

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee

Thursday, October 26, 2000

1:30 – 3:00

The Morrill Room

Morrill Hall

- Present: Fred Morrison (chair), Wilbert Ahern, Muriel Bebeau, Linda Brady, Dan Feeney, Richard Goldstein, David Hamilton, Marvin Marshak, V. Rama Murthy, Paula Rabinowitz, Charles Speaks, Billie Wahlstrom
- Regrets: Susan Brorson, Les Drewes, Marti Hope Gonzales, Joseph Massey, Jeff Ratliff-Crain
- Absent: none
- Guests: Assistant Vice President Victor Bloomfield, Executive Vice President Robert Bruininks, Senior Vice President Frank Cerra, University Librarian Thomas Shaughnessy, President Mark Yudof,
- Other: Pauline Oo (University Relations)

[In these minutes: the libraries and academic publishing]

Professor Morrison convened the meeting at 1:30 and noted that it was one of the “Intellectual Future of the University” discussions held periodically by the Committee. The topic at this meeting was the libraries and academic publishing.

Dr. Bruininks reviewed briefly data about library costs he had obtained at a meeting of the AAU and said that universities are “on a collision course” with the prices of academic journals. These escalating costs raise a number of issues for the faculty, he said, including peer review and publication outlets, standards for tenure, and academic freedom.

Dr. Bloomfield distributed copies of a resolution he had prepared for the Committee 18 months ago and said there was a high degree of consonance between its language and what is being said about academic publishing. He also pointed out that one of the themes in the training sessions on the responsible conduct of research is publishing.

Professor Morrison said he would like to focus on what the “storehouse of knowledge” would look like in ten or twenty years and what access to it would be. Will it be different from the libraries of today? If so, how should the University move in that direction?

Professor Marshak recalled that Dr. Shaughnessy had been in a meeting with about 50 faculty and representatives from Elsevier and a number of things came out of it. First, if Dr. Shaughnessy had shut

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down Walter Library five years ago there would have been a revolution; most faculty, however, have not gone to Norris Gymnasium (the temporary site of IT library materials while Walter is being remodeled) because many journals are available electronically and because there is a delivery service for any books that are needed. The non-physical library is already here, he concluded; one does not need to wait ten or twenty years to see it.

Second, Elsevier is adopting a Marxist pricing philosophy: it offered universities all 1100 of its journals—electronically or paper—for 10% more than the institution has paid up to now for those to which it has actually subscribed. So if a university had subscribed to 700, it pays 10% more for all 1100; if it had subscribed to 500, it pays 10% more for all 1100. A number of the faculty at the meeting said the institution could only afford to accept the offer if it gave up the paper subscriptions because the additional funds needed could only be found by giving up the expense of handling the paper copies.

Professor Marshak was of the view, apropos Dr. Bloomfield's resolution calling on institutions to cooperate in fighting high journal prices, that such collusion could violate anti-trust laws and that the chance of the cooperating occurring were in any event slim. The question before the Committee, he maintained, is whether the University is willing to give up paper copies, in at least some fields; doing so might recover enough money to keep the libraries afloat for another couple of years.

One problem in giving up paper copies, Dr. Shaughnessy told the Committee, is the extent to which access to electronic files would be assured. Elsevier knows this is a concern and will provide access to the last five years plus all future volumes but it has not said how the files will be available. Electronic archiving provides ACCESS; the University OWNS the paper copies. Dr. Shaughnessy also observed that the University is a land-grant institution; 20-30% of the people in the libraries each day have no connection to the University. Typically electronic access is limited to those who have an affiliation with the institution. Access to others could be made available but that would be a change in policy.

On the last point, Professor Hamilton said he had recently been at the University of Wisconsin and had read access to electronic journals, so that problem can be addressed. He commented that he had recently written a review chapter and searched a large number of articles; without online access he would have been unable to do so. One journal he uses publishes 25,000 pages per year; one cannot keep up unless one can search electronically. "Paper is gone," he said.

