

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT, 1999-2000

Charge

The University Library Committee (ULC) is charged to review and make recommendations on long-range planning for the library's resources, to review the libraries' performance in supporting and assisting scholarly activities, to monitor technical developments for the libraries, to consult with and advise administrative officers on library budget matters, to receive recommendations from departments and deans on libraries and to make recommendations to the chancellor, to give advice on resource allocation among library units and services, and to advise on the appointment of faculty members to search and screen committees for senior administrative appointments in major library units.

Recent Activities and Concerns

1. Budget

For the past several years a central concern of the ULC and of the General Library System (GLS) has been the inflationary effect of dramatically escalating costs of many journals, especially those in scientific and technical fields. This has been a vital concern of research libraries across the nation and has had a profound effect on the ability of the GLS to maintain collections of monographs as well as journals, especially in the light of a full decade without any increase in the libraries' base budget. Our librarians, consulting with faculty in all disciplines across the campus, have dealt creatively and wisely with this problem, maintaining the strength of collections as fully as possible, though weakening was inevitable. Last year's ULC report dealt at length with this and related problems in a document that achieved widespread distribution even beyond this campus.

The Wisconsin legislature in the current biennial budget recognized the inevitable deleterious effect of many years' inflation combined with a static acquisitions budget. The increase of library budgets by some \$2 million for the biennium has had a salutary effect in stemming the

tide of losses to collections. The ULC takes this change as a very favorable sign that our legislators acknowledge a fundamental fact of university life: no university can be a great university without a great library. Wisconsin has long been blessed with a great library and we now have increased reason to hope that we can maintain that greatness.

In particular, the budget for the current fiscal year (1999-2000) contributed \$517,000 in new money for collections at UW-Madison libraries, an amount that will be matched next year. These base-budget increases, while not making up for lost purchasing power over the past decade, are essential steps in the maintenance of collection strength. In addition, the UW System has assumed responsibility for the licensing of databases that was formerly shouldered by Madison campus libraries, freeing up another \$265,000 in annual savings to our campus libraries. One-time funding from the Madison Initiative for life sciences resources (\$150,000) has also been received. Together with economies made possible by greater budget flexibility and increases in library endowments, more than \$1 million in purchasing power for collections and access to collections has been added to the GLS budget this year. The consequence has been immediately visible as digital resources, including many full-text journals, magazines, and newspapers, as well as multimedia and bibliographical resources have been added. Monographs and serials remain central to the collecting practice of the libraries. Indeed, the director of the GLS has promised that the library will buy virtually any book students, faculty, or staff request. In addition, the UW-Madison Electronic Library has bought or leased major new resources in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. At the same time, the sharing of resources among libraries within the state and beyond has noticeably increased, a trend we expect to continue.

Thus, after many years of unhappy budget information, the ULC is pleased to report a very good year. We trust this awareness of libraries' needs will remain a high priority of future state budgets.

2. Development

Consistent with the approach of academic units across the campus in recent years, the GLS is committed to developing financial resources through fund-raising, both one-time funding for special projects through grant applications (a practice that has been followed for many years, providing critical relief in the difficult past decade) and longer term initiatives to raise gift money that can establish endowments for the support of future needs. This year's ULC has voted formally and enthusiastically to encourage this practice. In particular, we have encouraged the establishment of a Board of Visitors for the General Library System. A recently created part-time position at the UW Foundation gives us the benefit of a staff person who is assisting from within the Foundation in identifying individuals who will comprise a Board to advise and assist our libraries. Members of the ULC have volunteered to assist in this cause and it will remain a high priority issue on next year's ULC agenda.

