

University Library Committee 1995-1996

Minutes for October 11, 1995

Present: Frances Cogan, John Gage, Peter Gilkey, Lucy Lynch, William Orr, Leland Roth, George Shipman, Joseph St. Sauver, Ray Weldon

Absent: Theodore Palmer

Guest: Deborah Carver, Assistant University Librarian for Public Services and Collections

Summary

The meeting dealt with the possible serials cancellation project. It also dealt with the need to augment the membership of the committee to have more broadly based representation. The meeting began at 1601 and ended at 1720. The committee will resume discussion of the possible serials cancellation project at 1600 on Wednesday 25 October 1995.

Detailed Minutes

Professor Gilkey, Chair, began the meeting at 4:01 p.m. by asking the assembled committee members to introduce themselves. When they had done so, Gilkey mentioned that he would be putting the agendas and other pertinent information concerning this committee on the World Wide Web, the address is: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~gilkey/univlib.html>.

Serials Budget Cuts

Gilkey asked Shipman and Carver to briefly provide some background information on the need for a serials cancellation and then explain the current situation in more detail. Shipman began by describing the acquisition budget and how the Library recognizes the reaching of an 80%/20% split between continuing commitments (such as journals, other serials, licensing agreements) and discretionary moneys (monographs) as signaling a potentially dangerous imbalance. This ratio varies some from discipline and discipline, but the Library uses the 80/20 figure as a guide for the overall budget. 70/30 is actually a more desirable ratio. Because subscription costs have gone up dramatically, it is difficult to keep acquisitions from reaching this 80/20 mark. Shipman commented that a serials cancellation project is necessary, but it could be postponed one year. The committee advice is sought in choosing whether to do a cancellation project this year or to postpone it until next year. Shipman mentioned that he felt that the University as a whole had developed a good partnership in maintaining a balanced stewardship of the acquisitions budget through the work of the Library subject specialists with the faculty departmental library representatives. Individual serial titles are cancelled throughout the course of a year through an ongoing review process. The large-scale serials cancellation projects require a lot of preparation on the part of the Library staff, but a lot of work and input is required from the faculty as well. A 1/2 million dollar cut is quite a blow to scholarship so when it must be done the widest university community consultation is hoped for, and the process begins with this committee. Departmental library representatives are the most involved with the actual work of cancellation and various deadlines must be met so that budget commitments are not extended further than planned in order to accomplish the savings. Shipman asked the group if there were any questions.

A question was asked about where departmental library representatives fit in the process--before the ULC recommends and advises or after? The answer is that their work begins following the ULC general recommendations so they may work specifically within their discipline to complete the process.

Gilkey expressed the concern that this year ULC was not representative enough to make recommendations about a process of this magnitude affecting the entire scholarly community that would be completely credible to that community. There are no professional schools represented on the committee. The Department of Education, for example, has a different usage of serials and monographs than the departments currently represented. A question was posed about how the Law Library fit in to this process. Shipman answered that they have a high degree of autonomy but would also have an amount to cut. Gilkey proposed that as Chair of the committee he go to the President of the University Senate to recommend greater representation on this year

Gage asked how this process worked in the past. It was explained that this proposal for a large-scale serials cancellation is similar to earlier serial cuts where departmental representative work with library staff in achieving the cuts. Gage commented that Gilkey's proposal to encourage greater representation seemed wise. Shipman commented that this was the first committee without representation from Business, Music, Journalism, or Education.

Weldon asked why a large serials cancellation project was necessary if there was a regular program of culling on an annual basis. Shipman suggested that the committee briefly review the handout prepared by Carver and allow her to explain some of the issues in greater detail to better understand the reasons for the proposed serials cancellation project. It was noted that the Kansas Group (used in the handout for comparison purposes) is a university peer group of institutions whose size and mission is similar. Carver summarized some of the material presented in the handout. She mentioned that 80/20 is an arbitrary figure, but the Library feels it is a reasonable minimum threshold to use. Following this guideline prevents the Library from wiping out the discretionary fund line. Example A under Budget Scenarios was highlighted as the budget prediction if no serials cancellation is done. The column marked =93APPROV.=94 represents approval plan dollars--funds deposited in accounts in order for books to be automatically sent to the Library based on a profile of the University research and curriculum needs. If a serials cancellation is done this year, the next one would probably be required in 5 years. Gilkey wondered why serials cancellation appeared to follow a catastrophic model. Roth asked why it had been such a short time since the last project. Carver explained that inflation grew much faster than predicted. Shipman noted that the percentage of moneys coming to the Library for Acquisitions had decreased in the past 3 to 4 years. It was noted that other factors placing severe pressure on acquisitions include a weak dollar abroad (affecting foreign acquisitions) and publishers that have stung libraries with high prices.

