

## MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES FACULTY:

### MEETING OF FEBRUARY 21, 2014 TO DISCUSS

### THE LIBRARIES AND CURRENT SCIENCE INITIATIVES

Prof. Jack Snyder, chair of the A&S faculty's Policy and Planning Committee, began the meeting shortly after 12:30 pm in 207 Low Library. About 40 people were present during the meeting.

**Introductory remarks.** Prof. Snyder said the first item on the agenda would be discussion of a recent self-study by the Columbia University Libraries/Information Services (CUL/IS), a very long document available in PDF form to any interested faculty through the office of Vice Provost Stephen Rittenberg. James Neal, Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian, would present an overview of the Libraries, and address a response to the self-study from an internal review committee of A&S professors appointed by the provost.

Prof. Snyder noted an article on the Libraries in *Spectator* the day before, which reminded him of the complexity of Columbia's mix of constituencies. The headline was "Seating a Concern for Students." Prof. Snyder asked to hear the faculty's main concerns about the Libraries.

Prof. Snyder noted that past provosts maintained an advisory faculty committee on the Libraries, but this custom has not been followed in recent years. He invited discussion of this situation.

**Presentation from James Neal.** University Librarian James Neal recalled that there was a provostial faculty advisory committee when he came to Columbia in 2001, and for the next 5 years or so. The effort was discontinued by Provost Alan Brinkley. Mr. Neal agreed with the suggestion in the memo from the Internal Review Committee that a vehicle for faculty input was needed in addition to the University Senate Libraries Committee. He strongly supports the idea of setting up a university faculty committee, which he has discussed with Provost Coatsworth. There were also discussions with A&S EVP Nicholas Dirks about appointing a libraries committee in the Arts and Sciences.

Mr. Neal based his talk on a [PowerPoint presentation](#), as well as on a series of [commentaries](#) that he had prepared for the main criticisms of the Libraries in the [memo](#) of the Internal Review Committee, whose members are Molly Murray (English), Timothy Frye (Political Science), and Brent Stockwell (Biological Sciences).

Mr. Neal said Columbia’s Libraries collection ranked 11th among American universities when he arrived. It now ranks 3rd, behind Harvard and Yale. During that span the Libraries have invested heavily in their collections, which include print books, journals (many of them now digital), and special collections that are among the most important in the world.

Internal committee concerns about the Libraries’ commitment to print acquisitions. Mr. Neal said the Internal Review Committee had questioned the commitment of the Libraries to its print collections. He said the Libraries are committed to developing their general academic collections in print, while also expanding access to electronic resources. He offered some numbers on acquisitions of print monographs in some recent three-year periods:

1992-94.....255,819 print monographs.  
2001-03.....230,298  
2008-10.....275,123

In the last 12 months.....98,509, more than in any one of those previous years.

Mr. Neal apologized for the use of the term “legacy print” in the self-study, which he said had been misunderstood and was now banned from the vocabulary of the Libraries. [The memo from the internal committee had quoted the term “legacy analog collections” from the self-study.] He said the term is not meant to refer to general print collections, but to those books (published before 1923, the current cut-off date for copyright in the U.S.) and historical journals that are now accessible electronically. It also refers to sound recordings and films in older formats.

To the suggestion in the internal committee’s memo that the proportion of Libraries expenditures going to electronic publications is too high, MR. Neal responded that 52 percent of the Libraries budget now goes to licensed electronic content—less than for most American academic libraries, which typically commit 60-70 percent for this purpose.

Mr. Neal asked for consideration of the Libraries’ obligation to maintain up-to-date collections in science, engineering, medicine, law and business, whose publications are now almost completely electronic. He said the Libraries have done an outstanding job of managing their funds, so they can continue to make large investments in print books.

*Electronic and multimedia resources.* Mr. Neal outlined the growth and increasing complexity of the electronic and multimedia resources for which the Libraries are now responsible, including video and sound. He said many web sites and documents are here today and gone tomorrow, and libraries need to figure out how to curate them. There are also critical software collections. How can these be preserved? Mr. Neal said the Libraries now have two Mellon grants to help address some of these challenges.