Professor Rabinowitz said she would like to argue the other side. When libraries got rid of card catalogues, they lost the advantage of proximity. One must know what one wants in an electronic search but in the library one can find things physically together. There are ways that electronic searches are useful but they are not when one does not know what is there to be found. Walking through the stacks allows one to see those things one does not know about. Dr. Bloomfield rejoined that he uses a weekly electronic search tool that yields about 200 hits, of which he keeps perhaps 10, and the entire process takes him about 30 minutes. Moreover, disciplines are such now that one could be looking for literature related to economics, microbiology, and chemistry; the linear shelf is less important than it once was because things are connected through electronic indices in ways to help scholarship one could not imagine in the past.

That is true for materials now and in the future, Professor Rabinowitz rejoined, but for those who do research on the past do not have materials available electronically. Professor Morrison said that no

one is suggesting closing the libraries; the issue is how to acquire and deal with new material. And to classify and use older material, Dr. Bloomfield added. Professor Morrison reported that all past U.S. law reports are now available electronically, but Dr. Cerra commented that knowledge of past materials is a problem because, for example, epidemiological studies of medical records will almost certainly NEVER be available electronically. Professor Marshak agreed that no one argues for closing the libraries and eliminating paper; what can be argued, he said, is that the University--or even the CIC universities--do not need 50 copies of *The Physical Review* from 1925. The humanities may need multiple copies of works, he said.

There is great difference between disciplines on how information is organized, Dr. Shaughnessy observed. The sciences and law have moved faster in adopting technology so more information is available electronically in those fields; the social sciences have been catching up but the humanities are still heavily a print world.

There is serious concern about the scholarly monograph, Dr. Shaughnessy said, and the way faculty move up in their careers. This gets to the point of the scholarly publishing system, Dr. Bloomfield agreed. The economics of publishing a monograph should have nothing to do with its intellectual content; electronic publishing is not costly. What is required is a system-wide acceptance that an electronic publication counts as much as a book for a faculty member and a dean. This is also an area where the humanities can be helped.

Professor Marshak said that according to Elsevier the cost of a publication is in the editing, with much less in printing. If electronic publishing is to be valuable there must be editing and a gatekeeper; if Elsevier is telling the truth, there may not be great savings to be achieved with electronic publishing. The library budget is about \$25 million; if the sciences stop buying paper copies of journals, what savings would there be in receiving, binding, and storage, he asked? Dr. Shaughnessy said binding costs about \$100,000. Some journals are not available electronically so paper copies must be purchased. There are 23,000 paid subscriptions; if one-third of them are in the sciences, there would be savings in staff costs (many of them student employees) if paper copies were eliminated.

The problem with the current system, the President commented, is that the libraries must maintain both systems, electronic and paper, with the fixed costs of both. Savings from electronic publishing are likely to be minor, he maintained; like other digital technology revolutions, one does not save money from them. Savings will accrue only with radical changes, such as not building an archives building and building search engines instead. Machines will not replace people even if one uses search engines; even without paper copies of journals, there will still be a need for people to help patrons use the search engines. In order to make any gains one must rethink what the library is, he concluded.

More and more, Dr. Shaughnessy said, libraries are teaching students how to find materials and how to bring value judgments to what they find--they are increasingly offering instruction on how to use materials conscientiously and well. With more students off-campus and without access to the libraries, they are also sending out a lot more materials to them.

Both Drs. Bloomfield and Shaughnessy spoke of validating faculty work through publisher evaluation of whether or not the work is worth publishing, Professor Morrison commented. (Peer reviewers make the judgment, Dr. Bloomfield interjected.) What is happening is that publishers are paying peer reviewers to be editors of the journals so they can sell the journals to libraries. He related

that he edits a professional society journal that costs subscribers \$40 per year; the corresponding journal published professionally costs over \$500 per year. If faculty are to rely on electronic publishing they must establish the equivalent of university presses that can say something is decent scholarly work and deserves the imprimatur of the press. This will require an institutional investment in dissemination "on our site" (rather than at another institution or organization). This also means the institution must accept the editing function and handle the associated costs.

Professor Wahlstrom, recollecting Dr. Shaughnessy's point that 20% or more of the library's patrons come from outside the University, said she surmised some come because of the value of what is in the library and the University's imprimatur on the materials. The same is likely true of materials the libraries send out. On the other hand, Google searches 1.2 billion web sites; one would be more confident of the search results if Google acted as a filter like the University's libraries. Students are not taught how to use these kinds of search engines.

