

To: Joseph Burns, Dean of Faculty

From: Nerissa Russell

Re: Annual Report, University Faculty Library Board, 2012-13

The main theme of this year's work on the Library Board has been the implications of changes in academic publishing for research libraries, notably our own. There are both challenges and opportunities, but we are particularly concerned about the effects on the Library's bottom line, and the implications for maintaining collections to support faculty and student research and instruction. Last year the emphasis was on boosting the collections budget to restore the Cornell Library to the top 10 in the country. After a faculty petition and meetings with the provost, Provost Kent Fuchs agreed to a one-time boost. Subsequent negotiations over library funding in the new budget model seem to have resulted in an improved position that, while it will not in the short term put us back in the top 10, at least moves us in the right direction (up 2-3 notches from our current 16th place). Fundraising is also underway specifically for the collections budget; this will help but not solve the problem.

This year we devoted more effort to the underlying factors that are stressing library budgets. In addition to budget cuts resulting from the recession, the greater challenges come from an expanding mandate for material to be curated (notably including large amounts of digital material), and from the spiraling prices for scientific journals demanded by a small number of for-profit publishers who now control most of them. As these journal subscriptions eat up ever-increasing proportions of the collections budget, it is harder to acquire all of the more reasonably priced material from other areas. One response has been a growing number of library consortia to share resources, as with Borrow Direct and 2CUL (in which Cornell is sharing a growing amount of technical services with Columbia, as well as coordinating acquisitions). This has had the unintended effect of reducing book purchases from university presses (as libraries share copies), in turn endangering their business model.

We had a number of discussions of these interrelated topics on the board this year, and also worked with the Library to encourage wider discussion at the Faculty Forum in the spring (thanks very much for sponsoring this) and in a series of discussions of a reading project in which the Library gave away copies of two books on the topic to form a basis for deeper dialogue. I began the year feeling that open access was the key to solving at least the scientific journal pricing issue. However, our deeper engagement with these problems complicated this understanding. While open access has many virtues, it has not yet led to the disappearance of journals or cancellation of subscriptions, even in physics, where it has been most thoroughly embraced for some time now. Rather, the for-profit publishers are embracing open access, and seeking high payments at the front end rather than through subscriptions, or most often in addition to subscriptions.

In the end, we concluded that these matters require more focused attention than we can give them, which attends to (at the least) journal pricing/library costs, the plight of

university presses, open access, tenure and promotion requirements (real and perceived), and new media. We propose an ad hoc committee of the Faculty Senate, to meet during the fall to consider these related issues and seek solutions that Cornell can pioneer. This might be, in part, new forms of non-profit publishing ventures, of which the SIGNALE project to produce monographs through a collaboration among the German Studies Department, Cornell University Press, and the Library might serve as one model.

We also devoted time to a number of other issues, including:

- 1) continued access to online materials for Cornell retirees other than emeritus faculty
- 2) the HathiTrust and related lawsuits about access to online materials
- 3) the implications of MOOCs for research libraries: the ability to use copyrighted material as course readings (the key is whether courts interpret this as educational and thus fair use, or a form of publishing); maintaining accessibility for disabled students; archiving open textbooks; cross-platform and archival issues for digital course materials in general
- 4) the new catalog interface, which will be available soon and should be an improvement over the current one; Columbia is using the same platform, facilitating 2CUL coordination
- 5) the implementation of an expanded library liaison program to faculty departments to promote knowledge and use of library resources, with a special focus this year on library services in the area of scholarly communications
- 6) trying to sort out (without much success, frankly) the increasingly overlapping roles of the Library, IT, and CTE; the Library and IT, at least, are working on more effective coordination
- 7) testing of electronic lab notebooks for teaching and research
- 8) progress report from the Committee to Consider the Future of Access to the Mathematical Literature at Cornell; the final report should be available for discussion in the early fall
- 9) hearings regarding the implementation of the recent Obama administration initiative on open access archiving of research data (we are likely to be hearing more about how this plays out over the next couple of years)