Notes from the Library Committee

September 25, 2014

Present: Amanda Wilcox (Chair), Dave Pilachowski (Director of Libraries), Jochebed Bogunjoko, Griffith Simon, Brent Heeringa, Eric Knibbs, Dinny Taylor, Chris Winters

Absent: Ben Nathan, Quinn Pitcher, Bob Volz

We began the meeting with personal introductions and the introduction of two issues that AW, as chair, hopes the committee will take up for consideration this year.

* The first of these is further educating ourselves about the library’s digital commons, called “Unbound,” and then educating other constituencies about this resource, and intelligently promoting its use and development—paying particular attention to faculty education and encouragement, but also encouraging students to explore how Unbound may be useful to them. AW hopes to devote all or most of a meeting later in the year to a discussion of this topic.
* The second issue is dual—the perennial, and perennially pressing, question of what resources the library acquires and how it promotes and maintains access to those materials. So, for short, **acquisitions and access**. AW would like to devote most of our time this year to thoughtful consideration of how the library can continue providing excellent access to as broad and deep a range of resources as are within the College’s means, through careful cultivation of its traditional and digital collections. This topic should be at the forefront of our thinking as we go forward, and we will devote time to it over the course of the year. AW asked all members of the committee to begin by thinking about which of the library’s resources they currently use, and how they access them.

Then AW turned the meeting over to DP, who brought us up to speed with observations on issues that are currently preoccupying the library staff and its users, as we all acclimate to the new Sawyer.

These building-related issues include

* Work on the building, such as wiring projectors, is ongoing, particularly in the CET.
* Occupancy levels: The students are using the library as study and meeting space in greater numbers than expected—this is a good thing! Over time, clearer patterns may emerge in terms of more and less busy times of day and spaces within the library.
* Noise levels: In the new library’s floor plan, study spaces are very close to more public spaces, where students consult with staff. Library staff member are finding that students are *very* interested in keeping the library quiet.
* Another noise issue: The hand dryers in the men’s room on the main floor are noisy enough to disturb people working in the reading room there. (DT mentioned a similar issue in Hollander, when that building was new. The hand dryers ended up being removed.)
* “Camping out” in group study rooms: The new library has 16 study rooms, and currently there is no system for reserving them. It’s possible that some of the rooms will become reservable, in order to make use of the space more equitable. We talked about how a reservation system might work, including the use of tablets mounted immediately outside the rooms that could instantly record reservations and cancellations, and a more low tech way of managing the problem that is currently in use in Schow library, where half an hour after a space goes dark (because it is not occupied), library staff removes the belongings that were left to mark the camper’s claim on the space.

Student members of the committee raised several other issues to do with usage and the unfinished state of the building—namely, the possibility that the vending area on the lower floor of the library could become a café, if Dining Services and the library received the increases in staffing that would be necessary to make a café feasible, and the question of whether the walls that divide study rooms on the south side of the building may be missing their top element, with the result that sound travels too freely from one room to another.

DP noted two additional issues that he plans to bring to the committee this year for their consultation.

* First, the library’s plans for addressing the need to stream feature length films for use in course reserves. At present, the library licenses a limited number of streamed videos via an agreement with a distributor called Swank Motion Pictures (<http://www.swank.com/>). In-house screening is a joint initiative between OIT and the library, and so far the impediments to implementing a satisfactory solution have been legal, rather than technological. DP will keep us apprised as the library and OIT continue to work on this issue.
* Secondly, it is time to update FRANCIS, the integrated library system. There are two options, either signing on for a new version of FRANCIS, which has a very different look and feel from the current software, or signing on with a different software provider entirely. DP has commissioned a committee of library staff members to explore the options. This is a major decision, which will have a 10 to 15 year impact on everyone who uses the library, both patrons and staff.

Then we headed out for a tour of the new library, including the Chapin Rare Books Library and the CET. We were joined in the CET by Jonathan Morgan-Leamon, who showed us around.

We adjourned at approximately 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Wilcox