

VCU Libraries Advisory Committee, September 30, 2016
Main Conference Room
Tompkins-McCaw Library
2:00–3:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attending:

Lorraine Anderson, Meredith Baines, Natalie Baker, Matt Bogenschutz, Lelia Brinegar, Corey Davis, Jose Dula (chair), Les Harrison, Fin Hatfield, Cheng Ly, Tom Nelson, Faye Prichard, Valerie Robnolt, Pam Taylor, Kenneth Warren

Absent with notice:

Nastassja Lewinski, Jeremy Stultz

Absent:

MaryBeth DeMarco, Whitney Newcomb

Staff:

Kathy Bradshaw, John Duke, Jimmy Ghaphery, John Ulmschneider, Pam Fraga (recording secretary)

Guest: Blythe Bowman, former Wilder School representative, Steve Barkeley, VCU Libraries

Business

Dr. Dula called the meeting to order.

Review and approval of agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

Review and approval of minutes from April 2016

The minutes were corrected to show that Dr. Robnolt and Kathy Bradshaw were present. With that revision, the minutes were approved.

Dr. Dula invited the members to introduce themselves and welcomed them to the Committee for the 2016-17 academic year.

Changes in operational practice by the VCU Libraries for 2016-17

- **Elimination of overdue fines:** Mr. Ulmschneider told the Committee that effective August 1, overdue fines for books from the general collection were eliminated. Students especially will benefit from the end of punitive fines for overdue books. If a general collection item is not returned by the end of the semester, a lost item fee will be charged that will be waived (except for a processing fee) if the item is returned. Overdue fines remain in place for a range of other library materials. For items borrowed from Innovative Media (cameras, computers, A/V technology, etc.), overdue and late fees have

been increased to motivate return of borrowed items. Students not uncommonly took advantage of the previous overdue fine level to, in effect, rent expensive equipment for a very low cost over a semester, which kept that equipment from other students with need.

- **Library building hours expansion:** Cabell Library now opens one hour earlier on weekends, after requests from students and observations by staff of students waiting outside Cabell before opening hours on Saturday and Sunday.
- **Temporary closure of Cabell terrace:** In early summer staff observed students climbing over the security barrier on the terrace to sit on the exterior ledge. There is no protection from a 4-story fall to the ground if someone scales the security barrier. Consequently, the terrace has been closed until an architectural solution can be developed to prevent people from accessing the edge.
- **Workshop reservations now online:** Students may now reserve workspace and equipment in The Workshop (Innovative Media) on the lower level.
- **VCU affiliation required for access to Cabell Library between 10pm and 6am:** Beginning Sept. 1, a user must present a current VCU ID to enter the building after 10pm. In addition, anyone in the building between 10pm and 6am must have a current VCU ID. Previously, a user needed an ID from any college, university, or high school to enter the building after 10am or be in the building overnight. However, most of these IDs do not have expiration dates, so that staff had no way to validate whether the user was a current student. Consequently security has been tightened by requiring current VCU ID to enter, since staff can check the currency of any VCU ID.
- **Operating hours for Starbucks:** Contrary to rumor, the university has not expanded hours for Starbucks. It closes from 2am to 7:00 am each day.
- **Major renovations at TML:** Steve Barkeley from Tompkins-McCaw Library briefly described the planned reconstruction of the first floor of Tompkins-McCaw Library. Construction is scheduled to begin in December and should be completed before the end of January. Mr. Barkeley reported that the plans include new furniture and increased electrical power supply. He also said the current service desk footprint will be reduced to about 1/3 its current size to give more study space for students.