*The Libraries as places.* Mr. Neal listed key locations in the Libraries system, including the three interdisciplinary libraries, the 10 school and departmental libraries, and the special collections.

In more detail, he outlined the origins and workings of the Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP). When it began in 2002, this initiative transferred some 1.8 million print items to an environmentally secure site near Princeton from several inadequate temporary storage spaces that the University had used for its excess capacity during the 1990s. The guidelines for ReCAP, set up in concert with Princeton and the NYPL, and in consultation with Columbia faculty, were to transport volumes that have not circulated for some time (5 years in the sciences, 8 in the humanities), and runs of journals that have become available electronically. Archival material (some 100K boxes) has also been sent to ReCAP. Mr. Neal said there are now some 4.45 million Columbia items at ReCAP. On average the Libraries transfer some 150K print volumes a year—about as many as they add to the Morningside collections in that span.

Internal committee reservations about transfers to ReCAP. Mr. Neal said the Libraries get it about the importance to faculty of keeping the humanities collections on campus. There are no plans for a wholesale transfer of any Butler collections to ReCAP. Librarians are making judicious decisions on what to transfer. They have also brought 19K item back to campus at faculty request over the life of ReCAP.

*Libraries people.* Mr. Neal listed the groups of people working for the Libraries: 317 professional staff, 207 support staff, 250 student employees (per semester), 60 interns (per year).

This workforce is organized in four groups: collections and services; digital programs and technology services; bibliographic services and collections development; and finance, administration, and human resources.

Internal committee unease about Libraries staffing levels. Mr. Neal addressed the conclusion of the internal committee that while staffing levels remained flat at the libraries of peer institutions, Columbia's staff grew 15 percent between FY02 and FY11, with the bulk of the growth in the professional staff. Mr. Neal said he wished that were true.

In 2004 the Libraries added the Barnard libraries, then later the TC libraries and the Burke Library at UTS. In 2006 the Center for New Media Teaching and Learning and the Center for Digital Research and Scholarship (CDRS, or "Cedars") became Libraries units. None of these changes really added new staff, but expanded what Columbia reported to the Association of Research Libraries.

In the financial downturn of 2009, Mr. Neal said, the Libraries reduced their budget by \$3.4 million, and lost 43 full-time positions. These have not been restored. Over the span identified by the internal committee (2002-11), the staff has actually not grown by 15 percent, but shrunk by 6 percent.

*Libraries services.* Mr. Neal gave annual totals for references and consultations, book loans, library classes, and interlibrary loans, but said many of the services the libraries now provides are digital—web visits, database searches, articles downloaded, CLIO searches.

Physical visits to the Libraries increased 25 percent between 2002 and 2012, to 3.9 million. During that span the Libraries have added about 1000 seats, a 27 percent increase, to about 4000.

Internal committee concern that the Libraries, especially Butler, may become a “glorified study hall with a wi-fi connection.” Mr. Neal said that the undergraduate student body increased by 16 percent from 2007 to 2013 (the total student body by 18 percent). During that span, while many seats have been added in other Columbia libraries, only 10 were added in Butler. Now seats in the libraries will become scarcer, with the Engineering Library set to close at the end of this year (167 seats), and Barnard’s library about to close for an extended period.

Mr. Neal offered the following numbers as a simple measure of trends in print books in the Libraries’ collections:

January 2004.....1,053,357 books in Butler Library  
February 21, 2014.....1,049,212 books in Butler Library.

*Libraries involvement in teaching and learning.* Mr. Neal gave numbers showing major involvement of the Libraries in Courseworks, which is used by 21 Columbia schools, including CUMC, UTS, and TC. Many courses use electronic reserves, with a librarian in the online classroom. Mr. Neal also outlined the work of the Center for New Media Teaching and Learning.

*Libraries involvement in research and scholarship.* Mr. Neal showed slides on the digital research centers and on CDRS.

Internal committee doubts about Libraries priorities with general and “special” collections. Mr. Neal addressed the suggestion in the internal committee memo that the Libraries are focusing on special collections at the expense of general print collections. He stressed the importance of special collections in the mission of a major research library, and identified six distinguished special collections at Columbia, noting that they are mainly in print, and heavily focused on the humanities.

