

Senate Libraries Committee Report, 2012-2013 (April 2, 2013)

This has been a busy year for the GW Libraries. The Provost's committee conducting a strategic review of GW Libraries, which came into being because of recommendations from the Senate Libraries Committee, has been working throughout year; some of that committee's activities have been reported to the Senate as part of an interim report earlier this semester. Additionally, GW is seeking a new University Librarian to replace Jack Siggins, who retired at the end of last summer. Of course, Gelman is also undergoing a substantial remodeling.

The Libraries Committee has met with the Librarians' Council, which provided fresh perspective on issues affecting Gelman in particular. We recommend that such joint meetings occur at least annually.

The Libraries Committee also met with the two outside consultants (Karin Wittenborg from UVa and Jim Neal from Columbia) brought in by the Strategic Review Committee, in what was a watershed kind of event: hearing their candid assessment of Gelman strengthened the Libraries Committee's resolve to make sure that the Provost's committee produces a report that will result in decisive action to address the needs of the University. The strategic review committee has also crafted a survey asking faculty and graduate students about their use of Gelman and its adequacy for their teaching and research; that too will play a role in shaping the final report this committee sends to the Provost.

The Senate needs to be aware of the serious problems we face with our library resources, and needs to continue to work with the administration to see that in this area we are making progress commensurate with our aspirations. Among other things, next year's Libraries Committee should study the final report of the Provost's strategic review committee, and report to the Senate on its statement of goals and recommendations, as well as on what actions the administration takes to address them.

In a separate matter, the Libraries Committee considered a request from Gelman librarians that the Senate support a librarian (currently working at McMaster's University) threatened with a lawsuit by a publisher unhappy with his blog-posted characterizations of the quality of the press. Unable to devote enough time to the issues to formulate an independent, objective assessment, the Committee decided not to pursue the matter at the moment, although it recognizes that a publisher attempting to curtail the speech of an academic librarian through legal intimidation is serious business; the Committee may return to this issue in the coming year.

David McAleavey, Chair; faculty members: Vincy Fon, Simon Berkovich, Richard Stott, Chunlei Liang; ex officio members: Vice Provost Steve Ehrmann (for Provost Lerman), Scott Pagel (Law Library), Anne Linton (Himmelfarb Library), Andrea Stewart (GW Libraries)