Reports and Discussion

Elsevier Science Direct renewal – PowerPoint

Mr. Ulmschneider described the collections budget of the VCU Libraries budget and underscored the amount allocated to journal subscriptions, about 76% in 2016-17. Subscriptions to Elsevier-provided journals make up a substantial part of these expenditures. The costs for these journals are expected to rise significantly in the proposed 5-year Elsevier contract now under negotiation by a consortium of Virginia doctoral institutions (with James Madison University as well). The best-case negotiated increase over the 5-year period of the contact likely

will be around 20% from the current pricing, from \$8.1 million in 2016 to \$9.8 million in 2021, with compounding increases over the time period. The bulk of the cost of this agreement is carried by UVA, VCU and Virginia Tech (70%+) with the rest carried by the other members of the consortium. The total expenditures by the consortium over the 5-year period for Elsevier journals covered by the contract will be nearly \$45.5 million. Although many of the journals in the package are indispensable to research and scholarship on Virginia's doctoral campuses, some are not, and the library directors in the consortium have concluded that these costs cannot be borne indefinitely. Consequently, the consortium directors have agreed to put into place a plan and process to ensure that the consortium members do not renew the contract when it expires in 5 years.

The committee engaged in lively discussion about the Elsevier renewal. Some of the points raised included:

- Elsevier is a publically held Dutch company, so Virginia's and VCU's expenditures are in effect providing dividends to the shareholders of a foreign company.
- Materials will be available for delivery through interlibrary loan (ILL) to requesting institutions.
- Although in the absence of a contract the VCU Libraries could obtain most of the content of the Elsevier package for users via interlibrary loan, it would entail a delay of one or two days. This delay is inconvenient to users and often can have consequence for their work.
- VCU will retain a certain portion of the journals as permanent subscriptions, with the issues available in perpetuity, while other journals in the package will be available only as long as the contract is in place.
- Academic institutions must find a way to meet the needs of faculty and students to disseminate their research findings that does not rely exclusively on journal published by for-profit publishers. The market has been consolidating in recent years, and close to 90% of all scholarly and scientific journals are now published by only a handful of publishers. It creates a monopoly market that provides few options for cost control to academic libraries.
- The journal market places academic presses, which publish most scholarly monographs, under substantial pressure, since universities must expend the bulk of their funds on journals from major publishers like Elsevier. Consequently purchases of academic monographs are in decline.

Affordable Course Content initiative – handout

Mr. Ghaphery described the costs of textbooks and course materials to students as a major challenge and a significant source of debt. He reported that VCU is looking at options for textbooks and other course materials that are much less expensive and much more affordable to students. The VCU Libraries has had some success in identifying existing low-cost or no-cost options for course materials and is working hard to continue to develop new options. As part of the state-wide Open Textbook Network initiative, the VCU Libraries is developing ways to encourage adoption, adaption, or creation of low-cost and free textbooks by faculty for their classes. Workshops scheduled by the VCU Libraries to involve faculty in reviewing materials

contributed to the OTN filled their enrollments within days, an encouraging sign. The VCU Libraries also is working with the Office of the Provost to develop a grant program to support faculty in adopting, adapting, or authoring textbooks. He also reported that the VCU Libraries is targeting the top 100 enrollment classes to see if already-existing low- and no-cost materials might be used, with very large potential savings for the university community.

Committee members had a number of questions and comments, among them:

- Local bookstores might be an obstacle in the use of less expensive textbooks; professors have to list with Barnes & Noble (campus bookstore) and these are then at full retail price.
- Adding links in the collection to lists of appropriate low- or no-cost materials would help.
- Grants are not always helpful as an incentive because they go to the department, not the individual faculty member. A work-release as incentive for faculty to participate in the adapting, adopting, or authoring affordable course content would be better.
- Some universities have a style-guide on their own websites, thus saving students the cost of purchasing these guides. (VCU should look into this.)

Mr. Ulmschneider thanked the Committee for their input and engagement. He asked them to discuss these issues with their colleagues, and also work to raise awareness among their colleagues of low- and no-cost options for classroom materials.

Mr. Ulmschneider announced that the VCU Libraries has three items in the opening displays at the new National Museum of African-American History and Culture in Washington, DC. He also announced that the VCU Libraries was one of 5 institutions recognized by the Landmark Libraries Award for the outstanding architecture and design of the new Cabell Library.

The Levis Reading event is October 11th and the 1st Novelist Award event is November 17th.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05pm.