

VCU Libraries Advisory Committee, November 17, 2017
3rd Floor Conference Room/Boardroom
James Branch Cabell Library
2:00–3:00 p.m.

Minutes

In attendance

Lorraine Anderson, Meredith Baines (chair), Matt Bogenschutz, Lelia Brinegar, Corey Davis, Les Harrison, Cheng Ly, Sarah Mizer, Tom Nelson, Amy Pakyz, Valerie Robnolt, Nancy Stutts, Jayaraman Vijayakumar

Absent

Nicole Ekanem, Hassen Hafiz, Faye Prichard, Kenneth Warren

Staff: Kathy Bradshaw, Karen Cary, Dennis Clark, John Ulmschneider, Pam Fraga (recording secretary)

Business

Review and approval of agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Review and approval of minutes from September 2017

The minutes were approved as presented.

Association of Research Libraries membership – PowerPoint

Mr. Ulmschneider reported that Virginia Commonwealth University has been invited to join the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), effective January 1, 2018, and has accepted the invitation. VCU joins Virginia Tech and UVA as the only Virginia universities in ARL. He thanked the members of the Committee for their support throughout the extended and rigorous ARL application process.

Reports and Discussion

LibQUAL 2017 quality assessment survey results – PowerPoint

The LibQUAL survey on library quality is conducted by the VCU Libraries on a regularly scheduled basis, every two to three years, and surveys a large sample of the VCU population. The findings from the survey play a major role in shaping strategic planning, library budgets, facilities investments, and staffing design, placing input from library users at the center of investment strategies. Mr. Ulmschneider's PowerPoint illustrated the changes in LibQUAL scores from the first year of the survey at VCU, 2004, through 2017. The data show improvement in all measures, in some cases quite significant improvements. He noted that the VCU Libraries used survey findings over time to target financial, personnel, and facilities investments that improved scores. The survey's results over time showed greatest improvement in scores that faculty and graduate students gave to library collections and access to scholarly literature.

Budget redesign: summary of challenges for VCU Libraries – PowerPoint

Mr. Ulmschneider's PowerPoint showed the budget for VCU Libraries as it stood on July 1, 2017, at the beginning of the current fiscal year. A bit over half of the budget is dedicated to acquiring library collections. He noted that research libraries generally have a larger personnel and operations budget than library materials budget, making VCU's budget profile distinctive and resulting in fewer librarians to help the VCU community find and make use of library materials.

Several points were raised in the discussion which followed:

- Research enterprise at VCU requires more involvement from librarians than VCU Libraries can provide currently.
- VCU Libraries has minimal capacity to assist faculty and the VCU community in exploring publishing options and evolving more effective, impactful ways to disseminate scholarly findings.
- Some members of the Committee noted that publishing in standard, high-prestige journals is essential to faculty advancement, and publishing in alternative, open-access venues might be detrimental to careers and promotion opportunities.
- The existing budget profile constrains the ability of the VCU Libraries to raise awareness about and strengthen the use of the use of free- and reduced-cost course materials, including textbooks, which can have significant positive impact on the overall costs to students of a VCU education
- The VCU Libraries does not purchase textbooks for its collections, but a study in spring 2017 indicated that the library system owns around 9% of the library materials used in the 100 courses with the highest enrollment at VCU. Survey data indicates that most faculty are not aware of options for free and reduced-cost course materials, but the data also indicates that faculty do consider cost an important factor in choosing course materials, and will take advantage of less expensive options if they are aware of them.
- It will be difficult to eliminate purchased textbooks entirely, especially for instruction in arts and humanities.
- Because of the high costs of textbooks, students adopt a variety of ways to mitigate the cost, including not buying the textbook at all, seeking out older editions, or even dropping the course, all of which can negatively impact student performance and success.
- School of Dentistry regularly reviews its course content with the liaison librarian to ensure it uses the most efficient and cost effective course materials possible. Other departments do this, as well.
- The need for off-site storage, which is critical, will require staff to manage the facility.

