Senate Committee on Libraries Minutes

Tuesday, December 11, 2012
1:00 – 2:00 PM
Marvin Duchow Library, Rm A-512, New Music Building

Present: Prof. Nathalie Cooke, (Chair); Dr. C. Colleen Cook; Prof. Gillian Lane-Mercier; Prof. Emily Carson; Prof. Kenneth Ragan; Prof. Guillermina Almazan; Ms Natalie Waters; Ms Sara Holder; Ms Elizabeth Gibson; Ms Kira Gossack-Keenan; Ms Cora-Lee Conway

Regrets: Prof. Andrea Bernasconi; Prof. Martin Chénier; Prof. H. Patrick Glenn; Prof. Nigel Roulet; Ms. Isabel Vivas; Prof. Andrea Bernasconi

1. Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved by Kenneth Ragan and seconded by Guillermina Almazan.

2. Introduction from the Chair

The Chair noted that the committee was meeting at the Marvin Duchow Music Library for the first time, and that they would circulate through various libraries on campus as a way for committee members to see and experience different library spaces around campus. She touched on a brief history of the library, designed and built as part of the new music building in 2005. She also noted that it houses one of the most important academic music collections in Canada, with musical scores from the Medieval and Renaissance periods through to the 20th century, as well as numerous sound and video recordings and scholarly journals.

Other news

McLennan Library was recently in the headlines thanks to the very well-received PAWS Program. A pair of therapy dogs visited the library on December 4th and 6th from 2-4:00 pm and offered stressed students a bit of respite from the pressures of studying for exams and finishing end-of-term papers. The dogs were such a hit that Dean Cook and library staff are eager to bring them in again next semester.

The SCL Annual Report was presented at Senate on December the 5th. Due to a scheduling conflict, committee member Gillian Lane-Mercier presented the report on behalf of Associate Provost Nathalie Cooke. She said that it was received positively and there were no questions or issues brought forth. The Senate expressed appreciation to the Senate Committee on Libraries for its activity over the past year.
3. Minutes of the Meeting of October 22, 2012

The minutes were approved by Kenneth Ragan and seconded by Sara Holder.

4. Dean of Libraries Report
Presenters: C. Colleen Cook

Colleen Cook began by noting that while they are yet unsure of how badly the impending provincial budget cuts will affect the libraries, she is sure they will certainly be affected. One concern is the continual price inflation of serials. Subscription costs rise about 5-7% annually, and about 500K of the library’s annual budget is dedicated to paying these costs. Kenneth Ragan asked if there were some journals that are worse than others, and Colleen Cook said that while the rising costs are across the board, some publishers, including STEM, American Chemical Society and Elsevier were among the worst.

She then brought up the issue of lack of space in the McGill libraries for books or students and that as of yet, they have no plan for addressing these issues. This is a top priority for the libraries in the coming year, as study/work space continues to be a contentious issue in the library amongst the students, and stacks are beyond capacity.

Colleen Cook reported that on November 1st, the furniture arrived (some at a discount) in the Furniture Lab at the HSSL. It has been very popular with students from all disciplines, as is evidenced by what is left on the whiteboards. (Kenneth Ragan noted that this was ironic, because white boards were developed during the Manhattan Project so that things written on them could be erased without leaving a trace.) Colleen Cook said that the lab has been so popular that we already know what chairs break easily. Kenneth Ragan asked if the purpose of the lab was to determine just one type/set of furniture to be used throughout the libraries, and Colleen Cook responded that no, it was to find out what types worked in the wide variety of spaces in the various libraries. Colleen Cook reported that a special ‘Space Planning Working Group’ has been set up to survey students for feedback on the furniture lab, and asked the students present to encourage fellow students to give feedback.

Colleen Cook listed events that had taken place in and around the library over the last 2 months, including many exhibits and talks. Of note were the Raymond Klibansky exhibit at the BaNQ from November 12, 2012-August 25, 2013, the Arthur Szyk (renowned graphic artist and book illustrator) exhibit in the HSSL, and the exhibition celebrating the 300th anniversary of Jean-Jacques Rousseau up in RBSC. Also highlighted were the furniture arrival in the Redpath ‘furniture lab’ and the HSSL becoming open for study 24/7 as of November 29.

She went on to report that with thanks to Steven Spodek, Library Development and Alumni Relations Officer, $315K has been raised so far towards the purchase of a collection of works by Voltaire, which includes manuscripts and letters. This collection is valued at $800K, but has been offered to McGill for $400K. Many are very excited to be acquiring such an important body of work.