*The Libraries' enabling efforts.* In its fundraising efforts, Mr. Neal said, the Libraries set a goal of \$50 million in the capital campaign, and then raised \$105 million. They have also won grants worth \$32 million. They devote considerable effort to communication and marketing for upcoming programs.

Internal committee worries about the impact of the Libraries' numerous collaborations with other research libraries on Columbia's own print collections. Mr. Neal addressed the internal committee's suggestion that partnerships with other research libraries—in joint management, book sharing, cataloging, and lending and storage efforts like 2CUL, Borrow Direct, and ReCAP—might further undermine the commitment to having lots of books available in the campus library. He said peer libraries have collaborated closely over the last century to share collections, staff expertise, and technology. He said that in the Manhattan Research Libraries Initiative (MaRLI), an effort to share books with NYU and the NYPL, print items housed at the NYPL *would* be made available to Columbia researchers. The internal committee had worried that books in the NYPL research library would not circulate.

Mr. Neal said Columbia librarians are involved in deliberations on key policy issues such as copyright, privacy, and intellectual and academic freedom. They are also leaders in their profession. Most have graduate degrees; they publish, teach, and consult.

*Key issues raised in the self-study.* Mr. Neal listed some pressing needs:

- help from the university with the debt service in funding ReCAP;
- additional funds for facilities repairs and renovation;
- additional funding for maintaining collections. Historically the Libraries had annual increases of 8 percent for this purpose; that rate is now 4.5 percent.
- a sustainable funding model for long-term digital storage;
- a strategy for major gifts;
- a new back end for CLIO;
- competitive salaries for IT and other professional staff;
- sustainable funding for academic computing services;
- a new special collections facility;
- subsidies for collections and services provided to affiliated institutions.

*Questions and discussion.* Prof. Elizabeth Blackmar (History) identified two questions that emerged at a recent department meeting:

1. There is a disparity between the perspectives of faculty and grad students on the Libraries, on the one hand, and undergraduates on the other. How do the Libraries understand this disparity?
2. The internal committee responded to the Libraries' self-study in good faith. But VP Neal sounded defensive in his responses their concerns. How was he thinking about this faculty dissatisfaction?

Mr. Neal said there have been four surveys of faculty and student satisfaction with the Libraries over the last decade, and the evaluations have improved each time. But there are abiding issues. The most serious is funding the collections. All research libraries tend to fall down on this measure. He said students have different needs. They are physically in the libraries more, and so are more sensitive to space issues, which are a University responsibility, not just a Libraries issue. He said he didn't want to sound defensive, but wanted to be sure the information available is accurate. He said the Libraries are committed to supporting teaching, learning, and research.

Commenting further on the issue of faculty dissatisfaction, Mr. Neal said there is always a shortfall in meeting research needs, but the Libraries have closed the gap. The complexity of the different kinds of access to research is now sometimes chaotic. CLIO collapses many disparities among disciplines. This is an endemic problem across research libraries.

Mr. Neal stressed again that the Columbia Libraries invest at a high level in print, and that they are not going willy-nilly to ReCAP. At the same time, the Libraries have to keep pace with disciplines that are moving to digital approaches.

Prof. Samuel Silverstein (P&S) said the Senate Libraries Committee, which he chairs, cannot provide sufficient faculty oversight of the Libraries. For that purpose, he said, a standing faculty committee is needed. He said the Senate committee welcomes additional discussion to give the Libraries the help they need.

He said the CUMC library is now independent of the Columbia Libraries. Does VP Neal have data on usage there? He said many students uptown have insufficient library space, and come to Morningside.

Sen. Silverstein praised the two-page appendix to the self-study by Rob Cartolano, Associate Vice President for Digital Programs and Technology Services, which he said succinctly identify the key issues going forward. Prof. Snyder said this appendix is included in the memo from the internal committee, and is on the PPC website.

Prof. Mae Ngai (History) said there is widespread anxiety among faculty about digitization, and they are not Luddites. She said there is anecdotal evidence of troubling decisions to send books to ReCAP. On the issue of space, she mentioned that peer institutions typically have undergraduate libraries, with different books and space configurations.

