

University Library Committee Minutes
December 7, 2016, 3:15 pm

Present: Thomas Burr, Magdalena Casper-Shipp, S. J. Chang, Melissa Johnson, Marie Labonville, Alan Lessoff, Dallas Long, Ed Jay Percell, Ed Reitz, Dane Ward, Kathy Webster

Absent: Chelsea Fary, Oguzhan Dincer, Chad Kahl

Guests: Susan Kalter

Meeting was called to order at 3:20pm.

Burr asked if changes to the November meeting minutes were needed. Labonville proposed a few editorial changes, which Burr accepted. The minutes with Labonville's edits were approved.

Burr asked about moving the order of the agenda items. He said he would like to come up with a plan for addressing collection management, perhaps in the form of a motion or resolution from the University Library committee.

Lessoff suggested the committee move to establish a sub-committee or working group to collaborate with librarians and develop a deaccessioning policy and set of procedures. Lessoff said the library lacked "a faculty voice" during previous deaccessioning projects, and this would help everyone move forward. Johnson said she is her school's liaison to the library, and library liaisons might be the more appropriate people to be involved in such an endeavor. Lessoff said he would like to put his money where his mouth is; he voiced concerns, and now he would like to be part of a solution to those concerns. Ward said a group could help ask guiding questions for such an endeavor. Ward said the library needs to be much clearer about why collections are acquired or retained and how these collections meet the needs of research, teaching, and learning.

Burr said there are two levels at play. The library's bigger picture collection philosophy and then the various subject-specific collection development policies that shape each subject librarian's collection management decisions. Johnson said these policies need to be distinct because the needs of the disciplines are very different. She said her subject librarian for the School of Art is very thorough and thoughtful in making collection management decisions.

Burr offered that we start with reviewing the collection philosophy. Should the philosophy be revised? Opened up for further conversation? The library's collection development coordinator, Chad Buckley, did not develop the collection philosophy with faculty input – only the librarians' input. Johnson pointed out that Burr's suggestion felt like a very top-down approach. She thought any discussions should start with the disciplines. Lessoff suggested that each subject librarian be invited to present and discuss their policies for their subject areas. Ward said the current subject-specific collection development policies probably aren't very explicit about deaccessioning; their focus is on new materials to be acquired.

Webster asked what the librarians' questions are. What do they need to know from the faculty in order to manage the collections better? If they need to work with the departments to do this, then maybe the sub-committee that Lessoff proposed should be committees that are within each department, working with their librarians.

Purcell said he wondered if the departments really need to provide input into the overarching collection philosophy. The faculty can ask questions, but managing the library's collections is the librarians' purview. Ward referenced Purcell's framework that was included in the previous month's meeting minutes. The framework could be used as model for establishing a collecting policy. Purcell pointed out that he hesitated to use the word policy and chose the word "framework" deliberately.

Burr wanted to ensure we were on the same page regarding terminology. The philosophy is a guiding set of principles. A framework is an intermediary step.

Lessoff said he wants something constructive to come out of the University Library committee meetings. We need a product. Why not let us provide input if the librarians want input? Charge a group to review the deaccessioning policies and make recommendations. Johnson said that is the librarians' job.

Burr returned to the concept of top/down and bottom/up. He said Lessoff's proposal is still on the table. He asked if any member wanted to second Lessoff's motion. The motion was not seconded.

Lessoff said no one is going to force anyone to do anything, but faculty objected to the library's past and current deaccessioning practices so why should we not help review the policies and provide some constructive solutions?

Burr asked how many committees echoed Lessoff's position. Johnson said the committee members are the ones to open up dialog rather than the ones to create policy. Burr clarified that Lessoff's proposal is to recommend rather than to create policy. Purcell disagreed; the collection philosophy is only the library's domain. He referred to Ward once saying the collection philosophy is translated into action by the subject librarians. Burr said the six academic colleges have a vested interest in how the librarians manage the collections.

Ward said Lessoff's group could ask questions about the collection philosophy. The questions could filter out to the departments and generate discussion between faculty and their subject librarians. In the end, the library will have a more robust collection philosophy and subject-specific collection development policies.

Lessoff said the fireworks over the IRMA Annex relocation during Dean Wastawy's administration have demanded conversations. This is a political issue in regards to the standing of the librarians on equal footing with the faculty. Someone has to be responsible if this process is to be marshalled. Ward said the context of collections has changed since the IRMA Annex relocation because of the library's patrons having different preferences in formats and because of budget priorities and constraints.

Burr asked Long to read his notes of Lessoff's proposal again. Afterwards, Burr offered a friendly amendment to the proposal that the sub-committee include departments' liaisons to the library. Webster reiterated that such an endeavor should take place wholly within the departments and between the departments' faculty members and their subject librarians.

Burr proposed that the committee re-read the collection philosophy, invite Chad Buckley to a future meeting, and ask questions and offer points that may need to be clarified. Lessoff reiterated his substantive concern over the librarians' lacking faculty input into the philosophy. Lessoff needed to step out of the meeting for 15-20 minutes, and Burr tabled the issue until Lessoff was able to rejoin the meeting. In the meantime, Burr reminded the committee of Dincer's statement at a previous meeting

that the library should be able to force the departments to include subject librarians in some kind of meetings with the faculty. Burr said we should reframe that thought a bit to ask why some departments don't invite their subject librarians. They may not be satisfied with their subject librarians.

Reitz asked whether the librarians all go to faculty meetings. He pointed out that the nursing librarian is a regular and expected participant in many meetings at Mennonite College of Nursing. Ward said there are three models: an embedded librarian fully involved with the department's activities, such as the nursing librarian, or the subject librarian is invited to attend occasional faculty meetings for specific purposes, or no face-to-face meetings with the faculty as a whole and interaction occurs on individual bases.

Someone asked whether the committee should facilitate a survey about the librarians. Could we do a survey of the department chairs' perceptions? Burr asked Long whether he and Kahl could accomplish this during one of the regular Department Chairs/School Directors' Council meetings, which Long and Kahl regularly attend. Long said he suspected not, as those meetings have little opportunity for discussion and tend to be informational with university administrators providing information to the chairs about topics like admissions. Burr offered to go talk to the chairs himself. Long was not sure candid feedback would be received.

Ward suggested it may be more helpful to find out what chairs or faculty would like to discuss with librarians. "What do you believe we should be talking about? Technology? What spaces do you need?" Casper-Shipp said we should get back to the committee's original charge, which is focused on communication between the faculty and the library.

Labonville suggested the committee review the collection philosophy together. Burr suggested the committee go through the collection philosophy at the January meeting and then decide if we think it is sufficient as is or if departments need to look at it through the context of their disciplines or if the philosophy needs a much wider look.

Burr suggested we do a deep-dive into the collection philosophy and develop questions. What do we want to know from the departments?

Burr set the next meeting for January 13th, 2017 at 3:15pm.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.