Colleen Cook reported the foundation of an endowment for the Osler library with an end goal of $2.5M. This endowment will ultimately replace the multiple, smaller endowments currently in use at the Osler, totaling roughly $1M. These are difficult to use due to the many restrictions placed on them, whereas one large endowment will be much easier to work with. It will be a difficult task to achieve, but Colleen Cook said she and her colleagues are working very hard to make it happen.
A plaque and monument to Margaret Ridley Charlton was erected outside the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building in the fall of 2012. Margaret Ridley Charlton was the first Assistant Librarian of the McGill University Medical Library, appointed in 1896. She served in this position until 1914 and was a pioneer in 19th and 20th century medical librarianship. She worked with Sir William Osler to help establish the Association of Medical Librarians-now the Medical Library Association.

Finally, Colleen Cook was happy to report that the Library has raised a total of $13,080 for CentreAide this year.

5. Clippings

Redpath Terrace Renos
Nathalie Cooke noted that there has been a positive spin put on the ongoing renovations, despite the prolonged 2nd phase. Colleen Cook noted that while the renovations have impeded access to the library, most have gotten used to it, and no one has formally complained. The third phase is due to start in the spring. This phase will obstruct access through the main entrance even more, but ultimately it will put an end to the flooding that occurs in the underground storage areas.

Open Access
McGill's support of the open access movement is causing some controversy at the university. The McGill Library would like to take a resolution about this to Senate, as it is an on-going issue. Colleen Cook noted that many other libraries across North America, including Concordia and Harvard have signed on in the past few years.

Colleen Cook mentioned a similar issue of student fees for Copibec. This is a third-party organization that charges fees to schools (usually about $20 per student) as an insurance policy on royalties for copyrighted materials. Some think McGill should not have to pay this fee, but that students should be properly informed about how to use materials under copyright. Some argue that the library is already paying for this by way of license purchasing, and students should not have to pay the extra fee. One suggestion was to keep the fee in the tuition costs, but use that money to open a Copyright Advisory Office to advise students on how to use these materials. Colleen Cook said that many other schools have already backed out of this system, including UBC, Queen’s and Université de Laval. A better idea would be to pay copyright fees through a clearing house.

6. Discussion of community feedback on Libraries

Guillermina Almazan noted that the Pharmacology Library had a low visitor rate and that books were rarely used. Medical students are using electronic resources far more often. Colleen Cook explained that since e-Journals became popular, the library now carries roughly 80,000 journals, as opposed to around 19,000 when they were only in print.

Sara Holder from the Education library reported that their library was quite busy, and that they’ve attempted to open up space by installing compact shelving. The Education students really need more group study space than quiet study areas. The compact shelving has reduced the space taken up by books to half, and they hope to create larger group study areas.
Elizabeth Gibson noted that space was an issue of prime concern in the HSSL. The 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 5\textsuperscript{th} and sixth floors all have compact shelving and quiet study space is at a premium.

Natalie Waters reported that the Mac Campus library is always very busy as well. It is very quiet upstairs, and that has led to some tension between the students, because some like to eat in the library. The noise bothers the other students studying. Students are using the library mainly to do work and study, not to take out books.

Kira Gossack-Keenan, the undergraduate student representative, said that people have been very happy with the library’s policy of being open 24/7, especially during exams. She noted, also, that students seem very tense with regards to the space issues in the HSSL and other libraries. Colleen Cook also stated that the state of the bathrooms in the HSSL is awful, and that this is exacerbated by the overcrowding.

Cora-Lee Conway, the student representative for the PGSS, brought up the issue of the current exhibition of Arthur Syzk works in the McLennan Library. She’s heard negative feedback from students, saying it is jarring, visceral and disturbing, especially at exam time, and that you have no choice but to walk through it to get to the stacks and Circulation Desk. She acknowledged that it is very important work, and had urged students to read the curatorial statements in order to get the full context of the works, however, also acknowledged that it causes anxiety to some.

Gillian Lane-Mercier went on to say that they have been juggling with the conflict between space for study and space for offices in the library, and noted that study spaces set up on campus outside the library are rarely, if ever, successful. Gwendolyn Owens said that the Westmount Public Library has become a weekend haven for students.

Nathalie Cooke requested a gate count to be presented at the next meeting for all libraries. This will generate data on how many people are coming to, and staying at the library, how many people are leaving quickly (perhaps in frustration), and what the peak hours of library use are.

7. Other Business/Discussion

There was no other business.

Natalie Waters moved that the meeting be adjourned; seconded by Gillian Lane-Mercier.