VCU's libraries and their environment in five years: what might we look like and how might we get there? Topics covered included:

- possible futures for health sciences library
- meeting demand for space at Cabell Library
- operation and features of an off-site storage facilities
- VCU's engagement with new avenues for dissemination scholarly studies and findings
- how faculty choose and use textbooks
- other issues pertinent to the future of VCU's libraries

This portion of the meeting involved a lively dialogue on the above referenced topics. The following points were discussed:

- Though not yet certain, it appears that proposed construction of a two new clinical care towers on the MCV Campus will require relocating Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences. It's possible that the VCU Libraries will need to vacate TML by summer 2019 as part of that planning.
- If TML must relocate, its collections likely will move to a different location than its "programmed space", the space dedicated to student and faculty academic work, library offices, processing, and minimal collections. VCU Libraries, VCU Facilities Management, and VCU Health are exploring options that include the former Children's Pavilion and the Museum of the Confederacy.
- The use of the expanded Cabell Library has exceeded expectations and it's already out of student work space during parts of the semester. The only short-term solution is to relocate some collections into off-site storage and repurpose collections space for student academic work space.

- The MCV Campus provides almost no space dedicated to collaborative work between students and faculty, or between faculty on the MCV Campus and faculty on the Monroe Park Campus.
- Committee members expressed interest in helping VCU Libraries in its work the hold down increases in costs for journal subscription bundles with Elsevier and other publishers.
- The chief measure of value for many journals (and related products) is the count of journal article downloads. Downloads are a poor surrogate for actual use, and further, place the VCU Libraries in the position of negotiating based on data and value propositions provided by the publisher, clearly disadvantageous to the library system. We definitely need better ways to determine the actual use of materials accessed online.
- ARL membership is a wonderful distinction, but ARL does not provide assistance or advantage in working with journal publishers.
- Because of its relationships in various consortia, including VIVA, VCU Libraries has enjoyed a strong bargaining position that has helped keep some price increases below national averages.
- Most research libraries are working on better ways to assist faculty in publishing in open access. Canada and Europe have been creative and assertive in this effort, but U.S. research libraries have been strong in this work too.
- It is critical to let faculty know what is being purchased, its cost, and how they might consider these costs in their publishing decisions.
- ARL advocates on behalf of its membership, and presents a visible and respected library voice in developing Federal and state policies and legislation related, especially for open access to the results of research funded by taxpayer dollars. ARL is not a lobbying organization and is restricted in what it can do in that respect, but it does assist other organizations that have a more explicit lobbying mission around these issues.
- Reducing the number of downloads does not reduce the cost of the subscription. It only raises the cost per download, since the same price is distributed over fewer downloads.
- Student academic work space, including study space, remains limited across both campuses. Right now, the libraries can create more space only by relocating collections off-site and repurposing space formerly used for collections.
- 10 minutes between classes will stay the norm because to expand it to 15 would necessitate more classrooms and more faculty.
- If TML is displaced by a new clinical building, any temporary facility must be replaced in the near term with a permanent, purpose-built health sciences library. One possible location is in the area of McGuire Hall. Most of the space in a new library will reflect the vision embraced by the new Cabell Library: open, light-filled academic work space for students and faculty. A new health sciences library also will provide spaces that meet distinctive MCV Campus needs, such a space for faculty collaborators from both campuses, event spaces for lectures and symposia in the health sciences, a makerspace designed for the health sciences community, and the like.
- It's not possible to know which students are using library space at any given time, because the VCU Libraries does not collect information on the users of its spaces. For instance, students and faculty from the MCV Campus clearly use Cabell Library (scrubs are occasionally spotted in Cabell), but we cannot know how many, how often, or for what purpose.

Mr. Ulmschneider introduced Karen Cary as the new Interim Associate University Librarian for Collections with the retirement of John Duke, whose last day in the office is today.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 pm.