

CORNELL UNIVERSITY FACULTY LIBRARY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT, 2006-07

The University Faculty Library met monthly during the academic year 2006-2007, with two special meetings to discuss the search for the new University Librarian. The board focused its attention on several major topics: large-scale digitization of books, the search for a new University Librarian, and the Olin Library building. The board also reviewed the effect of new copyright guidelines on electronic course reserves, and presented to the Faculty Senate a resolution urging faculty to retain appropriate rights to the copyright in their academic writings.

The board wishes to acknowledge the great assistance provided by the University Librarian Sarah Thomas, the Interim University Librarian Anne Kenney, Vice Provost John Siliciano as representative of the Provost, and the Dean of Faculty, Charles Walcott.

Large-scale digitization of books

Over the next decade, the large-scale digitization of books is likely to be a very important development for the library and the university. In two meetings, the board discussed the short-term implications of the digitization project supported by Microsoft, and the implications of entering into further contracts with commercial companies that include long-term restrictions on the use that Cornell can make of its scanned library materials.

The board welcomes the pilot project with Microsoft to scan about 100,000 books. This project provides the university with an opportunity to gain experience in scanning and in how to use the digitized materials. The board was interested in how the faculty can best contribute to the selection of materials to be scanned. While not ideal, the contract with Microsoft is acceptable for a pilot project.

The board is more concerned about future plans. There is a danger in entering into contracts with commercial companies that are overly restrictive in what the university is permitted to do with the scanned materials. The university's administration is in danger of making decisions incrementally, without considering their long-term academic impact. Recently, the Library has begun negotiations with another company that insists on contract terms that would constrain the university's use of the scanned materials forever. At the May meeting, the board asked the chair to write to the Provost expressing concerns about the long-term impact of accepting a contract containing such restrictions.

Search for a new University Librarian

In November, Sarah Thomas announced her resignation, after more than ten years as the University Librarian. The Library Board wishes to thank her for her achievements at leading the Cornell University Library so effectively through a time of rapid change and wishes her well in her new position at Oxford University.

The search for a new University Librarian is a challenge and an opportunity for Cornell. During the next decade, university libraries are likely to see fundamental changes as the transition to digital libraries continues. The new University Librarian needs to have insights into the new technology and the expertise to manage it effectively, yet be fully cognizant of the tradition role of the Library. This requires a leader with deep academic understanding. The board urges the search committee to seek very widely and to be open minded in identifying potential candidates.

The chair of the search committee, Vice Provost John Siliciano, is an ex officio member of the library board. He held two special meetings with the board and the members of the board will play an active role in interviewing candidates. Two other members of the board (Arms and Culler) are members of the search committee.

Copyright

Copyright in journal articles and passages from books is a long-standing concern of the board. For many years, the Association of American Publishers (AAP) has attempted to narrow the fair use of copyrighted material in education. Last year, in response to a legal complaint by the AAP, the university circulated a letter to all faculty with guidelines for fair use and reproduction of copyrighted material in paper or electronic format. The board thanks the Provost's Office, the University Counsel's office, and the Library administration for their efforts in handling this problem, but the impact is clearly undesirable. This fall, there was a 70 percent decline in the volume of e-Reserve materials used compared to fall 2005.

An underlying cause of the problem is that faculty customarily transfer to publishers the copyright in their journal articles and other writings. Last year's board proposed a resolution to the Faculty Senate providing guidance to faculty members and urging them to retain rights in the material they create so that it can be used in education and other appropriate ways. Because of a lack of a quorum, the Faculty Senate did not vote on this resolution at its meeting in May 2006. It was presented to the Faculty Senate at its meeting on September 13, 2006 and passed unanimously. The resolution is online at: http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/FacSen/approved_minutes/2006-2007/060913Minutes/LibBdResolution24Apr06.pdf.

Olin Library

The Library administration briefed the board on the library's capital priorities. Renovations to Olin Library are high on the Library's list, including secure study space for graduate students, more group study space, and the installation of technological infrastructure in Olin classrooms. The board's immediate worry is that Olin Library has no sprinkler system and an inadequate HVAC system. This is a major weakness, given the large numbers of people who work and study in the building, and the irreplaceable collections housed there.

Membership

During 2006/2007, the members of the board were: William Arms, chair (Computer Science), Robert Cooke (Bio. & Environ. Engr.), Jonathan Culler (English), Paul Ginsparg (Physics), Rebecca Harris-Warrick (Music), John Hermanson (Biomedical Science), Michael Kammen (History), Mary Beth Norton (History), Jon Parmenter (History), Richard Penner (Hotel), Nerissa Russell (Anthropology), Buzz Spector (Art), Charles Walcott, Dean of Faculty, ex officio, Brad Anton, Associate Dean and Secretary of the Faculty, ex officio, Sarah Thomas, University Librarian, ex officio, Vice Provost John Siliciano, ex officio (representing the Provost). Sarah Thomas resigned midway through the year and Anne Kenney, Interim University Librarian, took her position. Sandie Sutfin of the Dean of Faculty Office provided administrative support.

Submitted on behalf of the University Faculty Library Board.

William Y. Arms
June 6, 2007