**Biology and Life Sciences Planning Team Open Meeting**

**Discussion of Draft Report Recommendations**

**January 22, 2010**

**Background:**
The Biology and Life Science Planning Team has been working during fall semester 2009 to plan for the future of the Biology Library and related services. A Draft Report reflecting the work of this team was made available on December 23, 2009. Faculty, students and practitioners were invited to submit feedback on this report, and to attend an open meeting held in the Main Library on January 22, 2010.

**Attendance:**
The meeting was attended by 10-15 Library faculty and staff members, the Chair of the Senate Committee on the Library, and 1 faculty member from the School of Integrative Biology who was not on the Team. David Clayton, School of Molecular & Cellular Biology and a member of the Planning Team, was also in attendance.

**Discussion:**

Team Leader Greg Youngen gave an overview of the Biology Team Draft Report:

- Team was charged with looking at the Biology Library and Life Sciences on campus. The Charge deliverables were to: engage and consult with members of academic communities with regard to delivery of library services, identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration and address recommendations from Spring 09 to close Biology Library in Burill Hall.
- To address these issues, they conducted an IRB-approved survey among all campus communities involving life sciences. They received 240 responses: 50% faculty/staff/post docs, 32% grad stud, 13% undergrads. They believe responses will go a long way to address how people think about and use the libraries
  - Survey results (analyzed in more detail in an Appendix to the draft report):
    - By and large, traditional information needs are being met through existing collections. This breaks down some among clinical/medical services, and is where they depend on Health Science libraries - UIC.
    - Identified new and unmet needs and opportunities for collaboration.
    - Highest responses included request for services to help to identify and manipulate statistics, data analysis tools (large data sets), and managing data resources. This opens opportunities to identify people who have skills to address these needs in new hires, as well as areas in which librarians may want to make the opportunity to build there skills.

**Recommendations.**

- Based on survey results, previous Life Science divisions, space needs of IB and MCB, and potential utility cost issues for remote libraries.
  - Good usage stats: Fewer uses of departmental libraries. Reshelving stats have dropped to 10% of what they were in 1997, thanks to online resources.
  - Report from Mar ‘09: Recommended that merging with ACES was preferable to drastically shrinking or splitting the collection among more than one place.
- Team identified 3 options:
  - Reduce but do not eliminate library presence in Burrill Hall.
  - Explore opportunities to combine all science libraries (except Grainger) in this part of campus into one facility.
  - Close Biology Library and relocate all collections and services.
• Final recommendation:
  • Relocate bulk of collection to Oak St. and ACES.
  • Include in vacated space: an office for Biology Librarian, non-circ reference collection, group and individual study space, pick-up point for requested material from other libraries, and public access computers/scanners/wifi.
  • Committee was reluctant to close library, though it could be a phased transition with emphasis on virtual library services. Biology Library is too big and too important to move from Burrill Hall

Questions:

• JoAnn Jacoby asked Greg to talk about how the recommendations will help the Library address the new service needs identified in the survey. How would the suggested scenarios help us to provide these new services?
  ◦ Greg Youngen sees those new needs as staffing, not library issues. The team's recommendations focused on physical space and the library itself, and the modern computer lab and identified study space could help support these services.

• Audience member asked if the report considered the increasing interdisciplinarity within life sciences, and how this proposal addresses those issues.
  ◦ Greg Youngen answered that biology is probably the most interdisciplinary of the sciences (ex, BioTech), and is made up of people without specific libraries. The team did not get to the specific disciplines that have these needs. Addressing these needs is incumbent on the librarians, and adopting this mission is a part of library administration. Traditional user groups are School of Molecular & Cellular and School of Integrative Biology, but it is plain that the users expand far beyond. Diane noted that unlike the Applied Health Science Library, the Biology Library has never solely belonged to those two core schools. (Marybeth responded that Health Science Library likewise served constituents beyond the College of AHS)
  ◦ JoAnn noted that these libraries are a locus of departmental identity while still serving these overlapping constituencies. Getting at the balance between libraries as serving a particular department or college and libraries as serving a broader mission use is a significant question that most of the NSM Teams have had to grapple with.

