VCU Libraries Advisory Committee  
Cabell Room, James Branch Cabell Library, February 5, 2015  
Minutes

Attending  
Meredith Baines, David Burton, Corey Davis, MaryBeth DeMarco, Jose Dula (chair), Les Harrison, Cheng Ly, Whitney Newcomb, Valerie Robnolt, Leigh Small, Jeremy Stultz, Kenneth Warren, Keith Zirkle

Absent with notice  
Matt Bogenschutz, Lelia Brinegar, Jennifer Roudabush

Absent  
Frank Gulla, Faye Prichard, Kayla Scott

Staff: Kathy Bradshaw, Dennis Clark, John Duke, Jeanne Hammer, Teresa Knott, John Ulmschneider, Pam Fraga (recording secretary)

Business

Review and approval of agenda  
The agenda was approved as presented.

Review and approval of minutes from November 2015  
The minutes were approved as presented.

Mr. Ulmschneider welcomed members to the Spring Semester and reported that the new building is open, with a very positive reception by students. He noted that the 4th floor graduate and faculty study space is especially embraced by its intended user base. The dedication of the new building will be March 15th; members of the Committee will receive invitations shortly.

Status of relocation of DVD and CD collection into Cabell Library  
Mr. Clark than reported on the relocation of the DVD and CD collection. He reminded the Committee of the previous discussion about moving this collection out of Cabell. Based on feedback from faculty and students who use or wanted to use these items, and the discussion in the VLAC, the collection has been brought back to Cabell and is available on site. The compact CD’s were not brought back and Mr. Clark noted that overall, this collection is not growing as the use of streaming audio services increases. Mr. Ulmschneider added that increased use of services like Kanopy and SWANK (film based streaming services) is steadily eroding, though not eliminating, the use of onsite DVDs.

Reports and Discussion

Elsevier contract renewal negotiations – PowerPoint  
Mr. Ulmschneider reviewed data previously shared with VLAC about the size and scope of the Elsevier collection and the anticipated growth of Elsevier costs going forward. He told the Committee that the current contract with Elsevier expires on December 31, 2016, so the consortium holding the contract must either negotiated a new contract well in advance of that date, or decide not to renew the consortium contract. Elsevier reports that it has steadily added and enhanced content, but the consortium members need to verify this independently and decide whether the new content strengthens the case for renewal. While the consortium has met twice (VCU is the lead on this issue), no conclusions have been reached.
yet. The consortium members acknowledge that it is very difficult to replace the purchasing power and content access of the existing contract with individual purchases.

**Electronic theses and dissertations embargoes: whether, why, how long** – handout

Mr. Ulmschneider referred to handouts that illustrated embargo options at VCU and embargo policies at other institutions. He reported that the VCU Graduate School is revisiting its position with regard to ETDs and that the VCU Libraries, as the archival agent for ETDs, does have input into changes. He has attended two meetings with the Graduate School, and others in the VCU Libraries have also provided input to the Graduate School. There are a wide range of perspectives on this issue from faculty and graduate students across VCU. Input from VLAC, as a representative body of the university faculty and students, will be helpful when this topic is discussed again.

Currently at VCU, students may request an embargo, and the embargo can be instituted with the approval of the advisor. Because the embargo is handled by the student and advisor, the reasoning for each embargo request varies widely and often isn’t known to the Graduate School or the VCU Libraries. Three embargo periods are available to students, including a permanent embargo that bars access to the thesis or dissertation forever.

In the extensive discussion which followed, some of the points raised were:

- Length of embargo can be extreme (unlimited) and very difficult to reverse
- In humanities, an embargo may seem short-sighted but might be necessary to protect the research or data in the work
- In business, an embargo seems contrary to the purpose of research, which is to generate and share knowledge.
- Oral defenses are public so the having a work embargoed that has been defended seems useless
- Embargo could be seen as a commercial necessity to protect the information until it can be further developed, e.g., a book created from the dissertation
- There is no practice of embargo in the School of Education
- In medicine, dissertations and theses generally result in papers derived from the original and shared through publication; this is in fact a general expectation
- How dissertations evolve varies by the disciplines producing them
- Theses are more often embargoed at VCU than are dissertations
- VCU has options for much longer embargoes than peer institutions
- Having the dean or his/her delegate sign off on embargoes might be a way to help regulate and make consistent the practice in general
- An embargo doesn’t work for the student, since it keeps her or his work from being known and cited
- One compromise for the permanent embargo is to eliminate the permanent embargo option, but allow renewals of a non-permanent embargo. If an embargo is not renewed at the end of the original embargo period, the work becomes available. This would encourage earlier release of a work and solve the problem of lifting an embargo if the author cannot be found or is deceased.

Mr. Ulmschneider thanked the Committee for their input, perspectives and ideas. He said he would be sharing these with other interested parties, in particular the idea of having the deans involved in the embargo decision and the compromise solution to eliminate permanent embargoes.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.