Present: Prof. Nathalie Cooke, (Chair); Dr. C. Colleen Cook; Prof. Nigel Roulet; Prof. Emily Carson; Prof. Frédéric Charbonneau (delegate for Gillian Lane-Mercier); Ms. Sara Holder; Ms. Elizabeth Gibson; Miss Stephanie Bachelet; Miss Cora-Lee Conway

Regrets: Prof. Andrea Bernasconi; Prof. Martin Chénier; Prof. Gillian Lane-Mercier; Prof. H. Patrick Glenn; Prof. Kenneth Ragan; Prof. Guillermina Almazan; Ms. Natalie Waters; Miss Kira Gossak-Keenan; Miss Isabel Vivas

1. Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved by Sara Holder and Emily Carson.

2. Introduction from the Chair

Delegate Chair Nathalie Cooke welcomed members to the third meeting of the year, at the Schulich Library. She also acknowledged and welcomed additional attendees, Dr. Frédéric Charbonneau (delegate for Gillian Lane-Mercier), Lori Kloda, Assessment Librarian and Louis Houle (Associate Director, Client Services, Science, Health and Engineering), who had kindly volunteered his office for the meeting.

The building was built in 1893, designed by A.T. Taylor. It was originally named the Macdonald Physics Building. It was in this building that McGill luminary Ernest Rutherford conducted the research (1898 – 1907) that would eventually lead to his Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1908. Physics moved in the 1950s to the Foster Radiation Building (now incorporated in the Wong building) and later the Rutherford Physics Building. Renovated and reopened, this building became the Macdonald-Stewart Library Building in 1982. At this time, the physical sciences collection and the engineering collection were merged to form the Physical Sciences and Engineering Library.

In 2001 the Library was renamed the Schulich Library of Science and Engineering in honour of the family of Seymour Schulich (BSc’61, MBA’65), a generous benefactor of both the Library and the University.

Other news-Clippings

Nathalie Cooke reported that the only clipping referenced the flood of January 28th. The Montreal Gazette article mentioned the efforts of librarians and archivists who acted quickly to prevent as much damage and loss
of materials as they could. The McGill archives had water damage to about 300 boxes, but none of the material was considered rare and everything could be properly restored.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of December 11, 2012

There was a request that the minutes of the meeting of 11 December be amended. This has been done as requested.

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

Before hearing from Dean Cook, the committee heard from Lori Kloda, Assessment Librarian, about business arising from December’s meeting. Nathalie Cooke had asked for a report on gate counts to get an idea of the number of people coming and going from each library branch around campus. Kloda went back five years to see the comparison, and also took the numbers from academic year 2011-2012 and broke that down by month. She noted that the numbers included everyone coming in and out (not just library users/students), so the count could not be entirely accurate. Lori also mentioned that a pattern occurred in practically every count when broken down by month. She noticed a sharp rise in attendees in the months leading up to exams (November-December), peaking during exam period, and then dropping suddenly after that period.

She reported an unsurprisingly high number at the HSSL last year (2.5 million). 625,845 visitors went in and out of the Schulich Library, Mac campus Library had 144,465 visitors, and the Education Library was visited a total of 127,407 times. The Music Library data was incomplete due to several months where the gate count was not kept for various reasons. The Life Sciences Library was by far the least-attended library with roughly 70,000 visits, and Lori concluded that this was mainly due to the nature of materials most often used by Medical students (mainly electronic and online), and partly because of its remote location on upper campus. The Law Library was not included in her report; however, she noted that it too is used a lot by students from all faculties.

Nathalie Cooke requested that this information be circulated to members of the committee.

Colleen Cook reported that she gave an extensive review of the state of the library buildings at the Friends of the Library meeting last week, after all the flooding on campus. She said that fortunately, there was no significant damage to the libraries, but that this was for the unfortunate reason that the staff are now so practiced at flood cleanup and damage control, thanks to many incidents in the past.