The President agreed and said one sees that already. There is no hierarchy of knowledge in search engines; they represent the commodification of knowledge into packets, all of which are of apparent equivalent value. This also blurs the distinction between the library and archives, Professor Ahern commented. Archives often contained materials not intended for publication but which provide insight. Electronic searching is good in that much more is available; it is bad in that there are so many hits. Much sorting was done in the past by historical societies and the like, a function that is not performed to the same extent any more. There is a proposal to examine archiving in the electronic age, he reported, from the Minnesota Historical Society and Arizona State University.

Archiving is usually thought of as retention of a fixed copy of material, not an electronic copy, Professor Morrison said. Is there a consortium of universities retaining electronic copies? There is a mini-version in the caverns on the west bank, Dr. Shaughnessy said; the University has offered to take responsibility for the last copy of any scholarly book in Minnesota. They will be put in the caverns with preservation and access guaranteed. That cannot be done nationally because there is too much so there must be regional centers in order that libraries do not need to store all this material.

Does the University not own the electronic copies of the journals to which it subscribes, Professor Goldstein asked? Dr. Shaughnessy said that according to Elsevier, when an institution buys electronic access it buys an electronic file. Will one be able to read it in 20 years, Professor Goldstein responded? he said he did not know what it means to talk about a permanent electronic copy; paper copies will last hundreds of years. And if one is only LEASING access to the electronic files, the company can turn them off.

In terms of the stacks versus electronic copies, rights, storage, and cost are all issues, Professor Feeney said. He related that in his field they took a journal back from a publisher and are now producing paper copies. Electronic vendors have high costs; there needs to be a move away from the idea that electronic publishing is necessarily done by the private sector. The private sector electronic publishers are taking power away from authors. He said he was astounded by how little it costs to publish a journal that prints more than 1000 copies; it is about one dollar per copy; to put it on line could cost thousands of dollars. The journals are being held hostage by the publishers and it is ridiculous that universities lease knowledge on line.

Could one think about a University server, Professor Morrison asked? If the University would take on the function of putting its imprimatur on material, that could be translated to an electronic medium. Would that eliminate costs or put a big fixed cost on the University? Has the CIC discussed this, Professor Murthy asked? Once something is in electronic form, it does not matter where one is; there should not be duplication. In the electronic environment the main issues are licenses and copyright, Dr. Shaughnessy said. If something was published before 1920, the University owns it and can put it on the web and everyone can use it. The problem is copyrighted materials or licensed materials.

There are economies of scale that the CIC can achieve, Dr. Bloomfield said. Each university setting up a server is not economical. There are also the scholarly societies, he said; they are larger and have a broader membership/readership. There are also consortia to help with electronic publishing. There is a distinction between publications by universities or scholarly societies and for-profit publishers that have "captured us and are doing us in."

Dr. Cerra spoke about the role of the University library as an information source and the need to have information remain in the public domain (e.g., human genome data). What will the library's role be in keeping this information in the public domain, he asked, and will the University be called upon to absorb fixed costs in doing so? This is called "digital asset management," Dr. Shaughnessy said and is a critical issue; there is a need to develop descriptors and meta-data so there is standard terminology and data files are organized and connected.

With respect to the human genome data, Professor Marshak commented, it appears this is an area where universities will be competing with one another. The Harvard endowment is up 40%; other private university endowments have gone "out of sight" and they can raise tuition besides, so the private institutions have no incentive to get together. It is to their competitive advantage to control information. In the public institutions, income is constrained roughly to the rate of inflation so these schools are at a competitive disadvantage (as they are in faculty salaries) and may "get crushed" by the private institutions. So what is the University to do with its \$25 million per year for the libraries to keep its faculty as competitive as possible? The amount will not be \$35 or 40 million; what best can the University do with the dollars, he asked?

President Yudof said he agreed with Professor Marshak and with an observation Professor Feeney made: there is oligopolistic pricing in the electronic media. Dr. Shaughnessy has pointed out that the problem with books is that they have a high fixed cost but the cost drops as more are published. If that problem is fixed, faculty won't have a place to publish where the expected number of copies will not exceed 200. There could be a Big Ten server, with reviewers, that could market to 10,000 people at \$2 per copy. The professions would have to decide if they accepted such a publication. This is something that should be explored with the CIC, he said; it could affect university presses as well.

