Committee on the Library

Report for Academic Year 2020-2021

The membership of the library committee this year was:
Blackwell, Calvin - Economics
DeHaan, Kathleen - Communication
Domby, Adam - History
Grace, Carmen - Hispanic Studies (Secretary)
Ivey, Thomas - Mathematics (Chair)
McCollum, Malinda - English
Swart, Katie - Teacher Education

Committee Business

The committee met twice during the academic year, on October 22, 2020 and on March 24, 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings were held online via Zoom. Both meetings were attended in an ex-officio capacity by Dean of the Library John White and Associate Dean of Collection & Content Services Heather Gilbert. The main topics discussed were: the Library budget; Library operations during the pandemic; concerns about communications with academic users regarding items checked out; a proposal for merging this committee with the Educational Technology committee; and future plans for the library.

In addition to business conducted at the committee's meetings, in the periods before and between these meetings chair Ivey co-signed letters from Dean White in support of several curriculum proposals: for a new major in Environmental Geosciences (July 2020); for program changes for the Management major and minor (September 2020); for a Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics (November 2020); and for a minor in Business Applications of Weather and Climate (January 2021).

Library Materials Budget

The materials budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21 was $2,922,307, a 3.23% cut from the previous year's budget of $3,019,969. This cut was implemented by means of steep cuts of roughly $120k to the Approval Plan (a 70% decrease), $12k to firm orders (a 10% cut), reducing the $20k budget for New & One-Time Purchases to zero, holding the increase in the DDA (Demand-Driven Acquisitions) budget to $25k, and limiting the overall increase in the Serials budget to 1.24%. This last was possible due to some one-time factors, including making multi-year commitments to some serial subscriptions, and getting temporary pandemic 0% inflation deals with consortiums, sometimes in exchange for a commitment to a larger percentage increase later. (For more discussion, see minutes to the October meeting.)
For comparison purposes, the library would ideally plan for a 5-6% rate of inflation in serials costs. For example, the serials budget was $2.2 million in FY2015-16, and would be at $2.8 million now if these planned increases had been made. However, as the following chart shows, the materials budget has been cut in three out of the past five years. (These were the first decreases in this budget since 1970.) The Firm Orders and Approval Plan budgets have suffered particularly large cuts in recent years.

At the March meeting of the committee, Dean White commented that current budget levels in areas such as Firm Orders and the Approval Plan are as low as they can go without severely restricting the ability of faculty to obtain materials to support research and teaching. Fortunately, through judicious management of purchase requests, librarians have also held costs for the streaming platform Kanopy PDA at $80k.

The Library has requested an increased budget of $3,140,000 for FY2021-22. This includes a 6.14% increase ($158k) in the serials budget, and $60,000 allocated to purchase access to the IEEEExplore electronic library, which will support the College's new programs in Electrical and Systems Engineering. In addition to this subscription change, the library now has expanded access to the current newspaper database Access World News Research Collection, has initiated a 1-year trial to
the historical database Black Life in America, but has cut access to the Wall Street Journal Online (after the School of Business declined to continue co-funding this resource due to low usage).

**Library Operations**

The pandemic has affected library operations in numerous ways, including:

- reducing allowed building capacity to 500 persons (from up to 2,000 students at peak times in normal years) and removing 3 out of every 4 chairs to reinforce physical distancing;
- restricting Library access to College cardholders only;
- reducing hours (e.g., on Saturday mornings) to allow for deep cleaning;
- reductions in staffing (amounting to 10% of faculty/staff lines), due to unfilled positions and employee departures under the Voluntary Separation Program, have also made it difficult to maintain the same hours of service.

At the same time, library facilities remain essential for students. At the October meeting, Adam Domby noted that students need safe places to study, and they preferred to work in the Library instead of their dorm rooms. Students who need to print out course materials (that they might have otherwise received during in-person classes) often do so using printers in the Library; however, these are managed by Information Technology, so that library staff are unable to fix these printers if problems arise during evenings or on the weekend. At the March meeting, Heather Gilbert noted that a tension has developed between students who wish to go to the library to meet up with their peers, and those students who want a quiet place to work with not too many people around. To help the latter group, the Library has implemented an online "traffic meter" showing how busy the library at any moment.

Dean White commented that, while they were expecting a deluge of complaints about library operations during the pandemic, instead many users were thankful for making the Library a safe space. Still, with far fewer users than in normal years, they have gotten substantially less feedback, and it is unlikely that they will be able to use this year's usage data for future planning.

