

## STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE LIBRARY COMMITTEE

I view faculty committees which work with our staff and administration as fulfilling two roles. One is to provide advice when solicited, which is the most common role. Another is to think about actions which faculty may reasonably take to advance the mission of the unit in question, actions such as lobbying the higher administration, publicizing initiatives to our colleagues and students, coordinating with academic programs, and reaching out beyond campus with a unified faculty voice.

In this light, I propose that the next meeting of the library committee focus on strategic planning, with a "brainstorming" tenor. We should generate plenty of ideas and discussion. In subsequent meetings, we can decide which if any actions are ones we would like to follow up on, more carefully evaluating costs, outcomes and general merits of our ideas. Brainstorming like this means taking our focus away from immediate concerns, but it can keep us fresh and perhaps generate some ideas with real impact - a useful exercise on a once-a-year basis.

Given that our library faces such severe budget constraints, one might question what such an exercise might be worth. First, as you can see below, part of the strategizing can and should involve ways to improve the budget situation, in the long term. But also, some creativity and faculty perspective might prove helpful in addressing questions like "how do we retain and recruit top-quality librarians given our noncompetitive salaries?" After all, we have been answering this question ourselves in recruiting new faculty all the time.

Below are some areas I have thought about in asking the basic questions: how can our library, in partnership with faculty, continue to improve in its service to the U of O community? My reflections are fairly disjoint from the library's thoughtful planning document, in part simply because those ideas are already on the table and in part because I would like to focus more on areas where some faculty perspective and/or legwork would be of use. Note as well that the payoff of some of these ideas might be more long-term. I strongly encourage others on the committee to contribute, so we have a wealth of ideas to discuss before picking some narrow foci for our energies.

**0.1. Better utilizing current resources.** It is probably fair to say that Scholars' Bank is currently underutilized. As a committee we could take on the task of seeing this impressive intellectual architecture put to use. In mathematics, for example, Scholars' Bank could be used for people to share teaching materials (since, unlike some other departments, we tend to teach different courses from year to year). Other departments might find it a good place to highlight undergraduate work.

- Form a subcommittee to envision a wide variety of uses for Scholars' Bank.
- Use committee members as well as library staff to survey faculty, with a goal of at least one person from each department, to determine which of these uses should be encouraged.
- Implement strategies to encourage use. Would we even want a default of: if it is on your web page or otherwise publicly available, some staff will put it on Scholars's Bank (so that for example our research output is in one place and can be measured).

**0.2. Reducing costs.** One area of great cost increase has been journals, in particular in the sciences. The library's only recourse has been to cut titles. Since these journals contain content mostly generated by faculty, we (broadly) have the power to put pressure on publishers or ultimately move to venues which are of much less cost. This has been happening to some extent in mathematics, as well as other fields, but has still not reached "critical mass." Given the current role of peer-reviewed publication in promotion and tenure, and the fact that even "free" journals cost money to operate, one can argue that movements

to make material freely available is not as helpful as moving high-profile journals to low-cost publication venues. Some possible actions.

- Encourage U of O faculty on editorial boards to address the cost issues by buying out some of their teaching (for one quarter say, if taken on within the next five years) so they can either move a journal to a low-cost venue or create an alternative low-cost journal.
- Communicate with faculty at other campuses to encourage them to do the same. One means could be by passing a motion to this effect in our senate, and then to encourage other campuses to adopt similar motions.
- While we're talking about publication cost, perhaps a similar buy-out could be awarded for producing low-cost alternative textbooks, possibly building on existing open-source texts. Perhaps some partnerships can be brokered - with some central repositories, we could see open-source texts (and wiki-texts, etc) grow well beyond the isolated existing cases. Adopting such texts would be a huge relief for our students.

**0.3. Increasing profile and revenues.** The library has been fortunate in its ability to fundraise as part of Campaign Oregon. Ultimately, however, either a \$100M endowment is needed, or the funding within the university budget, ultimately controlled by the state, needs to increase dramatically.

One problem the university, and thus the library, ultimately faces is that our interface with the state is mainly through our students, and perhaps secondarily through our athletic programs. The broader citizenry of our state does not think about our academic mission with any frequency. Our library, as well as those of other OUS campuses, have as part of their mission to serve the general public. As a matter of cultivating some public good-will in the long term through reaching out more people in an academic way, perhaps we can make some of these resources more available, especially on-line resources.

- Continue to push for library fundraising to be a priority at the conclusion of Campaign Oregon. Look for opportunities for faculty to help.
- Create an online interface for the library and university aimed at general citizens. This could combine Google-like searches and an interface with the Library's catalog with tools that give more immediate access for those looking for Oregon-specific information, such as high-school students or people working on genealogy projects. One could envision an "Ask the U of O" feature, prominent featuring of research accomplishments at the university, a link to Inside Oregon, etc. Partnering with other OUS campuses might make such a project more workable.

**0.4. Anticipating future needs.** Anyone who spends significant time on the web has noticed a marked increase in the presence of video. Cheap data storage, streaming and video production technologies make routine what five years ago would have seemed impossible. In our University, the library and IT areas are integrated, which can be a great advantage. So this is an appropriate forum to consider ways in which communication by video can be supported.

- How, if at all, do we want to facilitate storage of video material to be used for academic purposes? (How does this work currently within Scholars' Bank, for example)?
- What resources are already available? What partnerships are ripe for cultivation? For example, the Oregon Sports Network has indicated a willingness to share their studio facilities. Could we already be in a position for example to have newscasts and interviews associated to the Oregon Daily Emerald?
- How might the use of video touch on the rest of the library's mission and strategic plan? For example, the possibilities with a new on-line interface for the general public are endless.

**0.5. Attracting and retaining skilled personnel.** To be brash, it is pathetic that our librarians have in the recent past been paid less than their counterparts at other OUS institutions such as Southern Oregon.

Though the situation has improved, it is unlikely that by pay alone we can continue to attract and retain the level of library staff which we have come to appreciate.

- Form a subcommittee to, in a very informal and low-key way, interview a few library staff to talk about issues of recruitment and retention.
- Explore opportunities which might benefit both library staff and faculty, such as programs to encourage staff and faculty to do (a modicum of) teaching or research together.