Report of Library Committee to Senate, April 2014

The 2013-14 academic year was a year of transitions for the library, which welcomed a new (permanent) Dean; following its mandate, the Senate Library Committee (SLC) has offered advice and recommendations on matters of academic policy. The library has also begun ongoing strategic planning, including areas of importance in academic policy, such as faculty support, collection management, and promotion of the Copyright Office, which affect instruction across the university. Other areas of planning, such as funding advocacy, indirectly relate to academic policy by affecting the library's ability to provide services to the university community. Similarly, promotion of special collections and enhancement of the physical space of the library will aid student studying, faculty research, and instruction, which are major academic functions of the university. This strategic planning is being aided by an analysis of the recently conducted LibQual survey, which indicates that the library should place a priority on developing space in a way to promote quiet study and learning. The SLC is broadly supportive of this planning process.

As with any set of transitions, there are challenges that the library staff is meeting, especially related to evolving technologies. The SLC has advised that the library consider the use of online video services for the media collection, although copyright compliance issues are thorny and may make use of this technology impossible at present. Ensuring that course eReserves comply with fair dealing policy is another area under technological development and consultation between the library and other groups on campus (such as CTLT, which runs Nexus). Of special interest to the SLC is the library's acquisitions budget, which affects every academic department at the university. Due to publisher bundling, the growth in use of ebooks, and increasingly interdisciplinary collections, it is cumbersome to produce a breakdown of the budget by department; library staff is testing new software to analyze collections and acquisitions more efficiently. Meanwhile, it is also crucial to note the primary role of database subscriptions, which, while valuable academically, also limit the ability of the library to make other acquisitions due to cost.

The SLC has made plans for the coming year (2014-15). We intend to meet at least once per term, with an additional open meeting of the "Library Users' Group" in the middle of the year. In the past, this meeting has served to inform the university community of the happenings of the library as well as to listen to the community's concerns. The SLC will meet more often if its business requires. The SLC appreciates the openness and transparency exhibited by library staff in the past year and looks forward to a similar relationship next year.

Finally, the SLC has held discussions regarding its purpose and terms of reference. Currently these are exclusively advisory in nature, but some committee members have wondered whether the SLC might take a more active role in decision making for the library. Nonetheless, most members of the SLC believe an advisory role is sufficient. We leave the question of whether or not to modify the SLC's terms of reference to include decision-making and the precise extent of those powers to the Senate at such time it revisits the standing rules for committees.

Andrew Frey, SLC chair