**Circulation and Communication**

Beginning in Fall 2019, the Library implemented a new cloud-based circulation system that is managed jointly by all members of the PASCAL consortium of libraries. (This system replaced the previous locally hosted system, which went online in 2004 and was obsolete as early as 2010.) Calvin Blackwell observed that several aspects of current system (mostly concerning emails) were problematic for users:

- Automated emails sent by this system seem to come from "outside the organization" and are prefaced by yellow-highlighted warning labels saying this. Thus, out of an abundance of caution, users might delete these as spam.
- Emails include details about what materials users currently have checked out of the Library, and as these are sent to official College addresses, they become a state record. This raises privacy concerns.
- Under current policy, one can't check out additional materials if one has too many overdue items. This may come as a surprise to some users.

Dean White responded that these changes were repeatedly announced in newsletters, with screenshots and how-to guides, beginning in 2019. However, it is hard to get faculty to pay
attention to such communications given that everything must be channeled through Yammer. Because the current circulation system is jointly managed with other institutions, it may not be possible to change the policy limiting additional checkouts. However, it may be possible to set a preferred email address for circulation emails.

**Merger Proposal**

In February 2021, Faculty Senate Speaker Simon Lewis contacted the chair of this committee, as well as Dean White and Educational Technology Committee Chair Marian Mazzone, suggesting that these two committees might consider merging. Lewis gave several rationales, including the fact that it is difficult to fill all the standing faculty committees, the Library Committee has a relatively light workload, and the Library is in many ways "the hub of educational technology on campus". Mazzone responded that the Ed. Tech. Committee already has a substantial workload, and felt that a merger would not be productive. Ivey responded that faculty members who serve on the Library Committee may feel passionately about libraries and their central role in scholarship, but may be less interested in technology (and vice-versa, no doubt), but promised to bring up this suggestion at the March meeting. At this meeting, members of the Library committee echoed these objections to merging, and Dean White pointed out that the committee's workload has been heavier in other years, as for example when difficult choices have to be made about budget cuts. In the end, the committee declined to support the merger proposal.

**Future Library Plans**

The Library is planning a renovation in Summer 2022. This may necessitate temporarily relocating the reference desk and closing the Calhoun Street entrance. Part of this renovation will result in creating new collaborative learning spaces in the library, and a new exhibit space for the collection of the former Rivers Communication Museum.

Yet another effect of the pandemic, and the resulting shortages of staff time, is that the announcement of the Library's Strategic Plan has been delayed from summer/fall 2020 to the next academic year.

**New Committee**

Chair Ivey also convened a meeting with members of the incoming Committee on the Library in early May 2021, for the purpose of electing a new chair. Katie Swart (Teacher Education) has kindly agreed to serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Thos. Ivey
Library Committee Spring Meeting  
October 22, 2020 via Zoom

In attendance: Calvin Blackwell, Adam Domby, Carmen Grace, Thomas Ivey (chair), Malinda McCollum, Katie Swart, John White (ex-officio), Heather Gilbert (ex-officio).

Unavailable: Kathleen DeHaan.

The meeting began at 9:30am with Chair Ivey sharing the committee charge. The committee voted to appoint Carmen Grace as Secretary.

Recent Business: John White, Dean of the Library, wrote letters of support regarding library resources for a new major in Environmental Geosciences (in July) and for a Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics (in September). The committee voted to approve the Committee Chair's authorization to co-sign such letters.

Dean White and Heather Gilbert, Associate Dean of Collection & Content Services, reported on the proposed library budget for FY 20/21.

Dean White first remarked that, like libraries at many academic institutions across the country, CofC's library is in pandemic mode. Library operations are showing strain: Covid capacity is down to 500 (reached twice, during first week of classes) from normal capacity of up to 2000 students. White said that there has been a 10% reduction in library faculty/staff lines (e.g., to the "VSP" buyout.). Coupled with need to staff more points within the library (security desk, etc.), this has made it more difficult to maintain library hours open. The library also has to restrict hours more, e.g., on Saturdays, to do deep cleaning.

The rest of the report concerned the library materials budget, on which the Library Committee is primarily consulted.

- Between 1985 and 2014 this budget was always expanding, including at least inflationary increases; however, the budget began contracting under President McConnell. Still, the rate of acquiring instructional materials is 9%, which is good by national standards. Generally speaking, the Library is negotiating contracts and cutting things that are not being used.

