STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following reports were reviewed for the purpose of providing strategic priorities for the future of the University Library:

Access Services Task Force
Learning Commons Task Force
Scholarly Commons Task Force
Shepley Bulfinch Report
Area Studies Proposal
Earth, Society, and Environment Proposal
Digital Content Team Report

EC recommends that the Library focus attention on the following areas, and that this strategic priorities document be revised on an annual basis.

1. Scholarly Commons/Learning Commons/Reconfiguration in Main Buildings

In reviewing these reports, the Executive Committee endorses the principles in the Scholarly Commons report, the Learning Commons report, the Access Services report, and the Digital Content Team Report. We note that the Shepley Bulfinch report should serve as an overall guiding document for how the Main and Undergraduate Libraries could be physically reconfigured, assuming unlimited funds. The Earth, Society, and Environment Proposal will need to be fleshed out in great detail if these departments and schools are merged. The Area Studies report contains worthwhile recommendations and principles. However, given the fact that our resources for facilities reconfiguration are very limited, we believe it makes most sense to focus on implementing the Scholarly Commons model first.

The Executive Committee endorses the philosophy presented by the Scholarly Commons Task Force Report and recommends that the Library implement the report’s recommendations as space and funds become available. In the Main Library, the stacks reconfiguration process has already begun. Assuming it continues as planned, this will provide room for retrospective reference materials to be moved into what is currently level 5 of Main Stacks, and will encourage the movement of general reference services to that area, as well as the Information Desk area. Space would then be available to begin revamping the current Reference Room to accommodate a “Scholarly Commons” incorporating the staff, some of the collections, and the services of the English Library and the Modern Languages and Linguistics Library. As funds become available to move the current cataloging operations to the basement of the Main Library, additional space would open up on the second floor of the building and much of this area could be repurposed based on recommendations in the Scholarly Commons report. We feel that some circulating materials should be included in the Scholarly Commons Area, and that the Commons areas should include easy access to subject specialists, appropriate technological tools, and effective user services areas (both group and quiet study). Development of the Scholarly Commons should be guided by the AUL for Services and
Director of Facilities with input from the Arts and Humanities Division, Central Public Services, the Social Science Division, other Library Faculty, and Library users.

The Area Studies Proposal leaves us with many questions concerning the physical location of these units. For example, some units recommended for inclusion in the proposed “Area Studies Information Center” bear less intellectual affinity with each other than with Library units in other divisions. One consideration might be to move Area Studies units to larger disciplinary centers where the materials would be in greatest demand. For example, the disciplinary cross-over between the Afro-Americana and Africana Libraries with the social sciences would place them in that location. The language expertise of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Library makes it a candidate for service delivery through the Scholarly Commons. Likewise, the reference services within the Slavic Library would mesh nicely with the activities of the Scholarly Commons. The Asian Studies Library is somewhat less amenable to relocation due to its congruence with the collections in Main Stacks. We believe it makes most sense to consider these issues further in light of the evolving Scholarly Commons model.

The Undergraduate Library is already developing the Learning Commons which opens up many possibilities for combined service points within the Undergraduate Library. The Access Services Report has left us with a few questions concerning implementation, but as an articulation of general principles, the concept of further consolidation of service points makes good fiscal sense as well as good service provision.

Although the various reports were viewed favorably, there remain many questions about the reorganization of units within the Library. Where does Government Documents fit into the picture? Does Applied Life Studies change in any way? What happens to Special Collections, especially those related to the proposed consolidated Earth, Society, and Environment proposal? What about the Classics Library?

2. Digital Project Development and Support of Existing Digital Resources

The second major area the Executive Committee suggests for added resources and attention is the maintenance and development of digital projects that both enable our users to access our collections and provide our users with new, rich resources. It can be noted that despite an increase in enrollment since 1997, our personal reference statistics continue to drop (from 503,657 questions answered in 1997 to 248,227 in 2003 according to our ARL statistics). One must assume that much of this reflects a change in our users’ habits from physical use to virtual use of the Library. Support for digital service development is needed in several areas: digitization, metadata development, support of e-resources, federated search, etc.

Position Request Criteria

The following criteria are suggested as guidelines in evaluating position requests:
1. Multi-functional, cross-disciplinary responsibilities and initiatives are strongly
couraged. There is much discussion of how cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary our
teaching and research faculty have become. In order to support this, the library will
courage and mirror these efforts.

2. Maintenance of digital services and digital service development is supported. The
provision of metadata and digitization for our resources is essential and in many ways we
are lagging in this area. In addition, the development of new digital projects must be
couraged if we are to maintain our preeminence.

3. Sound rationales and objective evidence are essential for successful requests. Ideas
that relate to the major areas identified in the SWOT analysis will also be given more
weight.

4. General support of campus strategic initiatives will be favored. The Campus Strategic
Plan identifies informatics, health sciences, and sustainable energy and environment
initiatives as major areas for advancement as well as a continued emphasis on
undergraduate education and local to global partnerships. Library resources will be
directed to these areas whenever possible and practicable.

Approved by the Library Executive Committee
May 1, 2006