

**Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Libraries Advisory Committee**

**4th Floor Conference Room, James Branch Cabell Library
September 26, 2014**

Minutes

Attending

Meredith Baines, David Burton, Corey Davis (chair), Jose Dula, Susan Johnson, Whitney Newcomb, Faye Prichard, Mike Ryan, Vincent Ryan, Neha Sakhawalkar, AJ Shriar, Jeremy Stultz, Kenneth Warren, Carolyn White, Hu Yang

Absence with notice

Les Harrison

Absent

Peter Nguyen

Staff: John Duke, Jeanne Hammer, John Ulmschneider, Pam Fraga (recording secretary)

Dr. Davis welcomed the members to this year's Committee and invited each to introduce themselves.

Business

Review and approval of agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Review and approval of minutes from April 2014

The minutes were approved as presented.

Committee meeting schedule – handout

Mr. Ulmschneider informed the Committee that he and Dr. Davis had met earlier and discussed the issue of the Committee's meeting frequency. He reported that they explored possible changes to the Committee's operation in order to make the best use of the time that the very busy Committee members have set aside for VLAC. He noted that in the past VLAC had been instrumental in key decisions by VCU Libraries, such as selecting quotation for the elevator lobby areas and providing guidance on journals cancellations. One idea explored by Dr. Davis and Mr. Ulmschneider is to reduce the number of VLAC meetings to perhaps 2 per semester, and to focus the meetings on strategic and environmental issues and challenges, with less time devoted to library operations issues. The VCU Libraries staff would prepare discussion and information items well in advance for member review prior to the meeting. Members may have to do a little bit of "homework" prior to the meetings, but it would allow the most effective use of the meeting time.

Dr. Davis asked the Committee to think about the pros and cons of these ideas and be prepared to make a decision at the next meeting.

Some Committee members noted that the next meeting is scheduled for October 17, during Reading Days. It seems the VLAC meeting has often been scheduled this way in the past, and it has generally

been rescheduled. Dr. Davis agreed that the meeting should be rescheduled, and Mr. Ulmschneider said that the VLAC meeting schedule for next year will avoid the Reading Days period.

Reports and Discussion

Brief introduction to the VCU Libraries - PowerPoint

Setting the stage for 2014-15: investment planning initiative - PowerPoint

Ithaka Local Faculty Survey - PowerPoint

Mr. Ulmschneider said that first three items on the agenda were closely enough related that he would discuss them as one topic. He started with a brief overview of the organizational structure of VCU Libraries. He noted that while the VCU Libraries has a typically hierarchical structure for purposes of accountability and evaluation, in practice staff carry out their work in a matrixed environment, with a great deal of collaboration among staff and departments within the VCU Libraries and with other units at VCU. He also noted that the VCU Libraries has made stronger efforts to be work more closely with the library at Qatar.

Mr. Ulmschneider said that the *Quest for Distinction* specifically identifies as a goal membership in ARL (Association of Research Libraries). ARL membership is less a strategic goal and more a consequence of having the funding base and program richness in the library system commensurate with a major research university such as VCU. He reviewed the quantitative funding benchmarks and qualitative characteristics required for ARL membership. For VCU Libraries, the university is nearing the quantitative funding threshold for membership, and the library system has growing strength in program initiatives and collections of rare and unique materials that ARL membership requires. He said he expects VCU Libraries to achieve membership in the spring of 2016.

Mr. Ulmschneider showed the Committee library visitor counts, focusing on the time from 12:00 AM to 7:00 AM, to help illustrate the need for more space. The numbers continue to grow and the building continues to be extremely crowded, with over 2 million visitors using the building and resources last year.

He touched briefly on the many educational and cultural outreach events sponsored by VCU Libraries over the past year, including the many efforts to inform students about the then-proposed student library fee during the spring 2014 semester.

Mr. Ulmschneider briefly reviewed the VCU Libraries budget. He pointed out that the breakdown of 51% for collections and 48% for personnel was unusual among research libraries. Generally personnel is the largest expense in research libraries, but while the university has been able to support collections well, it has struggled to find enough funding to meet staffing needs in the VCU Libraries along with all the other faculty and staff needs throughout the university.

Mr. Ulmschneider discussed the investment strategy for VCU Libraries over the next two years. Budget investments will focus on three themes:

- Keeping the buildings open and providing services 24/5
- Building collections and access to the scholarly record
- Ensuring that faculty and students can create, find and use scholarly resources

The foundation for these investment themes is a new mission statement for the VCU Libraries that has been developed, incorporating input from the staff and faculty of VCU Libraries:

“The VCU Libraries transforms our communities by enriching scholarship, learning and critical care through our teaching, our collections and our leadership.”

Mr. Ulmschneider reviewed key elements of the new mission statement and explained its strategic focus.

Another aspect of implementing the new investment plan is data from the Ithaka Local Faculty Survey that helped shaped the plan. This survey is based on a national faculty survey that has been redesigned for a local focus. The VCU Libraries conducted its local survey in cooperation with 7 other research libraries who are members of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL). The survey was sent to all faculty at VCU; the response rate was 17%, which provides statistically valid results. The resulting data will be incorporated in monetary investment choices going forward.

Construction update for Monroe Park Campus library building – PowerPoint

Ms. Hammer gave a brief overview of the new timeline for the project. Originally the doors were scheduled to open in the Fall of 2015 but the schedule now calls for opening the 1st and 2nd floors in September 2015, with the 3rd and 4th floors opening in December 2015. The schedule still has some flexibility and these dates may change. Two of the many upcoming challenges are the temporary closing of the 1st floor restrooms between winter break and spring break, and the permanent closing of the 4th floor conference room at winter break. Ms. Hammer noted that heavy pounding and drilling was finished during the summer break and that the concrete pouring is being done between 2am and 8am to disturbance to the students. The building remain open 24/5 during the entire construction process.

Mr. Ulmschneider briefly reminded the Committee to check the other items in the packet of handouts as they were promotional pieces for upcoming events.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10PM.