

Recommendations for Library Acquisitions and Operations
Academic Affairs Committee of Faculty Senate
November 3, 2009

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate has conducted an investigation into concerns raised about the University Library System. The aim was to determine which aspects of the Library System work well for the faculty and which areas of improvement are required. Several constituencies have pointed to various rankings of the Library or changes in these rankings as evidence that the Library may not be meeting the teaching and research needs of the University. The following set of recommendations is designed to address a set of concerns that we as a committee heard most often in our fact finding. They are not designed to be a complete set of recommended solutions, but rather attempt to address some of the most frequently expressed concerns of our constituents. This set of recommendations was derived from well over 100 interviews conducted with faculty, administrators, Hesburgh Library and its branch staff and administrators, and various library committees where constituted. We have now received comments from all colleges, many institutes, a large percentage of departments and a substantial number of individual faculty members.

Across the University we found disparate opinions on the effectiveness of the Library; colleges with their own “on-site” Library facility, i.e., Business, Law, Science, and Engineering, appeared to be more satisfied. Units of the university that have been served by increased on-line journal subscriptions also are more favorably disposed toward the current state of Library holdings. However, a number of broad concerns did surface. In general, faculty and staff from both the colleges and the Library suggested that there was too little communication and coordination between user groups and the Library. Concerns about the total amount of resources devoted to the Library and the allocation of those resources were raised by many faculty members. Two specific instances include the important role of subject librarians and the funding and acquisitions made to support new faculty, departments, programs, and centers.

Because the Library and its services are so important to the mission of the University, it must be continually improved, commensurate with the University’s goals of maintaining its preeminent position in undergraduate and graduate teaching and becoming a premier research institution. Several of the following recommendations require minimal or no new resources and should be implemented as soon as possible; the remaining should be implemented as soon as feasible.

Recommendation 1: The Faculty Senate recommends that every Department, Center and Institute address the following as soon as possible, and thereafter on a biannual basis and report its responses to the Dean or, as appropriate, the Provost:

- 1) Does the library collection meet the needs of the basic curriculum? If not, where?
- 2) Does the library collection meet the basic research needs of the faculty? If not, where?
- 3) To attain or strengthen research and teaching pre-eminence in your discipline, what should the library collection in your field look like? What are the prioritized needs of your unit in order to advance its teaching and research mission?

The Deans and the Provost are asked to communicate these responses to the Director of Libraries. Furthermore, to facilitate ongoing communication, every Department, Center and Institute should annually inform its faculty of the subject librarian(s) responsible for their respective fields.

Recommendation 2: Subject librarians are an essential resource in maintaining the collection and facilitating faculty research in many disciplines. The Faculty Senate therefore recommends that the Hesburgh Libraries, with the involvement of the appropriate academic units, review:

- 1) The number of subject librarians to ensure adequate coverage across disciplines.
- 2) The allocation of subject librarians to ensure a match between each librarian's skills and background and the assigned subject area.
- 3) The support staff and technical resources available to subject librarians.
- 4) Whether it is desirable that subject librarians, especially in the Humanities, have a dual responsibility of serving as reference librarians, thereby reducing their ability to conduct subject librarian work during the academic year.

Deficiencies identified in this review should be addressed via changes in staffing and/or training for current faculty and staff.

Recommendation 3: The creation of new academic majors, programs, departments, centers, institutes and in some cases hiring of specific faculty require explicit coordination with the Library. The Faculty Senate therefore recommends:

- 1) Proposals to create any new academic unit explicitly address the adequacy of current Library holdings to meet its mission and/or the start-up and ongoing resources needed to support the new unit. Library staff should be included in the planning committee of new academic units where appropriate.
- 2) Chairs or directors should identify in the hiring process whether Library resources are sufficient to support the academic work of the new faculty member. Explicit discussions on the use of start-up funds to acquire new Library holdings, introduction to subject librarians, and/or planning to address deficiencies should occur as a uniform part of the hiring process for faculty.

Recommendation 4: A draft document "Task Force on the University of Notre Dame Libraries: A Report to the Provost" was prepared in September 2006 but never officially delivered. The draft report identified the need to increase holdings in areas that had been underserved during the early transition to a research library. The Faculty Senate recommends that the Task Force on the University of Notre Dame Libraries be reconstituted under the auspices of the Office of the Provost and be charged to update the previous report and create a *Strategic Plan* that explicitly addresses but is not limited to:

- How the Library can improve its resources and operations to support a world class research university.
- How to improve relationships with the Development Office to facilitate general and targeted growth in the Library's holdings. For instance, how to recruit in-kind donations as one means of filling gaps in our collections.
- How to manage duplicate materials to maximize the benefit to the University and to minimize potential disappointment by donors.
- How to attract, develop, and retain staff including key knowledge workers such as subject librarians.

Recommendation 5: The Faculty Senate recommends that the Office of the Provost in conjunction with the Office of Strategic Planning arrange for an external review of the entire Library system. This should include the production of a library self-study document. We further recommend that after this review, the Library system undergo an internal review every 5 years and an external review every 10 years.