

Report of the Library Committee of the Faculty Council, 2006-7

Materials budget. The Committee's major focus was on the Library's materials budget, with a special emphasis on book acquisitions.

The following information was presented to the Committee by University Librarian Daniel Ortiz, George Hart, and Stephen Haas.

The Library's book budget has varied greatly from year to year. In 1992, \$1.2 million was budgeted for books. Since then, the book budget has declined greatly. A line item in the state budget for Library materials that used to provide a steady source of funds for book purchases disappeared in the state's economic crisis early in this decade. Since then, there has been greater uncertainty from year to year about funding for materials. In some recent years, the Library has had other special sources of funds to purchase materials. For two years, the division of Corporate, Continuing, and Distance Education provided the library with \$100,000. In another year, the University President's office provided \$100,000. Funds for materials now come entirely from the general UMass Boston budget. UMass Dartmouth has an item in its student fees for library materials; UMass Boston does not.

In the current academic year, the Library has \$400,000 for materials. Of that amount, \$100,000 is available for books. The Library aspires to a materials budget of \$440,000. Much of the materials budget is currently spent on electronic resources. The cost of electronic resources has been increasing from 7 to 13 percent per year. Since the maintenance of electronic resources enjoys a higher priority than books, the book budget has suffers when the materials budget is flat.

The Library staff has made repeated public presentations demonstrating that the Healey Library's budget for materials is consistently below that of peer institutions.

The Library depends heavily upon inter-library loans to meet the book needs of students, faculty, and staff. The Boston Library Consortium is a particularly importance resource for these inter-library loans. Within the Consortium, UMass Boston is a net borrower; that is, it borrows 10 to 15 percent more books than it lends. There is no indication that UMass Boston's status in the Consortium is in jeopardy because of it is a consistent net borrower. UMass Boston sustains its credibility in the Consortium on the basis of the strength of its collection in selected fields.

The Library staff takes the position that UMass Boston is not a library of record. For that reason, the Healey Library does not consider that it has responsibility for developing and maintaining a comprehensive collection of books and journals. The Library staff aspires to maintain a full collection of materials only in a limited number of fields to which UMass Boston has made a particularly strong commitment. These fields include those in which the University offers PhD programs.

The library lacks the professional staff resources to keep up with the book needs of the faculty. With the major budget cuts early in this decade and the State's retirement incentive program, the library experienced a major reduction in professional staff. The library no longer has bibliographers to identify the book needs in all fields of study offered by the University. Because of staffing limitations, the library is not able to sustain its liaison program with departments to identify needs for library materials and other matters.

Departmental needs have also become more complex and varied with the explosion in the availability of electronic resources. Some departments remain heavily dependent upon books. Other departments now rely heavily upon journals and electronic books; they place much less emphasis on printed books. Even within departments there is sometimes great variation among faculty members in the extent of their emphasis on books.

The library staff now depends heavily upon faculty members to make recommendations for book purchases. Because faculty members vary greatly in the attention that they pay to book needs in their fields, the heavy dependence on faculty to recommend books results in very uneven collection development.

The Faculty Council discussed the library's materials needs at its March meeting. Overall, faculty and students appear to be highly appreciative of enormous electronic resources made available by the library. Inter-library loans services are also extremely helpful in supplementing what is offered through the Healey Library's collection. In general, faculty members seem to be supportive of the library's policy of giving priority to sustaining and strengthening its access to electronic resources.

Nevertheless, the materials budget and the strategy for making decisions about spending for materials remains a concern. The materials budget varies from year-to-year based upon the availability of funds. The University lacks a dedicated funding source for Library materials. There is no built-in mechanism to deal with annual inflation in the cost of electronic resources. The Library also needs a more systematic way to work with faculty in making decisions about material acquisitions.

The Library Committee expects to receive from the library staff a proposal for a revised liaison program to strengthen communication between library staff and colleges and departments concerning materials acquisitions.

Library appreciation. The Committee heard from library representatives concerning their perception that some faculty members underestimate the strength of the Healey library collection and its access to electronic data. The library staff is particularly concerned that new faculty members may not be fully aware of what the library offers. The library staff is interested in creating a home page specifically for faculty that would provide information on what the Healey library offers. The library staff needs technical help in strengthening its web site. The library staff also proposes that the annual orientation program for new faculty include a session on the library.

Proposed Poetry Room. Committee member Taylor Stoehr asked the committee to consider a proposal to create a poetry room in the Healey library. Faculty members in the new Master's in Fine Arts and Kevin Bowen, director of the Joiner Center are advocating for the proposed poetry room. The proposal has three major elements:

1. Expansion of the library's poetry holdings through an emphasis on special collections,
2. Provision of a space in which the library's poetry holdings would be readily available, and
3. Provision of a space in which special events featuring poets and poetry will be held.

A stimulus for establishment of the poetry room is the availability of the extensive collection of the recently deceased Dorchester poet, Cid Corman. The Joiner Center has identified funds with which to purchase the Corman collection. The library's archival staff members have indicated that they will need additional resources on an ongoing basis to maintain an expanded poetry collection. Other obstacles include identification of a space for the room and identification of resources to finance the staffing that the space will require. External funding will be needed to make the poetry room a reality. Advocates for the poetry room hope that the initiative will become a high priority for the University's private fund raising. The Committee learned that Provost Paul Fonteyn has indicated that in the immediate future the poetry room will not be a high priority for fund raising through University Advancement.

The Library Committee voted unanimously to support the effort to establish a poetry room.

Book loan period policy. The Committee was asked by the library circulation staff to consider a proposed revision in the loan period for faculty, staff, and graduate students that would enable library users to retain books for longer periods of time. The proposal is to extend the loan period to either 120 days or to the end of the semester. (The proposed loan period for graduate students will be 60 days; for all others, the loan period will be 30 days) Two renewals will be permitted. The implication is that faculty members will be able to keep books for nearly a year. A user-friendly approach to renewals will be used with faculty members able to renew either by phone or e-mail. Other patrons will be able to request books that are out on loan. When a book that is out on loan is requested by another patron, the borrower will be notified and will have two weeks to return the book. Those who do not return the book within two weeks will be assessed a fine of \$25.

The proposed policy is more consistent with that of other universities in the Boston area than the current policy that was put in place 12 years ago. (At that time the loan period was reduced to make more books available on the shelves)

Committee members reacted favorably to the proposal. Committee members made two requests that were well received by Daniel Ortiz:

1. Notify faculty about the proposed change and invite comments; ask faculty to indicate a preference for either the 120 day option or the end-of-semester alternative. (This recommendation has been implemented; faculty members have

- been notified electronically about the proposed change and invited to indicate their preferences regarding the two options identified above)
2. Evaluate the effects of the policy two years after it has been implemented.

Committee membership and participation.

The Committee consisted of the following faculty members: Ramon Borges, Frank Caro (chair), Peter Fejer, Anne Jones, Lusa Lo, Taylor Stoehr, and Julie Winch. The Committee included representation of all colleges except for the College of Nursing. The following members participated in at least one of the Committee's meetings: Peter Fejer, Anne Jones, Lusa Lo, Taylor Stoehr, Julie Winch, and Frank Caro. All of the committee members have expressed interest in continuing on the committee. None of the members have expiring terms. The addition of a representative from the College of Nursing will be welcomed.

Prepared and submitted by
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