• Comment from Linda Smith regarding Biology survey and HISP report feedback:
  ◦ The report identified core and emerging areas for the kinds of things that Biology stakeholders were seeking in support for their work. These are similar to things AHS users are looking for support in. This isn't a question of space, it's a question of services, and these needs must be framed with regard to the disciplines.

• One audience member was surprised that the team's final recommendation was a complete reversal of the March '09 decision, how did they reach it?
  ◦ Greg Youngen said that the earlier plan was looking at dividing libraries different ways.
  ◦ Diane Schmidt said that the Provost letter's version was concerned with how to close the Biology library, and that some options were to disperse the collection. What the planning team recommends now is to keep a core collection in Burrill Hall. The problem now is that biologists already need several libraries (Natural History, Chemistry, ACES, Vet Med) and if you were to split the collection among these, it looks like you are saying that Biology wasn't important (an image problem). Recommendation was to merge into ACES. Diane
noted that we have never looked at the size of the core Biology collection, so this is still an open question. We are recommending here to decrease the size and keep core materials in the current location, the dispersal would mostly be Oak St. and Main Stacks.

- Pat Allen noted that the college of ACES, in designing their library, collaborated with the college and discovered they had many related needs.
- Even a small core collection will still need staff. Why not disperse reserve collection to other libraries and keep a virtual librarian?
- Pat Allen said this could be an opportunity for collaborating and cost share.
- Greg Youngen mentioned that Eastern Illinois has a newly remodeled science library, and how nice it is to have everyone in one building. Our model worked 100 years ago, but now we don't have the interaction and collaboration of working closer together. We don't see overlapping of disciplines and interactions with focused reference staff.
- JoAnn Jacoby talked about her husband’s experience as a biologist at the Illinois Natural History Survey. When starting research in a new area, he needs materials from Biology, the Natural History Survey Library, ACES, Geology, etc. Always seems to need these materials on Sunday morning when none of these is open. Navigating narrowly focused departmental libraries can be useful for people located next door, but challenging for people located farther away, or whose interest don’t map neatly to our departmental library structure.
- From reserve standpoint, students are far happier with fewer reserves locations to navigate.
- Diane Schmidt said that an issue with how closing libraries was visualized was that all physical science would be on the north end of campus, and all life science on the south end. So middle campus is abandoned, with fewer silos, but the ones we have are fewer and deeper. The engineers would be even more separated from the biologists. So she prefers more dispersed sciences libraries. Doing that doesn't help the biologists as much as creating a centralized science library. However, it would involve undoing a lot of what they've done to enact this.

- Pat Allen asked if this plan goes to an implementation team, what will the next phase be?
  - Greg Youngen said that it comes down to the Library Executive Committee, they are making recommendations now and have identified the issues, but knowing how to go forward, etc. will be up to the EC.

- Paula Kaufman asked if the team will revise their plan?
  - Greg Youngen said that they are taking feedback, but are more likely to add it as attachments than revise their report.
  - If they need more direct feedback, they could schedule another meeting of MCB/IB.

- Paula suggested would be most useful to the Executive Committee if the team would consider the input and make changes based on it, rather than leaving them for the EC to sort out. She would like to see a final, integrated report.
  - JoAnn Jacoby said that we will provide notes on the comments from this session so those can be considered as the Team revises the report.
  - Greg Youngen said that the team has not yet received many comments on the posted report, and what they do have is pretty evenly split between yes/no to closing the Biology Library.

- Greg Youngen asked whether we needed another open session closer to the north end of the quad, to get more feedback from the biologists. If another meeting is held in a more convenient location, will they come? David Clayton doesn't think another meeting will change much, the
implementation issue is when people will be paying more attention. The faculty had gotten the word that the Biology library would be closed, and that they don't know that keeping it open is still an option. This report isn’t going to elicit much of a reaction.

- Greg Youngen said that they will incorporate these points, and add them to the draft report.