Mr. Neal said he was a student at Columbia from 1969 to 1976, and recalled that the tension among different groups of library users in Butler at the time was palpable. He said undergraduate libraries are being shut down across the U.S, because designated collections and spaces are no longer seen as suited to the needs of undergraduates. He has tried to find possible locations for an undergraduate library in the Columbia vicinity, including Manhattanville.

Prof. Madeleine Zelin (EALAC) asked if some of the decisions to share responsibilities for buying new books with other libraries could be revisited. She was not convinced that the division of purchasing responsibilities reflected the research priorities of the individual universities.

Mr. Neal said studies have found that research libraries all tend to buy the same books. Their more recent collaborations are attempts to expand their overall reach, and share responsibilities. He said most major libraries are downsizing their special collections.

Prof. Snyder was reluctant to add committee work, but suggested one-time encounters between faculty in a particular discipline and the appropriate collections people in the Libraries. Mr. Neal supported this idea, which he said other institutions regularly carry out.

Prof. Jean Howard (English) asked if deliberations on the Libraries need a different governance arrangement. The work of the internal faculty committee proceeded somewhat like an ARC review, an approach that turned out to be something of a waste of faculty time. There should be a standing committee on the libraries. Prof. Howard said there also used to be a provostial committee on the Columbia University Press. There seems to have been an atrophy of provostial attention to both of these issues.

Provost John Coatsworth said he couldn't agree more. He understood that the last recession brought the work of both of those provostial committees to a halt. He was now speaking with Mr. Neal of reviving the libraries group. He said the Libraries could send their subject specialists to meetings of this group.

Prof. Cathy Popkin (Slavic) asked what happens to journal runs that have been digitized. VP Neal said they are sent to ReCAP or to the stacks. Prof. Popkin recalled a case in which the run was destroyed. Mr. Neal said that errors occurred in the 1980s, in the microfilm era; nothing like that has happened lately.

Prof. Joseph Howley (Classics) asked if the stacks might be closed at some point. Mr. Neal said stacks in Butler are open, but collections in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library have to be closed. They're just too valuable. As long as the Libraries invest in print collections, the stacks will remain open.

Prof. Timothy Frye (Political Science), chair of the internal committee appointed by the provost, said that Prof. Howard was right—the group was overmatched in trying to follow all of the Libraries' multiple uses—but also that the committee had learned a great deal. He said that the Libraries' self-study was masterful, though not an easy read, and that the committee's memo was written as a call for discussion rather than as a critique in and of itself. He asked for feedback from other faculty groups, and gave his email address: [tmf2@columbia.edu](mailto:tmf2@columbia.edu).

Mr. Neal said anyone in the group could have his slides as well as the text of his commentary on the points made by the internal committee [both are linked to these minutes, along with the internal committee's memo]. He said an external committee, including the university librarians of Yale, Chicago, and Michigan, completed a review of the Columbia Libraries in December and has submitted a report to the provost.

**Funding the natural sciences.** Prof. Snyder said EVP David Madigan and Dean of Natural Sciences Amber Miller would talk about current fundraising efforts related to the A&S Science Initiative and the new University-wide effort to support “personalized” or “precision” medicine. Prof. Snyder said President Bollinger had just announced the formation of a task force on the latter subject, which is based on advances in genomics and data science.

EVP Madigan said it has been evident for some time that Columbia urgently needs to overhaul its infrastructure for the sciences. He led an attempt a few years ago to make this case to the Trustees. His group was said to have done a poor job. There followed an effort by Dean Miller to develop a strategic plan. This was a ground-up exercise. A year ago the plan was put on paper, and now fundraising is under way to support it. A document presenting the plan is available.

Last year there was also a strategic review at CUMC, which focused on personalized medicine, a way to tailor medical treatments to individuals. Some of the initiatives were narrowly genomic, while others were broader. The fledgling field offers a large, complex set of challenges, spilling over into environmental, social, ethical, and other issues.

