cooperative arrangements to maximize access to scholarly materials. Especially helpful have been various consortial purchasing arrangements, inter-library loan and document delivery. The library has moved, where possible, to purchase soft-bound rather than hard-bound books. The UCL also discussed formulation of an acquisition policy based on use and the identification of distinguished collections, taking care not to conflate “frequency of use” with “importance.”

Discussion of Other Matters

The Committee also considered other matters critical to the Library’s functioning. Among the most significant of these were:

1. The UCL is a conduit for information exchange between the library and the rest of the campus community. UCL’s constituency is, in some cases, the library itself, when it represents faculty and student perspectives to the library Director and staff. In other cases, the UCL’s constituency is the broader campus community, as when it represents library issues to students, staff, and faculty. While regular UCL meetings serve the Committee’s first function, it has been less effective in fulfilling its second, representing library issues to the campus community. Therefore, this year’s UCL explored ways to communicate better with its broader campus constituency. A subcommittee has been working with Cynthia Maciejczyk, Director of Communications, Projects, and Planning, to formulate a comprehensive communication strategy.
2. Contrary to the collective intuition of the Committee, the data make plain that technology has yet to fulfill its tremendous promise for resource savings. Reference digitization is a clear example: the up-front costs are enormous, while the enhanced access and low-cost distribution that it permits are realized only very much later (e.g., ArtStor). Similarly, electronic serials packages are famously expensive (e.g., ScienceDirect). Even digital resource sharing technologies continue to cost more than their paper counterparts.
3. The patron printing policy in the library has been reconsidered. Despite encouraging patrons to save digital copies of electronic materials, in the last year nearly 2 million copies have been produced at the printers in the Reference Department. Some of the printed copies are abandoned while some large repetitive runs of flyers, petitions, and other non-library mass mailings are being printed without cost to the patron. While the UCL is committed to the ideal that one ought to be able to go to the library and get free access to scholarly materials, it recognizes that the library’s free printing policies open it to abuses. In close consultation with student groups, the Committee endorsed placing library printers on the campus-wide print quota system for students

and increasing student quotas as appropriate. A final policy on library printing has yet to be established.

4. Academic units are differentially affected by budget problems. For example, electronic access to current serials benefits the sciences and social sciences more than the humanities, which tend to rely more on books. Reducing book budgets in order to subsidize spiraling electronic serials costs can distort acquisition priorities. Sustainable pricing and bundling practices must be pursued with commercial publishers to regain local control of collection development decisions.
5. The library strategic plan was discussed extensively as were details of its implementation.
6. The growth and development aspirations of the University were discussed. The Committee noted that, especially in cases where new initiatives are undertaken that involve foci other than those Notre Dame has traditionally pursued, creative new models of library capitalization need to be sought.
7. UCL offered its assistance to the Faculty Senate, should that body wish to consider a scholarly publishing resolution similar to those recently produced by faculty senates at other universities (viz., Stanford, Cornell, University of California).
8. The Committee noted completion of the renovation to the lower level of the Hesburgh Library and its blessing by Fr. Hesburgh in a ceremony held September 18, 2003. Student behavior and seat counts clearly demonstrate the beneficial effects of an environment conducive to individual and/or group study.
9. New library services were also noted, including on-line renewal, self check-out, MyLibrary, email notification for recalls and renewals, as well as various internal and external web redesign efforts supporting increased self-service.
10. The Committee awaits the results of a survey of internal library communication which has been completed with the assistance of an outside consultant.
11. Moderating demand for articles from journals to which the library does not subscribe was discussed as a means to control costs. Among possible ways to moderate demand, the Committee considered steering use of convenience to available resources and introducing various cost-sharing policies. It was not immediately evident how either of these solutions could be implemented without undermining the academic integrity of the research process (or normal research practices).
12. The Committee noted the University Libraries' successful pursuit of external grants. The National Endowment for the Humanities awarded the University Libraries a \$450,000 grant to aid in the preservation of more than 15,000 endangered 19th and early 20th century monographs documenting the Catholic tradition. In addition, smaller grants were received for geographic information systems equipment for the Engineering Library and a summer diversity program for high school students to work in the library.
13. The Committee commends the Provost's decision to form a University task force to set forth

strategies for dealing with library needs in the context of University aspirations and the next fundraising campaign.

In closing, UCL is pleased to see that the Provost continues to recognize the serious difficulties faced by the library and appreciates the ad hoc support the library has received in recent years. We trust the Provost's Libraries Task Force will recognize the special plight of the libraries, which labor under the twin burdens of ordinary budget cuts and hyperinflation as they seek to meet the demands of Notre Dame's rising scholarly ambitions. We look forward to working together as we formulate and implement the recommendations this collaborative process produces.

University Committee on Libraries 2003/04

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