- Assoc. Dean Gilbert showed 5-year history of library budgets -- especially, projections versus reality. The budget normally builds in inflationary increases in, e.g., serials cost. (The most expensive serials, by a factor of 5-6, are those required by School of Business, followed by SSM.) As of 2015, projection for FY21 budget was $3.7m but we are actually at around $3m. Library management got to this number by aggressively limiting serials inflation to around 2% and cutting the Firm Orders and Approval Plan budget. (The latter is cut even more in FY21 budget.). In the last two years additional savings were achieved by locking in subscription prices for 3-5 year periods. Gilbert went into more detail in several budget areas:
• **Serials:** This budget increase was held at 1.24%, due to a combination of one-time factors, including getting temporary pandemic 0% inflation deals with consortiums, sometimes in exchange for a commitment to a larger percent increase down the road. Over several years, journal orders from faculty have suffered a 70% cut because the library needs to have money for faculty to order materials. However, the current budget is not that bad because the library can still provide faculty what they need for instruction.

• **Firm Orders:** These are materials faculty specifically ask for. This budget has been cut from $336k in FY15 to $105k in FY21 proposal. Relative to other parts of the budget, this has not been cut as much recently (only 10% relative to last year), to allow for faculty to still order materials for instruction.

• **Approval Plan:** These are materials sent by publishers based on faculty profiles. This is now done by algorithms, since faculty don’t have time to give input. On balance, this has proved to be pretty successful, in that what faculty ask for is often already in the Approval Plan. The Approval Plan budget was cut from $330k in FY16 to $52k in FY21 proposal; in fact, it is currently frozen—publishers are sending lists of what they *would* be selling us, and at end of year the $52k will be spent based on that.

• **DDA/Kanopy:** DDA is the ‘Demand Driven Acquisitions’ program for e-books, which had a 30.12% budget increase. Kanopy PDA is a streaming platform that replaces what used to be spent on DVDs (a now obsolescent technology); while it’s a good platform, the rapid increases in the costs involved have at times seemed unsustainable. The way it works is, once a film is watched for more than 30 seconds by three users, the Library is obliged to purchase access to this resource, typically at $150 per film. (Kanopy offers titles at a variety of prices, but the expensive ones are what users want to watch.) Spiraling costs have been controlled somewhat by negotiating a lower price, and only paying for access to resources not elsewhere available in collection. The Library intends to hold the cost of Kanopy at $80k.

• Budget cuts like those above have spurred careful analysis of resource use. Lately, the library has shifted more spending into journals instead of books, based on faculty feedback, and to buying individual subscriptions instead of series. There is also the library serials survey, where information is collected about what serials faculty want to keep or not. Getting new subscriptions is still possible, and some can be cheaper. For example, the library is proposing to subscribe to IEEEXplore, a package of electrical engineering journals and other digital resources. This would only cost around $60k annually, a pretty good deal, and would support other programs (e.g., Computer Science); without it, the new engineering programs would be sure to run into accreditation trouble.

• At best, this year's budget will be the same as last year's $3,019,969, with no increases for inflation. This means that after this year the Library has no cushion: if there is any inflation in costs then there will be more (and more
painful) cuts.

*Questions from Committee members:* Calvin Blackwell remarked that he used to use ILL services a lot to get journal articles. How much is now spent on ILL and Pascal? Dean White replied that it is hard to tease that amount out, because not all the costs involved are spent on acquiring materials---some contributed costs go to maintaining the catalogue, and access to databases through Pascal. As a general comment, if access to a journal is cut, it can be much more expensive for users to access articles on a per-article basis through ILL. Over the last ten years, it’s become a regular practice to monitor all resource usage and, e.g., cut access to journals not being used and get new subscriptions to journals that folks were using frequently by ILL. Unfortunately, now the Library has run out of easy ways of moving money around like that.

On other matters, Dean White recognizes that the library is operating differently because of the pandemic and the need of social distancing. He would like to know if the members of the committee know of any questions or concerns from the student body.

Adam Domby commented that students need safe places to work and prefer to work in the library instead of their dorms. He gets enquiries from students asking if they can study in empty classrooms (which are sometimes available in the evenings). Dean White answered that the problem with library access is the locked doors in the buildings. Public Safety already spends a good amount of their time unlocking doors, and card-enabled access to buildings has to wait until all the door locks are changed. (This has happened in some of the newest buildings on campus, e.g., SSM, which students do seem to use after hours a lot; but in some ways the whole campus is at the mercy of the locksmith.) White noted that there is a list of study spaces available in the *Back on the Bricks* website that can be used by students.

Ivey asked about students needing to use the Library to print materials. Dean White said that printers at the library are managed by IT, but IT does not have staff on duty in the evenings or weekends. When the printers break down, students expect library staff to fix them, so this is a problem. Ivey recommended bringing this issue to the next Town Hall.

Ivey also asked about the Library’s Strategic Plan. Dean White responded that it was supposed to be put in effect late summer or fall, but due to the pandemic it had to be postponed, just as the College’s Strategic Plan has been, and White hopes to share it with the committee in the spring.

