

University Library Committee Minutes
March 8, 2017, 3:15 pm

Present: Thomas Burr, S. J. Chang, Oguzhan Dincer, Melissa Johnson, Alan Lessoff, Dallas Long, Ed Reitz, Kathy Webster

Absent: Chad Kahl, Marie Labonville, Jay Percell, Dane Ward

Guests: Susan Kalter

Meeting was called to order at 3:20pm.

Burr passed out copies of the agenda, the compiled responses to library administration's responses to the collection philosophy questions, and the questions to be asked to departmental faculty. Burr asked if he had sent copies of last month's meeting minutes for members to review. Few people had seen the meeting minutes, so the minutes were not approved. Burr said he would resend the meeting minutes.

Burr asked whether his practice of anonymizing the comments he receives from members needs to continue. "Does it serve a purpose for us or not?" Members agreed that anonymity is not required moving forward.

Burr suggested to Long that Library Administration assemble a packet of documents including the collection philosophy, the collection development policy, withdrawal policy, and any other guiding documents associated with collection management. Make sure these documents harmonize with each other. Bring revised documents back to the ULC as a packet at a fall semester meeting.

Burr asked the ULC members to read his handouts. Based on the feedback or questions ULC members are giving to Library Administration on the collection philosophy, what are the central questions that the librarians should address as they revise documents?

Johnson said some departments do not communicate well with their liaison librarians, and this difficulty is the fundamental source of confusion when large-scale projects like IRMA are undertaken.

Lessoff said "What are we talking about as the vision for this library?" There is a misunderstanding on ULC as to what its members are arguing for. What does the university's R2 status really mean for us? What does a library serving an R2 institution need to accomplish? They need to define this, and that will result in the articulation of a vision. The tone of that vision will influence the philosophy and language of the library's guiding documents. Maybe the overall paradigm for how the library administrators and librarians see their work and the way they approach their work needs to change. Does the current paradigm make sense for an R2, and if not, what could or should the library do about it?

Lessoff appreciated the attention to databases, e-books, and other digital materials. He said, "How do we continuously teach research methods to our students in an effective way, given changes in technologies and students' changing information behaviors?"

There was a suggestion that the administrators' response still seemed defensive. The collections-related documents will need to be proactive and not reactive.

Long was asked about the status of NIU and SIUC's libraries, since those institutions are also classified as R2s. Long said he believed NIU and SIUC's libraries are not as effective as Milner because he has heard they have been facing declining budgets, lack as much institutional support, and have staffing levels that may not be able to support the libraries' missions.

Burr asked whether ULC members perceive Illinois State moving toward expectations of greater scholarly and creative productivity. He noted that CTLT has more staff than does RSP, which signified to him that teaching is still more important than is research. Members did generally feel there is added pressure to produce more research. Dincer explained briefly the economics that make higher research expectations almost a necessity for institutions with declining state support and greater competition for student enrollment.

It was suggested that Milner think about what's happening at the campus and consider how the library should respond. Don't look to the R2 comparators exclusively. Instead of talking about the problems we face, how can we be the best R2 that we can be?

There was agreement that the library should start with the university's R2 classification. Encourage the librarians to articulate what they think is good about the library and how the library does and should support an R2 institution.

Johnson asked whether there are overarching mission statements for the library's services, spaces, etc. as well as the collections.

Overall mission statement needs to tie in to the university's mission statement and guide the library's departments or service areas. Have the members seen the library's current mission statement? Long confirmed Milner does have one.

Webster referred to Ward's power point presentation. Milner has a vision already of what it will be. Lessoff said he was concerned about the service orientation – would like this to be more aspirational. Instead of "how we serve the university" to "what we think should happen."

Chang said he wanted the committee to remember that Illinois State's classification describes it as a "very high undergraduate" institution. He thought perhaps the questions being asked are too long-term. He said that over the years Illinois State has chosen not to become an R1. We need to be realistic.

Johnson asked who the 28 other libraries who are like us, as identified in the library administration's responses? Aspirational comparator libraries should also be identified and considered.

There was a request to make the conspectuses for each subject area publicly available.

Burr wanted to turn attention to his next agenda item. In summary, the members identified several major themes arising for the librarians to consider as the collection documents are revised:

- 1) Improve communication between departments and librarians
- 2) Reconsider the paradigm of a service-focused, primarily undergraduate serving library and think about the library's purpose and the work of the librarians against the context of R2 institutions
- 3) As part of the above, reconsider the "steady state" assumption in the collection documents themselves
- 4) Articulate a longer-term vision for the library in the context of an R2 institution

- 5) Emphasize that librarians and departmental faculty must collaborate – the future of the library is a concern shared by all of us.

Burr turned the discussion to the questions intended for faculty. He said Ward and Kahl liked the idea that the University Library Committee would do some research with 2-5 other faculty members regarding their relationships with and perspectives on the library. The members agreed that they would like to interview their colleagues using these questions as a guide. However, the group decided they would use only 2-5 questions. Burr suggested using a sample method from the social sciences, and the ULC members should interview colleagues they don't know, most likely in other departments. He suggested they invite people out for coffee and have a conversation. The committee members decided that they would spend the April meeting reviewing the questions more closely and narrowing their choices. They would undertake interviewing their colleagues in the Fall semester.

Kalter reminded Burr that his term and Labonville's terms on the ULC are ending, and they will need to state their interest for returning.

Burr set the next meeting for April 12th, 2017 at 3:15pm.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.