She said that there are 2 main areas at in the Redpath Library that are the cause for most of their flooding woes: 1) the loading dock opening into the basement of Redpath (luckily snow banks deflected most of the flow on January 28th), and 2) an area of infiltration in the ceiling in the southwest corner of the basement of the McLennan. This is where the Library stores somewhat rare materials, and a bit of water got up underneath the plastic that covers the lower shelves. Colleen Cook reported that they had been planning to move that material to compact shelving on the 4th floor of McLennan since the last flood. They would install a wall that would create a separate ‘rare materials’ section there.

Colleen Cook further noted that Archives and Records Management had a hard time with the flood. Because space is so tight, they have been forced to keep boxes of records on the floor. Their best solution was to only store records next in line for shredding, which are the least valuable, on the floor.
Colleen Cook reported that the Library is poised to hear what the impending budget cuts will mean for them. They have put together some scenarios for 3, 4 and 5% budget cuts.

The extraordinary inflation of the cost of serials continues to be an issue. This has been the case since the late 1960’s, when research literature expanded suddenly. Colleen Cook noted that the Library budget is indexed for this inflation, and a lot of money is used to maintain subscriptions to scholarly journals. She noted that parity with the USD is helpful in offsetting this inflation.

Colleen Cook went on to say that the libraries continue to be desperate for space. McGill is the only institution that she knows of in North America that has not added significant space or increased their storage capacity since the end of the 1960’s. When the McLennan building was originally constructed, they believed it was huge and that it would probably never be filled to capacity. However, one-third of the McLennan is now filled with compact shelving because of the need for more space. The Schulich Library has the most space; they have managed to discard back-runs of some journals which are available online. **Lori’s analysis of shelf usage**

Spaces delegated to student seating see a turnover eight times a day. Chairs, tables and study carrels are constantly being snapped up by students waiting for a space. People have resorted to sitting on the floor, just to get an outlet for their laptop. Colleen Cook said that investigating the next steps for increasing capacity for both books and students is high on her agenda.

Colleen Cook noted that when compared to other [research] libraries in Québec, Canada and the AAU, McGill’s collection is unique in Québec and highly unusual in Canada and the AAU. 30-40% of McGill’s collection is considered rare, in that they were published before 1960, when considerably fewer copies of books got printed. These “rare” books must be preserved; they are part of the ‘Global Collective Collection’, which means they are not in many collections in many libraries.

She reported that circulation data from the past 20 years show that 40% of the library’s collection has not been borrowed and many have only been circulated only 1-3 times.

Frédéric Charbonneau mentioned that he had met with Gillian Lane-Mercier earlier that day so that he could convey concerns from the Faculty of Arts about the rumoured disappearance of the library’s Reference Collection. He said that the members of the Faculty understand the severity of the space problem in the libraries and the need for student space.

He reported that while the Department of English was the first to express these concerns, his department (département de la langue et littérature français) feels the same way; that the dispersal of reference material would be an impediment to their work. He expressed the common feeling of surprise at the lack of discussion before this decision was made. Faculty members feel that the lines of communication are not clear between library administration and the departmental Liaison Librarians in the Faculty of Arts.

Colleen Cook responded by stating that the data they have indicates that, at peak usage, only about 20 items are circulated per day, and the usual number is only around two or three. Charbonneau noted that this was probably inaccurate, as many people will take something directly off the shelf and replace it without passing through the Circulation Desk. Cook noted that the number was small when compared with the extremely high
Colleen Cook apologized to Prof. Charbonneau, and to the Faculty of Arts for not coming to them first. Frédéric Charbonneau said that he understood from the rumours that the entire collection was being discarded. Colleen Cook responded that people may rest assured that she has spoken with Dean Manfredi, and that Sara Holder has been in touch with others in the Faculty who will be most affected. She confirmed that this was only rumour.

Colleen said that she has no doubt that the reference collection will have to move off the first floor, and that she is hoping to compromise by keeping things together in a way that will make sense to the user. She also stated that the library staff will keep talking and working on the problem until everyone is satisfied with the solution. She stressed again how vital the first floor has been and continues to be as a meeting place/group study area for students. Colleen Cook asked that Frédéric take these messages back to the Faculty of Arts.