3. Space

When the new addition to Memorial Library was planned and constructed during the 1980s, the expectation was that the increase in shelving capacity would allow for additions to the collections until about 2002. This has proven to be the case, but as we now approach that date, we are once again approaching a time when libraries will run out of storage capacity. (About one mile of shelving is required to accommodate the 60,000 volumes acquired in an average year.) While necessary and welcomed, the new health sciences library facilities, reviewed by the committee during the year, will offer space for only five years' growth. A committee of librarians from various campus libraries has begun meeting to plan for the not-too-distant day when a storage facility will be needed. The ULC has identified this problem as a major issue and has assigned a faculty member from the ULC as liaison with the librarians' committee. This, also, will be an ongoing issue.

4. Student-User Feedback

One of the student members of the ULC has urged the committee to find new ways of gauging opinions and ideas of library users, particularly students. The assessment of library effectiveness is currently a subject of professional interest nationwide. A subcommittee of librarians with representatives from the ULC including faculty, academic staff, and students is currently engaged in discussion of this matter and we expect action to be taken that will increase the amount and quality of student feedback to the library staff and administration. Our student membership this year, including two undergraduates and one graduate student, has been particularly active and helpful.

Other Current and Future Issues

Other topics discussed by the committee during the year have included the following:

- **Implementation of the new underlying technical software system for library operations.** The system replaces a decades-old set of software which was not suitable for Internet-based access and collections and was not Y2K compliant,
- **Cooperation of the libraries with the UW Press on publication projects.** As lines between, access to, and dissemination of scholarly knowledge begin to merge, they offer possibilities for increased collaboration and experimentation.
- **Preservation of archival materials.** Space in the basement of Steenbock Library is being reconfigured to provide expanded and enhanced housing for the university's archival materials. At issue for the future will be maintaining access to archival information, and indeed many genres of information in electronic formats.

- **Memorial Library Enhancements.** Proceeds from the UW Foundation's Parent Enrichment Fund will support renovation of a first-floor study hall into a teaching theater and presentation space as well as an upgraded, electronically wired study hall. In addition, a gift from the Class of 1949 is allowing creation of a digital text center for staff and projects.
- **Humanities Center Office.** The new UW–Madison Center for the Humanities will occupy newly configured office space on the second floor of Memorial Library in part of the area previously occupied by the subject catalogue, which has been moved to the basement.

Conclusion

The committee made two formal recommendations during the year:

- Support for the establishment over time of a Libraries Board of Visitors.
- Support for the use of the Middleton Library Building as an interim, on-campus collection-storage facility.

The ULC also wishes to go on record in thanking campus and UW System administrations for their support of a significant base budget addition for libraries, and the legislature for its allocations.

Committee Membership

Elected Faculty (voting members)

Virginia Boyd (1st of 4 yrs)
Human Ecology

Daniel Bromley (4th of 4 yrs)
Agriculture and Applied Economics

Sargent Bush (Chair, 4th of 4 yrs)
English

Barrett Caldwell (2nd of 4 yrs)
Engineering, Industrial Engineering

Thomas C. Osborn (2nd of 4 yrs)
Agronomy

Eric Triplett (1st of 4 yrs)
Agronomy

Dietrich Uhlenbrock (3rd of 4 yrs)
Math and Physics

Stephen L. Vaughn (3rd of 4 yrs)
Journalism and Mass Communication

Appointed Academic Staff (voting members)

Ann Gordon-Walker (4th of 4 yrs)
Institute for Molecular Virology

Alice Honeywell (3rd of 4 yrs)
La Follette Institute

Students (voting members)

Lisa Petrov
Julia Reiersgord
Ramchandra Watwe

Ex Officio from Bascom (non-voting members)

Phillip Braithwaite
Budget

Casey Nagy
Special Assistant, University Administration

Librarians (non-voting members)

Ken Frazier (permanent)
Director, General Library System

Steve Barkan (LCC Liaison)
Director, Law Library
Elected by LCC

David Null (2nd of 2 yrs)
Senior Academic Librarian, Reference
Elected by campus library staff

Robin Rider (1st of 2 yrs)
Curator, Special Collections
Elected by campus library staff