Literature and Languages NSM Team
Minutes March 25, 2010

Attending: JoAnn Jacoby (meeting coordinator), Paula Carns (minute taker), Dara Goldman, Harriett Green, Tony Hynes, Jo Kibbee, Bruce Swann, Renee Trilling

Agenda

1) Approval of final revision of the staffing document. Several members of the committee had questions about the document. They were:

- With regards to the proposed head of the unit, would this individual would be one of the librarians proposed for the unit or a librarian from another unit? The team briefly discussed current practices. Two general rules currently dictate the selection of unit heads. These individuals usually come from the unit and thus take on administrative duties of the unit in addition to their other responsibilities. In cases when all librarians in a unit are either untenured and/or absent for a lengthy period, such as on sabbatical, then a librarian from another unit will serve as head.

- The document lists two or more graduate students. How many will there be? The Team discussed the current budget crisis and its potential impact on graduate assistants. The joint libraries of English and Modern Languages and Linguistics have been awarded one quarter-time Graduate Assistant for next year with the possibility of additional Assistants to be determined in the next few months.

- How Student Assistants will there be? Once again the budget will determine the number.

- Will there be microfilm/fiche readers in the unit? Prof. Charles Wright in the English Department had expressed a need for this equipment. Prof. Renee Trilling will discuss the matter with him. Many felt that such equipment would be too costly for the new unit and that it would be best to have patrons use the readers in the History, Philosophy and Newspaper Library which not only has a number of such devices but the staff expertise to help patrons to use them.

2) Discussion of the services profile for the Literatures and Languages Library. I.e., how can the Library best facilitate research and learning in the new unit? What sort of interactions (with people and materials) do we want to encourage in this space? What services and tools should be available in the unit, online, or nearby in the Main Library?

To frame the discussion, the team reviewed the Planning Team survey at:

http://www.library.illinois.edu/nsm/lit/planning_team/litsurvey.html
Themes from the survey with regards to the needs of teaching faculty. They are:

- knowledgeable subject specialists
- maintenance of library as teaching and research tool
- easy access to books--majority of faculty are fine with online journals but at present mostly prefer paper books (the current lack of interest in e-books might be a reaction to the often poor quality of Google digitized books, as suggested by a team member; this might not be true of born-digital works)
- maintenance of the current quality of the library
- promotion of the library as a space for scholarly encounter for graduate students and faculty and as a humanities center for undergraduates, that is, a central communal space that would be a central part of the undergraduate education, in which students would learn how to become humanist scholars.
- The teaching faculty asked about the possibility of having library instruction workshops in the subject library/taught by the subject specialists. Paula Carns discussed her orientation sessions with the new Spanish department students and the challenges of getting students to participate in such courses. She noted that the faculty must work with librarians to bring the students into the library and encourage them to start participating in library activities. The teaching faculty expressed the hope of cultivating a culture where students would automatically go to the library for resources and help, and suggested the possibility of integrating library instruction into part of the curriculum—especially broader courses such as Discovery courses, Advanced Comp course in English, etc.—in order to make the culture more of the norm.

Discussion of the survey

- Teaching faculty expressed their concern with books being sent to remote storage. Their main concern was patron’s inability to browse books physically. Starting a new research project or preparing a new course, teaching faculty often need to consult a large number of materials. Doing so on site, such as in the Main Stacks or unit libraries, saves them from dealing with unwanted materials. The two teaching faculty present at the meeting suggested that one way around this problem is for the remote storage units to provide a browsing area where patrons can view requested books before taking them away.
- The teaching faculty agreed that the greatest improvement to the Library would be to improve the physical environment so that it is more welcoming to students and classes.
- Should the Team poll undergraduate and graduate students about the services that they would like the Library to provide? The team brainstormed questions to ask, such as What kind of reference model will work best for them? If you were given this kind of assignment such as a research topic, how would you go about it in the Library? What are the “best of” features that you would want in a literature library?
3) Next directions:
   • Discussion of services philosophy
   • The student survey