The various budget scenarios in Carver handout were reviewed and discussed. Shipman mentioned that there was a proposal that the Provost was taking to the Council of Deans which involved the Deans agreeing to a slight reduction in their Supplies and Services budgets to permit a 1% one-time increase in next year acquisitions budget to delay the serials cut and protect goals outlined in scenario E under Budget Scenarios. There were doubts expressed that this proposal would be accepted.

A lengthy discussion followed concerning other options for achieving moneys to supplement the acquisitions budget that would equal the amount the Library would gain from the proposal to be reviewed by the Deans. Suggestions were offered ranging from using savings from professional staff attrition, obtaining restricted donations, and increasing photocopying charges. Lynch asked if the downsizing of some departments on campus (such as Education) in the past had relieved pressure on serial subscriptions. Shipman explained that most journals used by Education were required primarily

by the Education graduate program. The programs that were cut did not have the impact on reducing serial subscriptions that would have offered real savings. Shipman noted that savings from professional staff attrition were already being used to deal with Supplies and Services and Student Payroll overages on a scale of \$400,000 - \$500,000 a year. He commented that \$4,000,000 is being sought for an Acquisitions Endowment as part of the Oregon Campaign, but, of course, only income would be used even when the endowment became fully funded. Increasing photocopy costs is a possibility, but also problematic as the current mood of the student body is strongly antagonistic to further fee hikes.

Switching some subscriptions from paper to electronic formats will not provide assistance in controlling serial costs. Costs for electronic journals may actually increase over paper formats in the short term. Some publishers tie electronic formats to current subscriptions of paper copies. There is also confusion in the marketplace on the price of electronic journal subscriptions with great variation from vendor to vendor. The sustainability of back issues for research is problematic as well, for if a vendor stops providing an electronic subscription, the Library is left with nothing as opposed to paper which has been acquired and saved even if a particular journal is stopped.

Shipman stated that he preferred example D of the Budget Scenarios, which does not depend on finding additional moneys but delays the cancellation project for a year. Gage commented that he had reservations about delaying the serials cut if one must be done because of the effect on the monographic portion of the budget. Gilkey stated that he does not see a particular advantage in delaying the project either as a few years from now whether or not a journal ended in 1995 or 1996 will not be of great concern. The question was voiced again as to why a large-scale cut in serials is necessary if annual culling is done. Shipman commented that the psychological effect of doing a large cancellation project every few years is less troubling to faculty than making substantial cuts every year. The University of Oregon is far from unique in having to do this. Every year there are libraries at major research universities that must accomplish the same kind of reduction in serials subscriptions. It was asked if automatic reviews of serials are going on now, and the answer was yes. Carver explained that cancellations are very labor intensive, and if they were done each year on the scale necessary to avoid the kind of project being considered, it would consume too large an amount of library staff time as well as faculty time.

Gilkey asked what the time frame was to accomplish the serials cancellation this year, and Carver responded that the process would need to begin in November. Some questions were asked about total figures for both serials and monographs and figures for the total acquisitions budget. Gilkey asked if the library budget figures could be made available for the committee. Noting the closeness of the date for the process to begin if the cut is made this year, Gilkey emphasized the need for the committee to meet again before November.

Representation

The questions about better representation came up again. Gilkey asked for a motion empowering him to ask the President of the University Senate to approve augmenting this year committee with more members to achieve a better representation from the professional schools. The motion was made and passed by a majority with St.Sauver opposed. St Sauver noted that meetings were already difficult to schedule and increasing the size of the committee could only exacerbate the problem.

Posting Minutes on the WWW

Gilkey reiterated that the minutes from this meeting and the agenda for the next would be posted on the World Wide Web. Cogan and Roth requested paper copies be sent to them.

Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the ULC was set as October 25, 1995 at 4:00 p.m. in the J. David Rowe Conference Room (Room 115H of the Knight Library).

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Submitted by Ross Bunnell October 12, 1995