The University has among the best collections in the world in some areas, Professor Wahlstrom pointed out; would it be worth it to digitize and then sell them through the libraries? Dr. Shaughnessy observed ruefully that the libraries are not good at selling things--they are good at giving things away. They definitely should do something like what Professor Wahlstrom suggests, he agreed, but the libraries have no expertise in doing so. The libraries have 25 unique maps--that are on the web and that publishers use freely.

Professor Morrison summarized the views as follows: Dr. Bloomfield wants to give everything away and have lower costs; Dr. Shaughnessy and Professor Wahlstrom want the library to sell things in order to generate income to underwrite other costs; he and the President want to sell journals for \$2 each to make money. Dr. Bloomfield said information should be like linux, open and free; the ethos is to diffuse knowledge while costs need to be covered. One question is whether copyright is useful on scholarly work; there is no economic benefit to selling the work. Costs can be covered; the market for what the faculty produce is the faculty--who now give away their work and have to buy it back at a high price.

Faculty give away their work because it is in their interest to do so: they get rewarded because they publish in these journals that cost a lot of money, the President remarked. If the faculty wants this to stop, they should declare that anyone who publishes in an Elsevier journal will not be promoted. Otherwise, he said, he did not see how the system would be broken because it is in the interest of enough institutions not to do so.

Faculty are happy to share their work with each other, Professor Morrison said; only one in 10,000 is a human genome map with commercial value outside the University. It is free to them, too, so they produce something valuable when there is no copyright. Law schools have free access to materials and receive money from Lexis and Westlaw: for the two or three articles where there are hits, money goes to the library. When there is something really valuable, there probably should be a copyright for the individual and the institution. Material is given away to other academics; when those outside the academy want to use it, they are charged. Drs. Bloomfield and Bruininks thought that is a model that could be used elsewhere in the institution. That requires the institution support the practice, Professor Morrison said.

There is no single solution, Dr. Bruininks said. There are big issues associated with libraries on the campus. Universities do this to themselves. For all the technological revolution, they have thought little about the nature and meaning of scholarship. They could control more venues but it is not just that one solution; universities must think creatively about this. It is clear they cannot keep up with funding increases--they cannot print money fast enough. They must attack the problem on more than one front.

Dr. Bloomfield expressed doubt that his proposal that universities act in concert against publishers would violate the law. The standards of judgment an institution might use could include the cost to the institution of an individual publishing in very expensive journals. What would be accomplished, Professor Morrison asked? If the goal is the evaluation of the academic qualifications or prominence of an individual, or keeping at the University someone who is visible, what does the cost of a book have to do with it? To say that the University also recognizes other things of scholarly value--such as equivalent purveyors of academic work, such as a scholarly society, would have positive value that others would recognize.

The best journals in many fields are those published by scientific and scholarly societies, which are among the cheapest on a cost per page basis, Dr. Bloomfield said. The issue is individual advantage versus the common good; right now the balance favors what is best for individuals.

What will be decided about Elsevier, Professor Hamilton asked? Their publications are the worst in his field, and in others, he added. Discussions are still going on, Dr. Shaughnessy said. Electronic access to all 1100 of their journals would cost \$138,000 more than what the University is currently

paying. It may be said that the University does not want the last 400 journals it does not presently subscribe to but the software offer is quite attractive. Dr. Shaughnessy said that Elsevier is strong in the life sciences, but both Professor Hamilton and Dr. Bloomfield (both of whom are in the life sciences) said they do not read Elsevier journals. The libraries do use professional judgments in deciding what journals to subscribe to, Professor Marshak said, and they also rate quality as well as worry about availability.

The Duluth campus has access to all 1100 Elsevier journals, Dr. Shaughnessy said, and they seem to like it very much. Is it possible for large blocks of universities to consolidate their libraries and buy as a consortium, rather than duplicating subscriptions, Professor Feeney asked? It is possible with paper copies, Professor Morrison said; one can send the paper copy but not photocopy it. It is NOT readily possible with electronic publications, with a license describing who can use the material. The cost to the institution goes up when more people can use the material. On the other hand, Dr. Bruininks reported that the CIC has saved institutions \$3.3 million in recent years by doing exactly what Professor Feeney suggests.

Professor Morrison thanked everyone and adjourned the discussion at 3:10.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota