REPORT OF THE SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR LIBRARY POLICIES AND OPERATIONS
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This is a report on current concerns facing the Northeastern University Library, prepared by a faculty committee chaired by Professor Elizabeth Maddock Dillon (English) and including Professor Paula Caligiuri (D’Amore-McKim School of Business), Professor Malcolm Hill (Marine and Environmental Sciences), Sarah Hooke-Lee (Director of Research and Information Service, School of Law), and ex officio member, Dean William Wakeling (University Libraries).

The committee has been charged with considering policy issues involving the Library’s strategic planning, infrastructures and resources, collections development and maintenance, program and service development, and other matters of concern to the faculty as Northeastern strives to achieve and retain status as a top teaching and research university. In the report below, we discuss four main areas of concern—space, data curation, communications, and budget—each of which pose challenges as the Library seeks to provide services to a university with a growing research profile.

1. Space

Space is increasingly under pressure in Snell Library as students, both undergraduate and graduate, seek more room for individual and group study space. The Library has pared down its print collections to make room for innovative space configurations and technology that is in high demand by students and faculty, but the need for study space will require further reduction of the print collection. Specifically, the Library is currently working to reduce print materials on the third and fourth floors of the library, with the goal of freeing up space equivalent to as much as an entire floor. In order to reduce the space taken up by print material, the Library has developed policies for identifying and relocating materials that are either not used or are available in digital form. It has also adopted a “digital first” policy for new acquisitions, a policy affirmed by this Committee in its report to the Faculty Senate in April 2013: whenever a journal or book is available in digital form, the library purchases the digital edition only, rather than the print edition (with certain specific exceptions). This serves not only the interest of making more space available for student use in Snell, but also the interests of NU students who are not located in Boston, including those in the Global Network and those working and studying outside of Boston.
The reduction of the print collection will not happen rapidly because it is a time and labor intensive process that involves identifying materials that are duplicates, that have been superseded, that are not being used, or that are available in other formats or from other sources. Subject to funding and other contingencies, in the next five years, the Library will aim to reduce the current print collection in Snell from 780,000 volumes to 400,000 volumes. Some materials will go into compact storage in other locations; some materials will be removed from the Library. The Library is also working with a consortium that is examining options for shared space for storing materials off site and is a partner in Eastern Academic Scholars Trust, an organization which aims to identify long-term retention copies of all print items across a consortium of research libraries. The Library is particularly eager to work with faculty to make decisions based on academic principles in identifying which materials should be retained and which might be replaced with digital copies or removed from the library. Liaison librarians will be reaching out to faculty regarding the print collection in specific disciplines.

We recommend, the following:

- Faculty members should speak to their liaison librarians about materials that they would like to see the Library retain, and in particular, identify journals, indexes, and/or materials that are not often circulated that should be retained.

2. Data Management

Data management is an increasingly important part of the research process across a range of fields and brings with it new needs and challenges for scholars who require sustained access and storage of data associated with their research that may ultimately become publically available. The Library is an ideal location for offering support to faculty with data management needs and Library is committed to taking a leading and coordinating role in data management, curation, and the preservation of the University’s digital assets. Snell’s librarians have extensive experience with many of the roles essential to the management process for digital assets, such as selection and weeding, copyright guidance, metadata (cataloging), preservation, access control, and repository systems. However, this environment is evolving rapidly for both faculty and library staff and thus requires the 1) development of new protocols, 2) robust communication between library and faculty regarding key aspects of data management, and 3) resources to support library curation and management of data.

A number of key factors indicate the need for increased attention to supporting data management and the capacity of the library to support that need:

- External research funding at Northeastern has risen from $48.7M to $127.5M in the past decade.
- The Obama administration issued a memorandum in February, 2013 requiring that each “federal agency with over $100 million in annual conduct of research and development expenditures to develop a plan to support increased public access to the results of research funded by the Federal Government.”
• Federal (and private) funding agencies are increasingly requiring data management (including data dissemination) plans.
• Two Northeastern researchers who have been denied grant funding based at least in part on the quality of their data management plans have reached out to the Library for assistance with subsequent applications.
• More publishers are requiring that data supporting published articles be made openly available
• Data themselves are becoming scholarly products. Data papers – peer reviewed publications describing data sets – are becoming more common.
• Data management is not usually a prime concern of the funded researcher, and is a task often undertaken by, or in consultation with, the library.
• The Library supports digital preservation and management by offering assistance with creating data management plans, as well as digital curation services via the Digital Repository Service and a dedicated repository manager position.

There is, however, currently no clearly articulated service map that links the Library, ITS, and Research Compliance.

We recommend, the following:

• The University should form a research data management working group, with membership drawn from the faculty and staff, the Library, ITS, and the office of Research Compliance, charged with identifying and/or recommending a full suite of integrated services supporting the research data lifecycle. This working group will be able to identify a protocol for data management as well as the resources needed to support this protocol.
• The Library does not currently have adequate funding to sustain staffing and technical infrastructure at the scale commonly required for research data management and related data curation activities, so additional resources should be allocated for this purpose.
• As new protocols and services are developed, the Library should work to communicate with faculty about best practices and data management options.

3. Communication

Overview
Faculty time is heavily constrained, so the Library places a high priority on providing (with varying degrees of success) a variety of channels for ease of bilateral communication. The range of services now offered by librarians to faculty continues to increase and needs to be marketed, through both the formal and informal activities of librarians and the Library’s adoption of strategic promotional efforts and new tools. By way of illustration, the services librarians can now orient to faculty include: acquiring and facilitating access to resources; consultations related to research, copyright, archival collections and projects, the digital repository, GIS, media production and 3D printing; assisting with grants and data requirements; coordinating instruction and orientations; designing library-related class assignments; creating related instructional materials and guides; and collaborating on events and programs. Some librarians have over time developed relationships with faculty through their appointments on the University Undergraduate Curriculum
Committee, Graduate Council, Sustainability Committee, and Holocaust Awareness Committee, to name a few.

Each department has an assigned librarian liaison who specializes in the subjects covered by the department and departments assign a specific faculty member to provide a point of contact and liaise with the appropriate librarian. Despite outreach efforts, communication between the library and the faculty remains a challenge and one that is particularly important to address given the changing nature of library resources in the digital age.

Library liaisons assigned to academic departments solicit and welcome faculty feedback about library collections and research support services. Such feedback is crucial to inform the Library’s administration in shaping its strategic developments, collections decisions, and new research support initiatives.

The Library is eager to find ways to improve communication with faculty and has undertaken a number of programs to that end. Effective communication strategies need to be developed for an increasingly interdisciplinary environment, not necessarily based on traditional departments or disciplines and for reaching adjunct faculty, who may play a different role in each department, with no established channel of communication to the Library and its librarians.

We recommend the following:

- Academic departments should invite librarians to meet with them at least once a year to share information and meet new faculty and adjuncts to discuss ways of collaborating.
- Academic departments should invite librarians to September and January undergraduate and graduate kickoff events.
- Where appropriate, University committees should invite librarians to participate on university-wide and departmental level committees. More involvement by librarians in these activities would give the library a stronger understanding of University library needs and key University members a better awareness of Library services and resources.

4. Resources and Budget

Northeastern University is in transition to becoming a major research institution; progress in this direction is indicated in the recent designation of Northeastern as an R1 university. As a result, however, there are new demands on the library to grow its collection to support the work of faculty and students researchers in ways not previously available. For instance, many new faculty members at Northeastern may expect a level of research support—including access to digital materials in particular—that the university does not now support. Academic libraries everywhere are struggling to cope with unsustainable rates of price increase, especially in journal and database subscription prices. Overall rates of increase are currently outstripping collections funding increases for academic research libraries nationally, and Northeastern is no exception. The issue is more acute at Northeastern, though, due to a historically low baseline of University investment, a function of the relatively recent development of the University’s enhanced research mission.
At the same time, the change to a residential campus and the strong improvement in student quality have placed additional pressure on the Library to rebalance library space to meet increasing study and collaborative space demands. The solution has been met in part by the Library’s progressive commitment to creating and sustaining a predominantly digital information environment, including replacing print with digital surrogates. Unfortunately, this too has significant adverse cost implications (digital costs are expensive and ongoing) that continue to severely challenge the Library’s ability to align its strategy with its budget.

Financial factors affecting the Library include the following:

- Continuing trend of price hikes that exceed the rate of increase (max. 3%) of the Library’s base collections budget: typically 5-6% per year for journals over the last several years, with subscriptions now forming some 86% of the Library’s total budget outlay;
- Impact of “big deal” journal packages; positive benefits for information access but negative impacts because of the increasing share of the collections budget they consume and the loss of the Library’s flexibility to cancel individual titles;
- Impact of publisher/vendor pricing tied to FTE, number of “sites” or campuses, faculty productivity, research output, Carnegie Classification (all trending upward at NU);
- NU Library’s continued active involvement in consortial and bilateral bargaining to moderate cost increases;
- Acquisition of books, journals and other materials in digital format has substantial additional costs in the form of ongoing platform fees, etc.;
- Interlibrary Loan heavily used but becoming increasing problematic because of licensing limitations on ILL for e-resources;
- Open access (OA) not offering relief because most core literature is still mainly subscription-based or a combination of subscription-based and OA and requires purchasing/leasing.

The Library now struggles to maintain current journal and database subscriptions without annual cancellations or cross-subsidies and to support research in areas/disciplines new to NU (e.g. medicine-related), as well as the needs of newly recruited researchers in existing and evolving disciplines. To avoid further rounds of cancellations and establish a level of information provision that matches the institution’s aspirations, the University needs urgently to explore means of improving the Library’s collections budget.

**We recommend** the following:

- The Library should receive a significant one-time boost to its collections budget in order to establish an appropriate new working baseline that takes into account levels at peer institutions.
- The annual allocation for collections funding should at least match the projected inflation index for information resources.
• Colleges should consider contributing annual collections funding to cover those resources which are purchased/leased specifically for their unique programs and cannot be covered by core funding.

• Other options for supplementary funding should be reviewed, including annual allocations from colleges to cover interlibrary loan use by their faculty and students, and the use of grant-awarded funds to cover information needs associated with enhanced research information needs.