Library Committee
Final Report for Academic Year 2015-2016

The Library Committee for 2014-2015 was comprised of the following members:

- **Juliette Bourdier**, French-Francophone-Italian Studies
- **Louise Doire**, Religious Studies
- **Jennifer Fox** (Secretary), Chemistry
- **Katherine Johnston-Thom**, Mathematics
- **Herbert Parker**, Studio Arts
- **Lisa Samuel**, International-Intercultural Studies
- **Robert Westerfelhaus** (Chair), Communication

Meetings
As is the committee’s custom, we met twice during the academic year, once during the fall semester and once again in spring.

During both the **fall and spring meetings**, the Library was represented by:

- **John White**, the newly appointed Dean of Libraries; and,
- **Katina Strauch**, Library Assistant Dean of Technical Services

For others present at the meeting, please see the minutes.

The primary focus of both meetings this academic year was the effect of projected budget cuts upon the Library’s ability to serve the pedagogical and research needs of students, faculty, and staff. Dean White and his staff are working valiantly to mitigate the adverse effects of these cuts, but they are getting close to the point where there is little more they can do as their budget is already quite lean, with very little fat to cut.

As noted in the minutes for the fall meeting, the direct effects of the recent $40k cut in the Library's budget were limited to the elimination of one staff position.

The Library has separate budgets for its personnel, its operations, and the Library materials. The materials budget is the one discussed in meetings of this committee. If needed, the dean can use small amounts of the operating and personnel budgets to protect the materials budget (e.g., the current elimination of one staff position).

And indeed, the guiding philosophy in the Library’s response to budget cuts is to protect the materials budget at all costs. This year, the materials budget was not cut. (The Library has never had to cut the materials budget. This might change.)
This model might not be sustainable given the threat of substantive budget cuts, the extent of which is still unknown. Indeed, according to Dean White there is a tipping point after which the campus community would notice a decrease in the available resources of the Library, which might well occur if the Library experiences two years of budget cuts.

In contrast to previous years, the current uncertainty in the College's 2016-17 budget necessitates multiple budget scenarios, which the committee reviewed and provisionally approved, the dean being given the discretion to act as he deems necessary depending upon what cuts are made.

Which of these scenarios will be implemented depends upon the SC state budget decisions (determining cost of living adjustments, etc.) and the CofC Board of Trustees’ decisions on tuition increases, both of which decisions will be determined during the summer. The Library will thus make final materials budget decisions in July, which is rather late in the planning cycle but an exigency beyond the control of Library administrators.

The funding contingencies which are being planned for are:

1) the budget will remain the same as the 2015-16 budget (unlikely),

2) the budget will decrease by $200,000, or

3) the budget will decrease by $400,000 (both of the latter figures are in dollars adjusted for inflation).

In the way of a hypothetical exercise to aid in planning for contingencies #2 and #3, the Library staff is currently examining the 2015-16 budget to determine how they could have spent $200k or $400k less in materials this year and what impact such cuts would have had.

The biggest concern remains the inflationary cost of journals, which increases ~5% each year. Consequently, any contingency in which the Library budget remains the same (i.e., is not increased) is a de facto budget cut for the Library.

The Library has received a budget increase every year since 1970, so 2016-17 will be the first year since then that the Library is facing a real or de facto recurring materials budget cut. (The materials budget was protected in 2015-16 by elimination of a staff position from the separate Library personnel budget.)

As Dean White points out, it is difficult to recover from years in which the materials budget is cut, as irreparable damage occurs to the strength of the collection. Hence, the Library is pushing to keep the materials budget from being cut.

While the Library can survive one or even two years of real or de facto cuts, three years would spell a catastrophe in the material offerings (and services as well) of the Library that would be felt by the campus community and impact teaching, research, and T&P.
For perspective, three years of budget cuts would essentially wipe out the departmental budgets (the firm order budget of faculty-chosen resources) line item entirely.

One area in which the Library is planning to absorb budget cuts is the firm order budgets for each department on campus (faculty-chosen resources that are ordered each year). Departments that are under-utilizing their budget or requesting materials that do not circulate (are not checked out from the Library or used within the Library and re-shelved by Library staff) will see cuts in their firm order budgets.

Demand-driven acquisitions (e.g., certain e-books listed in the Library catalogue) will receive a budget increase in the projected budget. The demand-driven acquisition program has been very successful; once these resources are purchased, they tend to be used multiple times. Since purchases are triggered only when a resource has been accessed, the money spent on demand-driven acquisitions is more effective than money spent to purchase resources that sit on the shelf just in case someone will eventually use them, if at all (those resources fall under the shelf-ready approval plan, which will see a budget cut in the projected budget).

If budget cuts affect our Library’s print material holdings, that gap can be partially filled by Pascal Delivers. However, it is worth noting, the College is a net lender in the Pascal system. (Indeed, we lend more materials than anyone else in South Carolina.)

In short, like the college itself the Library is facing serious budgeting challenges for the foreseeable future. Dean White and his staff are doing all they can to minimize the potential damage of these cuts to the Library’s print and electronic collections with the intent of mitigating any possible adverse effects upon teaching, research, and T&P.

The committee applauds their efforts. And we go on record as saying that ensuring the Library’s ability to maintain its core collection and continue to acquire the most recent scholarship is absolutely essential to the mission of the college.

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Respectfully submitted,

Robert Westerfelhaus, Chair