

Minutes of the University Senate Library Services Committee Meeting on 4/23/2009

Attendees:

Hongsik Ahn, Jay Bock, Bushra Butt, Floris Cash, Chris Filstrup, Fiona Grady, Julitta Jo, Stephen Koch, Judith Lockhead, Wolfgang Quitschke, Robert Shrock (chair), Jason Torre, Lin-shu Wang, Ashley Reji

Absent: Bill Godfrey, Lindsey Levitan

The nonstandard date for this meeting was a consequence of the fact that the usual date for the meeting, the second Thursday in the month, fell during the university spring vacation.

The Chair, Prof. Shrock, first welcomed our new undergraduate student representative, Ashley Reji, who has kindly agreed to serve on our committee.

The committee next approved the minutes from the meeting of 3/12/09.

A major part of the meeting was devoted to the report by the Dean and Director, Chris Filstrup, on the status of the library. Chris Filstrup presented options on cutting \$550K from the fiscal 08/09 base budget to satisfy a request from the provost for the fiscal year 09/10. The library is proposing cutting \$126K from its student budget and \$100K from its undergraduate electronic resources. The first cut would entail some reduction of hours, and the latter would entail reduction in resources heavily used by undergraduates. The context for these possible cuts is to protect the research collections, which have been cut several times in the last decade. Dean Filstrup then went over the goals of the new strategic plan, which will go through several staff discussions before being finalized.

Dean Filstrup described the current attempt to give users from Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) access to Stony Brook University (SBU) electronic resources. This is proceeding slowly. He also described the new library SBU is building in the Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ) in Korea. This will be part of a new SBU campus. The library will include a reading room and computers with access to SBU electronic resources. Janet Clarke is working on this proposal, which is part of a large SBU effort. IFEZ officials recently visited SBU and gave a presentation on this large zone, which includes universities, research centers, high tech businesses, and a very tall building. The Southampton library is on schedule to open in the fall. The new dean, Mary Pearl, considers it a signature building. It will provide access to all of our electronic resources and include print collections as well. Darren Chase is working with TLT to select computers and furnishings. The building will include classrooms, a large SINC site, and writing center as well as a library, each on a separate floor, but all three sharing staff and computer resources.

The committee then continued a discussion (from our March 12 meeting) concerning communications from the senior librarian Helene Volat, who had contacted members of the committee in March with criticisms of the library administration. At the March meeting the committee members present had agreed to invite Helene Volat to give a verbal presentation to our April meeting, but she declined. Instead, she had several

further communications (email and phone calls) with members of the committee. In particular, the Chair, Prof. Shrock, reported that he had discussed her criticisms with her via several telephone conversations. On April 14, 2009 Helene Volat sent an (unsigned) memo as a MS Word attachment to an email to the Chair, Prof. Shrock, criticizing the library administration for emphasizing electronic resources to the disadvantage of printed books. Prof. Shrock passed out paper copies of this memo to the members of the committee at the meeting, but stressed that, in fairness, Chris Filstrup and the library administration should have an opportunity to respond to it. Jason Torre described the library selectors' feeling that print is not valued. This led to a general discussion by the committee of several issues, including (i) the level of funding of the library, (ii) the importance of having the library's collection match the educational and research needs of the campus, and (iii) the question of future trends regarding print versus electronic resources. Prof. Shrock stressed the positive role that the committee should have in supporting funding for the library in order to address the needs – both print and electronic – of the library collection, and suggested that a useful step might be to draft and submit to the Provost a resolution toward this end. The committee agreed, and Shrock composed and read a tentative draft resolution, noting that he would circulate it to the members for their suggestions and revisions after the meeting.

The meeting was then adjourned.

PS: We record here the draft resolution incorporating revisions suggested shortly after the meeting by Prof. Judy Lochhead and Jason Torre.

Resolution, 4/23/09

We, the members of the University Library Services Committee of Stony Brook University, recognize that there are some concerns by certain faculty members and members of the library staff about the balance between allocation of funds for purchases of print assets (books, monographs, sheet music, digital recordings, etc.) and access to electronic resources, including electronic subscriptions to scientific, mathematical, engineering, medical journals, e-books, and electronic databases. We have received a memo from senior librarian Helene Volat stating that this is a particular concern to some faculty in the humanities and social sciences. The Dean and Director of Libraries, Chris Filstrup, has emphasized to us that the general priorities for funding of items including (i) series and journals, (ii) databases, and (iii) books is determined to a large extent above his level in the administration. We recognize that since its early years, our university has established and maintained outstanding departments in sciences and mathematics as well as biomedical and health-related studies (as is consistent with the establishment and dramatic growth of the Stony Brook University Hospital), and also very strong applied science and engineering departments, and that these historical facts have been reflected in presidential and provost-level priorities. We also recognize equally the very crucial value and importance of the humanities and social sciences for the students at our university and the need to support the research and teaching activities of faculty in these departments.

We understand that there are at least two issues involved here. A very important one is the overall level of funding for the library. Another is the ongoing effort, not just in our library, but in libraries across the world, of how to respond in the best manner to the digital and electronic revolution that is occurring in publishing. Helene Volat has stated that many people in humanities and social sciences still prefer to read actual books rather making use of electronic resources. She has cited data from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) on book acquisitions that ranks our library considerably lower than the ARL mean in this category. We understand the advantages of electronic access; for example, e-books do not go out of print the way conventional books do, and in contrast to the situation where a copy of a book is withdrawn by a user from the library and is hence not available to others who might want to read it, university users can take advantage of ready access to e-books and access to electronic resources. (Some restrictions on simultaneous use of e-books may apply in certain cases.) These are just two of the many aspects of the complementary advantages of print versus electronic assets. We recognize that it is normal in any library for different members of the management and staff to have slightly different opinions as to the best way to deal with the second issue. We as a committee wish to express the faculty's appreciation of the great efforts that Chris Filstrup and the staff of the library are making, in difficult times, to build up and maintain our library. We also thank Helene Volat for her input and her laudable desire to achieve an excellent level of purchasing of books for the library.

On the first issue, namely overall funding, we wish to express, in this resolution, our strong support, shared both by faculty and students, for an appropriate increase in the funding of the library (in inflation-corrected dollars, i.e. actual purchasing power). We believe that this would be a very valuable investment for our university to make. Clearly the requisite increased funding will help to enable the library administration to continue to improve the already-impressive electronic resources that we have and also to strengthen the purchases of print assets. In this way, the library can continue to serve its extremely valuable educational role for our students and its role as a resource for our faculty.

This resolution was agreed upon by the University Senate Library Services Committee.