**Library Committee**

**Report for 2013-14**

During 2013-14 the Library Committee met regularly and discussed a variety of topics relevant for the operation of the libraries and their function as a central component of the College.

The main issues that have been the focus of our meetings are:

1. Continued progress on completing the new Sawyer and Stetson renovation projects, including scheduling of the move and impacts on College operations
2. Budget for the library and allocation of funds to various activities and development of the collection
3. The growing role of “open access” outlets for creative scholarship in general and for scholarship produced by Williams faculty and students, including the potential implications for the budget and operation of the Library
4. Plans for academic year 2014-15, including opening of the new Stetson-Sawyer and the coordinated “Book Unbound” initiative

**Stetson-Sawyer Project:**

The Committee toured the new library construction site twice to assess the rate of progress on the project and to help us envision the development of this important new resources for the College. In the fall, the committee provided some feedback on furnishings for the new library.

**Along with the rest of the College community, we are excited about the new library facility and the role it can play in the intellectual life of the College. The project remains on track.**

One complication in the use of current Sawyer Library is the necessity to close the building for nearly a month this summer to facilitate the move of collections into the new building. Sawyer will close immediately following Reunion on June 16 and will remain closed through mid-July. The Committee brainstormed about how to most effectively communicate this closing to the campus community, including summer research students. The fact that Schow Science Library and Interlibrary Loan services will remain operational throughout the summer, as usual, will help address summer library needs. It is anticipated that the new library will open on or about July 21 to allow time for adjusting to the new building before fall classes begin. All building elements other than the faculty offices will become available in that mid-July time frame. Faculty moving into Stetson will do during the second week of June. A formal dedication of new Sawyer Library is being planned in conjunction with Convocation on Saturday, September 20, 2014.

**Budget:**

Robin Kibler, Head of Collection Management, presented the proposed FY14 budget for the libraries’ departmental and program acquisitions to the committee during the fall semester. The cost of serials continues to be the largest source of expenditures for collection acquisition and a major concern for the library. Projections for FY 2014 were that serials would require 84% of the acquisition budget, up from 82% in the preceding fiscal year.

The total budget for acquisitions for FY 2014 is $2,489,776. While this figure exceeds the 2009 fiscal year budget and is within $20,000 of the figure spent in FY 2008, adjusting for inflation indicates that current spending remains more than $259,000 – or about 10% - below the 2008 level. Returning to FY 2008 funding levels and compensating for the effects of inflation will require a serials budget on the order of $2,750,000 for FY 2015.

**The committee is very concerned about the shortfall in the serials and monograph budgets and recommends that the College look to restore the budget for this essential resource to pre-crisis levels as soon as possible. Much contemporary scholarship appears in serials, and if Williams is to continue providing best-in-class undergraduate education then students and faculty must have access to this scholarship.**

The committee reviewed the libraries’ budget for acquisitions and other broad activity areas. The committee recommended increasing the request for the laptop and tablet computer check-out service available at the library, reasoning that the demand for this service was likely to increase over time, particularly with the integration of OIT help desk in the new Stetson-Sawyer.

The committee also discussed the library proposal to increase three LSF positions from term to permanent positions, along with other aspects of the LSF. The operation of the LSF appears to be working well and is likely to play an important role in managing, storing, and making the collection available in a timely manner to students and faculty. The committee strongly endorsed making these essential staff positions permanent.

**Open Access**:

The development of “open access” outlets for scholarly publication has become important both as a source of new scholarship for students and faculty and as an outlet for the creative scholarship produced at Williams.

The defining characteristic of open access as a means of distributing scholarship is that the work is available at no cost to the reader apart from having access to a device that can find and display or reproduce the work in the appropriate format. Many scholars find this attractive since it makes their work available to a wide (literally global) audience and may allow the work to become available to this audience more rapidly than would be possible through conventional publication.

Students find this attractive because they are able to search for and gain access to creative works without having to worry about the cost to them personally, or about whether the library maintains a subscription or purchases the monograph.

Libraries find this attractive because they welcome any sort of competition in the serials (and to a lesser extent monograph) market that might help contain the spiraling cost of subscriptions, and because publicizing and facilitating use of open access scholarship enables them to better serve their communities and institutions by bringing a wide range of creative work from around the world to the attention of faculty, students and other library users.

Some academic libraries – for example Duke – have made support for open-access publication a central component of their activities. It is helpful to review the extensive resources presented at:

<http://library.duke.edu/research/openaccess> .

Support for open-access should certainly include providing information to faculty and students about open-access publication of scholarship and open-access sources for new research results.

As noted above, part of the attraction of open-access publication is the hope that it might help to moderate the increasing price of journal subscriptions to libraries. While this is certainly possible, we noted in our discussion that editing manuscript submissions, running web sites, and other activities of open-access publishers cannot in general be done for free. In place of subscription fees, many open-access publishers require substantial fees from authors in order to consider a manuscript for publication and/or fees for publication after the work has been accepted. While the reduction in subscription fees will help library budgets, if the costs are simply transferred to submission fees and page charges that must come out of already meager faculty research budgets, the savings to the College may not be as large as could be hoped. The Duke website referenced above includes information about **an initiative to assist faculty with covering the costs of submitting or publishing through open-access publishers, and we recommend examination of this and consideration of developing a similar program at Williams.**

Many departments at Williams are already making scholarship of faculty available via academic outlets for research papers or via their department web sites. We were encouraged to learn about and see in May the unveiling of the Williams “Unbound” initiative. This collaboration between the library and Office of Instructional Technology will host and catalog a variety of creative scholarship produced at Williams, and make the work available to students, faculty and, when possible, interested people from outside of Williams. The committee felt this initiative has great potential and recommend continued support and development, especially inclusion of work from more than just a handful of departments at the College.

**Future Agenda items for 2014-15:**

The committee commends some items to the attention of next year's library committee:

* Assess the functioning of the new Stetson-Sawyer facilities, including the integration of OIT services into the library and the implications for library services. This might be facilitated by occasional joint meetings between the library committee and the Information Technology committee.
* Review proposed budgets and allocations, with particular emphasis on restoring collection budgets to “pre-crisis” levels. This might be facilitated by direct communication with Committee on Priorities and Resources.
* Consider recommending a formal policy of supporting the costs associated with faculty making their work available through open source publication.

**Library Committee Members:** Stephen Sheppard, Duane Bailey, Ondine Chavoya, Dave Pilachowski, Dinny Taylor, Bob Volz, Chris Winters, David Gaines, Logan Lawson, Ben Nathan and Adam Wiener.

Reported by Stephen Sheppard, Chair.