Director's Column: Library Committee Initiates Print Journal Review

The Library Committee is an advisory group that studies and makes recommendations regarding the development, use and improvement of library resources, services and facilities. With representatives from each of the colleges and the Student Association, it also serves as the liaison group between the library, faculty and students.

This past fall the Library Committee and I discussed at length the library's acquisitions budget and the effect of state budget cutbacks, which was the topic of my Director's Column in the last issue of Zahnow Notes. We talked about the difficulty of coping with no increase in the acquisitions budget when the cost of journal subscriptions is projected to increase by 12-14% this year. While canceling journal subscriptions would have been one way to make sure that we didn’t exceed our budget, the library made the difficult decision to reduce spending on books and preserve our current subscriptions to print journals this fiscal year.

As we begin to hear more and more about the continuing state deficit and the prospect of additional cuts in higher education budgets next fiscal year, the Library Committee has already begun to think about the impact of yet another year with no increase in the acquisitions budget or, potentially more harmful, a reduction in the current level of funding. With no increase in the acquisitions budget next year and just a modest increase in journal prices, there would be little choice but to reduce the amount of money spent on journal subscriptions.

This year the library will spend approximately $340,000 to maintain its current print journal subscriptions, which amounts to...
60% of the total acquisitions budget. As we look ahead to next year, the Library Committee is now asking, “Are all of these journals essential to the courses and degree programs we offer now? Are they truly useful to and used by students and faculty? Are there some obvious candidates for cancellation?” Clearly, we need input from all faculty in order to answer these questions.

As a means of obtaining faculty input, the Library Committee recently called for a review of our current print journal subscriptions. Journal lists were generated and sorted by academic department. In early February, each Department Chair received a list of the print journal titles related to his or her department, including subscription costs for this year and the past three years. A cover memo explained the rationale for conducting a review at this time.

As departments collectively evaluate each title, the Library Committee and I hope to learn which print journals we absolutely need to have, which are of occasional use to students and faculty, and which may be candidates for cancellation.

The acquisitions budget the library receives in July of this year will dictate whether or not journals will need to be canceled for 2005. While we hope it will not be necessary, the bottom line is that we want to be prepared and we want faculty to be part of the decision-making process. Should it be necessary, Department Chairs and faculty will have an opportunity to review in late August the complete list of candidates for cancellation from all departments before any cancellations are finalized.

We hope to hear from all faculty as we undertake this important project. We do appreciate everyone’s support as we develop a plan for dealing with whatever the future may hold.

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