EVP Madigan said President Bollinger embraced the idea as something that could involve the whole university—including the A&S Science Initiative—not just CUMC, and he is personally leading the fundraising effort. The first step was a series of dinners late last fall; now there is a task force, on which EVP Madigan said A&S was somewhat underrepresented. He wants to add professors in the humanities and social sciences.

Prof. Austin Quigley (English) asked whose science initiative this was. Who took ownership at any point? Were there any faculty votes formally adopting the initiative?

Dean Miller said she completed the proposal for the Science Initiative a year ago, and presented it to the provost, the Trustees, and EVP Dirks. They accepted it.

Prof. Quigley noted that public presentations were not the same as faculty votes, because the latter indicate that one or more schools have taken responsibility for making the initiative work, including assigning it a priority among other fundraising activities.

Dean Miller said success depends on funds raised. She is working with EVP Madigan and EVP for Research Michael Purdy. She had successfully presented projects to the president on three subjects: molecular architecture, cosmic origins, and life at every scale. She said the next challenge is to build a donor base. There were two events in California in the fall, and another planned for this spring. A full-time development director is being hired now. An associate dean under her will also focus on this effort.

She said the plan is to seek donors within the Arts and Sciences, and also outside, with links to SEAS, the Earth Institute, and the Mind Brain Behavior initiative. The hope is to overlap with these efforts and to pool resources. Can the Science Initiative share some of the donors on the school rosters? She said the prospective donor base is not as big as she would prefer. She is responsible for the initiative.

Prof. Quigley noted that it is very difficult to operate on the margins of Development donor bases, which typically sit in the schools. If it is not clear which schools own and have responsibility for the initiative's success, it is hard to see how Dean Miller can make it happen on her own. Aligning parts of the project with existing or evolving school development projects might be helpful.

Dean Miller said she had discussed this issue. The initiative would naturally be part of ongoing A&S fundraising efforts. But some donors are more in the orbit of, for example, SEAS nanoscience programs. Some parceling out has been done. But Dean Miller acknowledged Prof. Quigley's point: the Science Initiative needs a constituency.

Prof. Howard asked if the natural sciences are finally helped or hindered by the personalized medicine initiative.

Dean Miller said she was trying to make use of every opportunity to boost the Science Initiative. With the proper structure in place, it might succeed.

EVP Madigan said it would be crazy not to grab onto this new campaign. He said faculty would receive an email about it later in the day. He also acknowledged that the conditions were less than ideal, even risky.

Prof. Howard said university-wide campaigns—whether for globalization or personalized medicine—can distort the direction of basic research. She said the English Dept. has now worked up a spurious affiliation with the globalization effort. She was troubled by the top-down approach.

Dean Miller acknowledged that this might not be the most efficient way to support research.

A professor said the New York Genome Center, which opened last fall, has broken new ground in genomic research. Thomas Maniatis, a co-founder, is chair of the Dept. of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics at P&S. The new center could have been based at Columbia.

Prof. Silverstein said Columbia's science researchers face a huge shortfall in federal funding, which is likely to grow more severe. No science initiative is taking account of this. Many current faculty are unfunded or short-funded. What can be done, locally and nationally, to support them? If nothing is done, universities will waste a resource in which they have invested heavily. An internal initiative to support current faculty could play a vital role.

Dean Miller agreed, but said the money isn't there to do this.

Sen. Silverstein said the university just completed a \$6.1 billion capital campaign and is now launching the personalized medicine initiative.

Dean Miller said those are top-down initiatives—not the same as the A&S Science Initiative, which can provide urgently needed seed money—a top priority.

Prof. Cathy Popkin (Slavic) asked if it was impossible to speak of an infusion of cash from the central administration to support this effort. She said the Physics Dept. is in a retention crisis right now. Maybe now is the time to appeal to the president for help.

EVP Madigan said now is the time to make a direct request. EVP Madigan said the provost has been helpful in the past and A&S leaders can certainly ask the central administration for help in dealing with crises as they arise.

Dean Miller said this is the crisis management operating mode. The goal is to get ahead of crises like this.

Prof. Snyder thanked the presenters. He adjourned the meeting at about 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Mathewson