Lastly, Ivey enquired about the status of the collection of the former Rivers Communications Museum. Dean White said that as of last year plans were already underway (architects consulted, fundraising underway, etc.) to make more exhibit space
on first floor of library for this collection. This is part of a renovation intended to make
more collaborative learning spaces in the Library.

The next Committee meeting will be planned for March 2021.

The meeting ended with the approval of the April 2020 minutes by voice vote and
adjourned at 10:30am.

Respectfully submitted.

Carmen Grace
Secretary

Thomas A. Ivey
Chair

**Library Committee Spring Meeting**

March 24, 2021 via Zoom

In attendance: Calvin Blackwell, Adam Domby, Malinda McCollum, Carmen Grace,
Thomas Ivey (chair), Katie Swart, John White (ex-officio), Heather Joanne (ex-officio).

Unavailable: Kathleen Anne DeHaan.

Agenda:

- Library budget discussion (J. White)
- Library user concerns (C. Blackwell)
- Committee functions discussion (T. Ivey)

The meeting was called to order at 3pm by Chair Ivey. After introductions, the minutes of
previous (Oct. 2020) meeting were approved by a voice vote.

**Budget update from Dean White & Associate Dean Gilbert:**

White reported that the library budget has played out much as anticipated last fall, with no
additional cuts to the collections budget. The only resource reduction has been the WSJ [Wall
Street Journal] Align service; this is a database primarily for the School of Business. When the
Library communicated user statistics to the SOB leadership, it was decided that the level of
usage wasn’t enough to justify the $20k that the school was contributing annually, and the
library declined to fund it on its own.

However, staffing has been a challenge, as the library lost some personnel due to the Voluntary
Separation Program buyout and some other unfilled positions have been `swept'.
Academic Affairs has presented the Library’s budget request to the Board of Trustees (BOT), including two important features:

- A roughly 6% amount ($158k) for serials inflation
- Funding the IEEExplore package which supports the new engineering programs.

The BOT has been made aware that there are no existing library resources to support engineering majors, so it seems likely that they will fund IEEExplore. However, if the BOT doesn’t fund the inflationary increase in serials, that $158k will have to come from somewhere else in the materials budget -- for example, this could necessitate a large (but temporary) cut in Firm Orders -- print or electronic books ordered by faculty on campus. Such a cut would be severe, and it would affect faculty and students.

Chair Ivey asked if, some of the potential damage could be absorbed by reducing the amounts spent on DDA (Demand Driven Acquisitions) programs. Associate Dean Gilbert replied that DDA actually saves money overall, since the library only acquires access to electronic resources (e.g., e-books, streaming movies) as they requested by users. In addition, it would be tricky to cut DDA purchases by, e.g., putting a cap on purchase prices. This could disproportionately impact programs that make extensive use of Kanopy resources (e.g., in LCWA). Gilbert added that we are one of the few institutions to keep Kanopy costs flat. Last year it was $80k, and we are on track to keep it at that level. (For a while it was growing fast, since it started out at $10k five or six years ago.) There is a library staff member who monitors Kanopy purchases and checks to see if the same resource is available through other means; if so, the library can get a refund from Kanopy.

White commented that, on the other hand, current budget levels in Firm Orders and Approval Plan are as low as they can go without seriously restricting purchases of instructional materials for faculty.

Gilbert added that, in terms of serials, while the access to the WSJ has been cut the library has expanded access to regional newspapers (e.g., Post and Courier, The State) through the Access World News Research Collection, and has arranged for one year access to the historical database Black Life in America.

**User Concerns**
Calvin Blackwell raised some concerns about recent changes in how the library notifies faculty about what resources they have checked out.

- Under the old system, it was impossible to access a record of what you had checked out in the past, because the library didn’t keep a record of it. [According to White, this was the library’s response to the Patriot Act.] Now when you check out some books, there is an email receipt sent to your CofC email address, so it becomes a state record. That’s concerning for reasons of privacy.
- When attempting to check out new books, you can’t do it if you have too many overdue books that haven’t been renewed. This is a change, and many of us were not aware of the change.
- Emails from the library (e.g., overdue notices, newsletters) come with the big yellow warning label that they come from "outside the organization". As a rule, we are told to delete these emails if they look in any way suspicious.
• Blackwell tried to find out when these changes were announced, but it is hard to find past newsletters on the library's website.