Nigel Roulet added that he has heard from numerous people across McGill that everyone is short on space. He asked Colleen Cook what the compelling argument would be for Libraries to get their space issues addressed. Nathalie Cooke suggested that Colleen and Nigel meet at some point to discuss this further.

6. Discussion of community feedback on Libraries

Cora-Lee Conway shared a question with the committee that the PGSS was planning to ask as a referendum to its members: Should we continue the $3.00 user fee over the next 5 years? This, she said, would get students thinking about the auxiliary costs that come with being a grad student. She thinks the question might get a ‘No’ from students who don’t have context for what their money is actually used for, or what they risk losing by voting to waive the fee. She is an avid library user, and would like to be part of a committee that has voted ‘Yes’ to continued payment of the fee. She asked whether she could get some examples of how these funds have been used.

Elizabeth Gibson responded that while she cannot speak for the future use of the funds, the abolishment of overdue book fines pays back the $3.00 over many times. She noted that fines for recalls and reserves remain punitive, but it’s nice to not have to pay, just for forgetting to return books. Cora-Lee Conway responded that last year the money went to finite projects, because they had finite funding (the fee is a one-time payment), and that some people will complain that they are responsible, and therefore do not need to worry about late fees anyway.

Colleen Cook said that the PGSS user fees helped pay for the replacement of tables and chairs around the library last year. Without this money, people might still be sitting on 40 year old furniture. The PGSS funds also went directly back into the graduate student rooms, to the Office for Students with Disabilities, and to replace some books that were severely damaged due to wear and tear. Elizabeth Gibson brought up the new book delivery service to any branch of the library, and expansion of study space. Colleen Cook also reminded the committee of the high cost for serial subscriptions ($11,000,000/yr), and that funds from SSMU and PGSS have helped with covering those costs as well.

Stephanie Bachelet expressed her appreciation for the newly opened-up space on the 4th floor in the Law library. She attended the Town Hall meeting on budget, and overheard someone suggest not keeping the library open
24 hours a day as a way to cut costs. Colleen Cook responded that keeping the library open all night was a very small cost, and that until she hears from the student body otherwise, they will continue to remain open overnight.

7. Other Business/Discussion

Colleen Cook reported that the Provost had given her the task of writing up a ‘worst-case scenario’ for the library budget. She asked the table to list the things that they would NOT want to be cut, especially if the budget was slashed by 10% (roughly $3,000,000, which is divided in half between personnel and materials).

Nigel Roulet said he would not like to see the position of Liaison Librarian disappear. The interaction between the Liaison Librarians and teaching units has been invaluable to students, in showing them how to use the library’s e-resources effectively. Some students use e-resources exclusively, so this service would be sorely missed.

Frédéric Charbonneau would be sad to see an interruption in serials if funds for acquisitions were cut. Books are easier to go back and purchase, whereas it would be much harder to obtain back issues for journals.

Cora-Lee Conway added that the vast collection of e-resources available should not be compromised. That this collection can be accessed anywhere in the world by McGill students is amazing.

Stephanie Bachelet said that space for students is always important, and Nigel Roulet responded that one thing studies have shown is the need for both social and intellectual spaces for students. Here at McGill, the library serves this vital role, especially on the first floor of the McLennan. Colleen Cook reminded the committee that these spaces don’t seem to work outside a library setting, to which Nigel Roulet agreed, and mentioned the statement made by architect Jack Diamond, who was a consultant in McGill’s master plan for the campus in 2005, about libraries serving as a place of quiet reflection and study, as well as providing space for collaborative research and social gathering.

Louis Houle said that since 2003 the library has been keeping track of the demographic for the HSSL and it grows increasingly varied all the time (only about 20% are actually Arts/Humanities students, 30% are Science and the rest is a mix of all other faculties). All students use the HSSL regardless of their area of study. Colleen Cook noted that ten years ago, they were convinced that libraries would be obsolete by now. Clearly this is not the case; technology is too isolating. People need human interaction while learning. Lori Kloda mentioned that the most recent LibQUAL surveys show a growing dissatisfaction amongst students with the lack of seating and room for group study.

There was no further business. Stephanie Bachelet moved for the meeting to be adjourned, seconded by Frédéric Charbonneau.