

University Library Committee Minutes
January 13, 2017, 3:15 pm

Present: Thomas Burr, Melissa Johnson, Chad Kahl, Marie Labonville, Alan Lessoff, Dallas Long, Ed Reitz, Dane Ward, Kathy Webster

Absent: Magdalena Casper-Shipp, S.J. Chang, Oguzhan Dincer, Chelsea Fray, Jay Percell

Guests: Chad Buckley, Susan Kalter

Meeting was called to order at 3:15pm.

Burr said he would send the December meeting minutes out for review at a future date. He had no formal agenda for this meeting. He asked "What do we think about the documents?" (referring to the two attachments he had sent prior to the meeting with members' anonymized comments on Milner's collection philosophy and a list of questions for department liaisons and faculty about their relationships with Milner Library.)

Lessoff said "whatever we end up doing, the result should be something the librarians feel good about. Would the subject librarians be interested in a review of the collection philosophy and withdrawal procedures so those documents reflect a shared understanding that they feel they can enforce? This could be a really good basis. But last meeting's takeaway is that we didn't want to overstep our bounds and interfere with librarians' professional independence."

Burr asked Lessoff if he thought there should be more detail and more interlinking of the two policies.

Johnson said the philosophy seemed too general for her to provide concrete feedback, but at the same time she feels the philosophy needs to stay broad. Her specific questions seem to be more directed to the library's collection development policies for the subject areas rather than for the collection philosophy. Her main concern is that the University Library Committee is looking at the wrong document(s).

Buckley agreed with Johnson. He explained the philosophy was written to share what the librarians see as trends and Milner Library's place within those trends.

Burr said the "steady state" referenced in the collection philosophy appears to be a gesture to the past. He said what the library needs is three documents in harmony with each other: the collection philosophy, an overall collection development policy (or plan?), and a withdrawal policy. Buckley said the overall collection development policy does exist and is about 4-5 pages in length. It was written by his predecessor. It's been updated over the years but never substantially changed.

Labonville asked if Milner Library is going back to the 800,000 number of books that the building was originally designed to hold. Ward said the paradigm of libraries engaging in competitive collection-building, when the total count of books was an important measure of distinction between libraries, is ending. Libraries aren't championing the number of books they hold anymore but are championing how they support teaching and learning. There is a tension between the need for spaces for study and for services with the spaces for collections, which do still remain important.

Lessoff said there are certain areas that are higher priority and others that are less so. Ward said we may have a larger print humanities collection in the future than we might in print sciences collection. Ward passed out a sample conspectus for law, for which Kahl is the subject librarian. Buckley explained what the conspectus meant for librarians and how it informs the practice of collecting works in very specific areas, languages, format, and how comprehensively the librarian needs to do that. Subject librarians may edit these, but the conspectuses are probably not majorly altered over the years unless there are substantial changes in programs of study.

Kahl offered an example from the American Bar Association looking at the conspectus and other documents for Milner's law collection as part of their accreditation review of the legal studies program. Kahl said the ABA advised him that Milner is over-collecting in law and seemed more representative of a collection that serves a law school instead of a paralegal studies program. Burr pointed out that faculty may have one view of the collections and accrediting bodies may have another view. Johnson said there is no way to consistently take into account the points of view of accrediting bodies as the review processes varies widely and differs in rigor between bodies.

Burr turned conversation back to the comments. He asked "What are the services the library is now choosing to emphasize, and are we really an undergraduate serving library?" Johnson said the language feels like the way Illinois State presents itself as an undergraduate institution. Ward said the library is a microcosm of the university. Johnson asked what does it mean to be an undergraduate library? Kahl said the library's resources are limited. Johnson said the lack of communication between the library and the faculty is the problem, maybe not the philosophy the library is using to guide its work.

Someone asked who the audience of the collection philosophy document is supposed to be. Buckley said the philosophy was originally intended to be an internal document for the benefit of the librarians. Lessoff reminded the committee that there has been a lot of misunderstanding. The librarians are curators of resources that belong to the whole university. Long said he liked what Lessoff said, but he wasn't sure where the committee is going from here.

Johnson said she wants to hear feedback from the librarians about the questions posed about the collection philosophy. Burr asked whether the questions demand a re-write of the collection philosophy. Johnson said the committee can't make that decision until the committee hears from the librarians. Kahl said he wanted more time to review the comments and formulate answers. Ward and Buckley also asked for more time. Burr asked Ward, Kahl, Buckley and Long to respond to the questions and comments. He asked for responses to be shared by February 1.

Webster asked what the vision of Milner Library is intended to be. Burr will send out a copy of the powerpoint presentation Ward made to the University Library Committee the prior when. Some members have not seen that presentation due to change in the membership roster. Long believes the presentation is the best answer to Webster's question.

Burr returned to the questions developed for faculty. What do we think of the questions? Long said he liked the questions but the librarians need not "yes" or "no" responses to many of the questions. We need to know "why" or "why not?" Burr agreed that would be helpful. Labonville asked whether the questions are intended to take the form of a survey. Burr said many methodologies are possible, including surveys, focus groups, etc. He said let's not consider methodologies right now.

Discussion ensued about the meaning and philosophy behind the use of the word “archival,” which appeared in the questions.

The next meeting is February 8th. Burr said the committee will review partial or complete responses from Ward, Kahl, Buckley, and Long.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.