

Library and Media Services Advisory Group  
February 22, 2011, 11:40 a.m.

Present: Paul Fischer , Terri Fishel, Angi Faiks, Brian Longley, Clay Steinman , Dave Collins Jacki Betsworth , Lynn Hudson ,Nadia Stennes-Spidahl

Agenda:

## Review of and response to External Review

1. Overview: Attendees commented that the review was good, well-balanced, and very positive.
2. Student Employment
  - The student employment financial solution offered is not viable – at Mac, we are not able to transfer funds from the S.E. (Student Employment) budget to pay professional staff. This suggestion may indicate reviewers' lack of familiarity with federal guidelines for funding; at least one of their colleges does not utilize student employees. The point that we should re-examine student staffing is still valid. The sheer number of students employed has a huge impact on staff and services.
  - **Point for response:** We need to have more staffing support so we can do more outreach.
  - Regarding comments about consolidation of points of service – if the only reason for the suggestion is to reduce the number of students employed, this suggestion may not be useful. S.E. continually encourages us to take on more employees. Group comment: reference desk students cannot always answer users' questions and must have a librarian available to them.
  - The report did not talk about whether there was enough work for all students. A secondary goal of the college and the library is to give real work training and skills exposure to students. We need to remember that there is purposeful scheduled redundancy because Public Services areas need to have backups in case of absence. All students will not be busy at all times.
3. Allocation of Workload
  - The report repeatedly says that we should match special expertise to tasks and make sure those people have time to use their specialized skills. General tasks should be allocated according to people's available time and level of training.
  - **Point for response:** We are stretched at both ends. We have hired people with specific skills to perform specialized work that suits their training, but we have also utilized portions of their time in other areas of need. We feel this purposeful cross-training and staffing is beneficial to the library's mission.
4. First Year Classes
  - "Tailor first year classes more strongly toward their class" – this suggestion might not be realistic. The library holds many as 35 first year sessions in a semester; some classes' content changes annually. Originally, five reference librarians taught them all. We currently use an expanded teaching group of 10 librarians. We develop common curriculum to give all first years a common first year session experience. We add custom detail during follow-

up sessions, senior seminars, and methodology courses. Statistically, Macalester's number of reference librarians on staff ranks in the lowest quartile of the Oberlin consortium.

- The Advisory Committee feels that the invitation to first years offered in each first year session is its primary component. All general info offered may not be relevant at the exact time it is delivered, but we don't want to tailor the focus so that we lose the feeling of access for students, who are often already overwhelmed with information. We view it as a solid introduction to the library, which is a good thing to offer.
- Students hear the information once or many times, depending on their field(s) of study. A third of last fall's students had a second session which was more tailored to class themes. It provided continuity and greater depth. Not every class has that component.
- **Point for evaluation:** The report raises a valid point – we should once again identify our learning outcomes. Does the first year course have the learning goals that we want to teach to? We need to articulate that info and share it with the faculty.

#### 5. Outreach / Events

- The Advisory Committee was surprised that reviewers discouraged National Library Week celebrations and other outreach efforts. Though NLW began in the public libraries, several schools in our consortium have joined in its celebration. It does not impact our budget or time negatively, and it supports our mission. We believe it builds bridges and support. Connecting academic library tradition with public library tradition helps create a seamless transition for our student users when they leave us and move to public library use.
- **Point for response:** NLW career panels have been successful; we have sent a student to library school annually in recent years.
- **Point for evaluation:** It is useful to restate internally why we do these things – examine the motives, even if we come up with the same outcome.

#### 6. Pay Per View articles – we will look at this option. One outcome might be dropping more subscriptions.

- **Point for response:** We have not cut our journals budget! We have offset increases with funds from the book budget.
- The report assumes too large an annual future budget increase. Our increase will be no more than 2%. We will need to find cuts that best allow us to continue to support our services.

### Surprises? Things they overlooked?

#### 7. Rare Books

- The group thought there would be more discussion about rare books, but the review team mentioned the topic only briefly. The report (P14, bottom) mentions a trend toward collecting more rare books and suggested assigning someone to manage this project. We believe it is a trend for libraries that have large or unique collections that might need special exposure (digitization) or management, and that have staff and space to support it. Our special collection is mainly first editions of books by Midwest writers, some signed by the authors. We do not have a dedicated archivist. We are investigating use of an endowed archival fund to support a sample / teaching book arts collection, and are working to build connections to people and organizations to meet this goal.

- **Point for Response:** We are already short-staffed and have committed to a future project that concerns archiving Mac publications. In our response, we will try to address the challenge of designating staff to special collections.

#### 8. Diversity

- Reviewers did not mention diversity of staff, but our **Point for Response** might include mention of our work to effectively craft job descriptions and positions that draw library professionals from different backgrounds. The profession as a whole is experiencing difficulty in attracting a diverse population.

#### 9. Printing

- Initial data from our 2011 print release project is back; in fewer than 10 days of second semester, one user printed over 700 sheets of paper. Others printed 400 or more sheets.
- Ten percent of print jobs were not released (i.e., actually printed after having been ordered) This new development will generate cost savings.
- Reviewers' recommendation that the college needs to deal with printing issues as a community is correct.

#### 10. Library Hours

- I-Term: the library opened at 8 a.m. vs. our usual 10 a.m. in January 2011. Use stats were low during the early hours; the majority of users were from the neighborhood.
- Closing between Christmas and New Years: Faculty members present don't perceive this as a burning issue and wonder how many voices might be represented in the review team's reference to "some faculty".
- Summer hours: No night/weekend access can be a challenge, but Advisory members feel the current schedule is manageable.
- Increasing regular hours: We live in an urban environment and must include a safety plan in any discussion of increased hours. We need a minimum of 2 staff members present to keep the building open; if we stay open, Campus Center needs to be open ½ hour past our close time to provide safe walk services. Only 5 of the 80 Oberlin libraries are located in cities. Our best comparable Oberlin college in terms of our urban location, Occidental, is open 24x5, with 2 professional staff members present midnight – 7 a.m.
- **Point for evaluation:** Maybe the answer to faculty access concerns is individual communication by liaisons to faculty – offering service and access as needed. (e.g., if we know a library staff member is routinely in the building @ 6 a.m., a liaison could arrange for a faculty member to gain access without opening the entire building.) Advisory reps present felt the library does not necessarily need to offer this service, but it would be great.
- **Questions for evaluation:** Where does the library sit in the big picture of the campus? Is the library the heart of the campus? Should it be? Do we want to be something different from what we are now? Can we afford the extra hours needed to make it happen? We are not currently seen by all as a central core service. We can't change impressions alone – it would have to be a campus priority. The current administrative vision is that there are many "hearts" to the campus. Holding up a single location as the place to be is not a priority. If we could sell the library as the heart of the campus TO the campus, then hours and staffing might follow.

11. Media Services

- The review team reports high levels of satisfaction (p13).
- MS has added hours recently.
- Location of the collection is a complicated issue. We are fully in favor of its move to the library building.
- Brian would be happy to pull together a task force as recommended in the report.

**ACTION:** Advisory members, please send any additional report feedback to Terri at your earliest convenience.

Meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Jacki Betsworth