Dean White responded:

• The old checkout system was long overdue to be replaced, having been put online in 2004 and already being outdated by 2010.
• The new system is cloud-based and managed jointly by all libraries in PASCAL. (Hence, it is difficult to implement local changes in how the system operates.)
• These changes were announced starting in Fall 2019, with extensive newsletters, screenshots, video demos, etc. Admittedly, it is hard to get folks on campus to pay attention to such communications, especially given how faculty dislike using Yammer. However, every school has a Library liaison, and faculty can communicate with them for information and to make requests.

Ivey asked if Professor Blackwell's concerns about the privacy of checkout records might be addressed by making the email receipt feature optional. Dean White said he would check in to it; it might be possible to specify a preferred email address that's not your official College email.

White commented that Library management has been eager to return to normal operations. They were afraid that, due to the pandemic, there would be a deluge of complaints about the Library. Instead, many users have thanked them for making the Library a safe space.

[Before the meeting was called to order, Gilbert noted that the pandemic had necessitated removing 3 out of every 4 chairs in the library, to reinforce social distancing. There is now a tension between students who want to go to the library to be with their peers, and those who want a quiet place to work with not too many people around. For the latter, the library has added a "traffic meter" which tracks how busy the library is in real time.]

In this connection, Ivey noted that for the duration of the pandemic the Library has been accessible to cardholders only, and asked how long those access restrictions will continue. White replied that as a federal document repository, the library has to give some access to the general public. It is likely that, going forward, there will be hours when it will be card-access only— for example, when there is no security guard on duty. Again, the library has lost some staff positions, so it has been difficult to cover all the shifts. Another issue that may affect access to the library is the planned renovation in summer 2022. During that period, there may be times when only the Rivers Green entrance is open, and they are working with the architects to modify plans so that the reference desk is not in the middle of a construction zone.

On another topic, Ivey commented that the Browsing Collection on the main floor of the library seems like the analogue of the 'New Book' area in a public library -- since checkout is only allowed for two weeks, with no renewals-- and yet many books in those shelves are not new. Heather Gilbert replied that it's really a selection from the library's collection intended for 'casual reading' purposes, rather than research or instruction. They may revisit the checkout policy for these items.

Adam Domby asked how much do these items circulate, and Gilbert replied that it's difficult to track. It seems like sometimes the shelves are half-empty, and then the shelves fill up again.

White noted that normally, the selection in the Browsing Collection is periodically refreshed. (For example, during the 'Fun Home' controversy the library put out every controversial
graphic novel in its collection). Unfortunately, this was not possible last year due to Covid-related staffing problems. Still, they would like to know if library users find the Browsing Collection appealing.

White said that, compared to normal years, the Library has seen substantially fewer users this year. For example, there are fewer than 400 students in the library at any one time during the pandemic, while in other years there are often more than a thousand users at certain times. As a result, Library management has gotten far less feedback from users this year. For future planning, they may have to throw out this year's usage data.

**Suggested Merger with Educational Technology Committee**

Ivey related that in February he had been approached (via email) by Faculty Senate Speaker Simon Lewis with a proposal to merge the Library and Educational Technology Committees. Lewis’s rationale was that it has sometimes been difficult to fill all the faculty committees, the Library committee’s workload is comparatively light, and yet the Library itself is the "hub of educational technology" on campus. The reaction of the chair of the Ed. Tech committee (Marian Mazzone, who was copied on this discussion) was negative, because that committee already has plenty to do. Nevertheless, Ivey promised to present Lewis's proposal for consideration by the Library committee.

Adam Domby felt that the faculty who are interested in educational technology may not have much overlap with faculty who, like himself, are passionate about libraries and their central role in scholarship.

Blackwell felt that, while he supported having fewer committees, this particular merger would be a bad idea, for one because of the large workload the Educational Technology committee already has. However, Blackwell might be open to a merger with another committee, just not this one.

Gilbert added that she had served on the Educational Technology committee herself and thought that there was little overlap (if any) between the concerns of these two committees.

Chair Ivey asked if, on the other hand, the work of the Library Committee might be expanded. He pointed out that the existing committee charge includes "compiling statistics on the number of volumes, circulations, and expenditures" of the Library; so, some committee members could be delegated to do that. The charge also includes "receiv[ing] recommendations from faculty, the schools, and the departments" to aid library development, services and increase usage; so, some committee members could actively solicit such recommendations from the various Schools within the College.

Dean White commented that the work of the committee has been much greater in other years when, for example, there have been difficult choices to make in cutting the serials budget.

In the end, the committee members decided to keep the committee charge unchanged.

The chair enquired if members felt there was need for an April meeting in order to help finalize the committee report. It was agreed that discussions and revisions of the report could be carried out by email.

The meeting adjourned at 4 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carmen Grace
Secretary

Thomas A. Ivey
Chair