

Report of Senate Library Committee Ad Hoc Committee to Investigate Charge

To: Senate Library Committee
Jennifer Gunn, Chair

From: SLC Ad Hoc Committee to Review Charge
Jennifer K. Alexander, Chair
Isaac Fox
David Zopfi-Jordan
Mary Beth Sancomb-Moran (ex officio)

Re: Report of Ad Hoc Committee

Date: 4 February 2010

Attachments: Charge to Senate Research Committee
Charge to Senate Information Technologies Committee
SLC 2009-2010 Membership Roster
Twin Cities' Universities Libraries Organization Chart

Overview

The Senate Library Committee, at its meeting of October 7, 2009 and following a discussion of the enormous changes facing the academy and libraries generally, unanimously approved a motion to form a task force/ad hoc committee to review the charge of the Committee. Jennifer Gunn, SLC chair, had proposed that such a committee be formed to examine whether the SLC's charge reflects the way the committee does indeed work, and whether the committee should take a more active role in reviewing and consulting or advising on policies and library administration. Jennifer Alexander volunteered to chair the committee, and Isaac Fox, David Jordan, and Mary Beth Sancomb-Moran agreed to serve as its members.

Charge to the Ad Hoc Committee

On November 6, 2009, the Ad Hoc Committee received its formal charge from the SLC Chair. The Ad Hoc Committee was charged to examine the Senate Library Committee's charge and composition, with special attention to three general areas: 1) the role of the committee, 2) the scope of the committee's charge, and 3) the composition of the committee. The Ad Hoc Committee was also charged with investigating a general question: does the committee's composition match its scope? Questions about scope included what, under its charge, is the appropriate Senate Library Committee responsibility for coordinate campus and independent libraries on the Twin Cities campus that do not report to the University Librarian. The Ad Hoc Committee had access to a variety of relevant

documents, including the SLC charge, charges given to similar committees, the Regents' policy, the University Libraries' organizational chart, and minutes of recent SLC meetings (which were not yet posted). Senate Library Committee historical minutes and Regents' Minutes were consulted online.

The Ad Hoc Committee met for its first discussion on Wednesday, November 11, 2009, and conducted subsequent discussions via email or on the phone.

Senate Library Committee charge

This is the charge given to the Senate Library Committee in University Senate by-laws, section G. The Ad Hoc Committee paid particular attention to the SLC's duty to recommend, advise, and evaluate, and those sections of the charge are highlighted below.

The Library Committee represents faculty, academic professional, civil service, and student interest in the University libraries.

Membership

The Library Committee shall be composed of 12 faculty/academic professional members, 1 civil service staff member, 4 students, and ex officio representation as specified by vote of the Senate. Members shall be nominated by the Committee on Committees with the approval of the Senate. Academic professionals members must also be eligible to serve in the Senate. The civil service member shall be appointed by the Civil Service Committee and shall not be a library employee.

Duties and Responsibilities

- a. **To make recommendations** to the Senate on all matters concerned with the policies and administration of University libraries.
- b. **To advise** the directors and other heads of University libraries.
- c. **To evaluate** University-wide library facilities, services, and collections.
- d. **To recommend** to the Senate Consultative Committee such actions or policies as it deems appropriate.

Findings of committee

1) Role of the committee

The Ad Hoc Committee considered this in two ways: what has been the most recent historical role of the committee, and what role the committee might play in future, under its charge.

Role in recent history

In a review of SLC minutes from the past year, the Ad Hoc Committee concluded that the SLC has had almost no role in advising the University Senate or in the larger university or academic community. Information made available to SLC members during committee meetings is valuable, and committee discussions illustrate how broad a variety of viewpoints the University Libraries must engage, but beyond providing its own members with information and the opportunity for discussion, admittedly on critical issues, the SLC has done little. It has not made a recommendation to the University Senate in some time, the one exception being to request a rules change to allow additional ex officio members to be added to the committee roster. In the last year the SLC took one outside action. It sent a letter to Provost Sullivan in February of 2009 in support of the University Libraries' budget compact, to which he replied in an email that he appreciates SLC support for the libraries and respects how crucial the University Libraries are for scholarship and research, but that all units are being asked to make cuts. This is the only outside or advisory action the SLC took during the past year.

A review of the minutes of the last year reveals that the SLC has been largely a recipient of information provided by the libraries. The SLC has found the materials and reports provided by the University Librarian and members of the library staff to be important and valuable. The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that the primary role of the SLC in recent meetings has been to gather information offered by the University Libraries, and that it does not act in an advisory capacity beyond posing questions, or responding to questions posed by library staff, in SLC meetings. The importance of the issues discussed, and the SLC's role, is illustrated in a summary of the events of some recent meetings. The November 5, 2008, meeting was dedicated to reports from the University Libraries on the critical issue of its budget/compact hearing and its identified needs, the Google settlement plan, and library communication initiatives and strategies to liaison with faculty. In its meeting of March 4, 2009, the SLC discussed the reply from Provost Sullivan to its February letter, the University Librarian described the choices the library is facing in trying to identify cuts of 5-8%, and library staff reported on efforts to increase user productivity and discoverability.

The SLC did provide outside groups a venue for discussing initiatives of interest to the University Libraries and to scholars more generally. In the SLC meeting of May 6, 2009, in addition to a report from the University Libraries, the Committee heard a report on the Scholarly Communication Collaborative by its co-chairs Kris Fowler and Jim Stemper. Following their report, Ms. Fowler and Mr. Stemper asked the committee for recommendations on how to engage research and professional society officers in providing information to the Collaborative. It would be useful to know if attending the SLC meeting was helpful to the Collaborative, or if the co-chairs primarily viewed attending the meeting as a way to inform the SLC.

The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that the SLC has recently functioned as a recipient of information and reports from the University Libraries and from other sources connected with scholarly research and publishing, and that the SLC did not in fact play the role required by its charge. The SLC did not make significant recommendations to the University Senate, nor did it advise the University Libraries or evaluate library services, facilities, and collections. As one SLC member wrote to the Ad Hoc Committee chair, “Whatever the bureaucratic documents say, it seems obvious that we are ‘charged’ with representing the library user community to the library administration and the faculty senate.... [U]nfortunately I don’t think the library committee itself is doing it with much vigor or imagination.”

Role under charge

The SLC is first charged with making recommendations to the University Senate. It is then charged to advise the directors and heads of the University Libraries, to evaluate the libraries, and to make recommendations to the Senate Consultative Committee regarding actions or policies the SLC deems appropriate. The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that this charge gives the SLC wide latitude in considering and making recommendations not only on the delivery of services and content, discussions of which have made up the bulk of recent committee meetings, but on the goals of the University Libraries generally and their overall role in the academic and scholarly enterprise. The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that its charge does allow the SLC to act with “vigor [and] imagination.”

2) Scope of committee’s charge

Overlap with other Senate committees

In reviewing the scope of the SLC's charge, the Ad Hoc Committee solicited comments from SLC members on what other bodies might overlap in scope with the SLC. Six members responded. Two saw some overlap with the Senate Committee on Information Technology (SCIT), and one with the Senate Research Committee (SRC).

Overlap with the Senate Committee on Information Technology may lie in its interest in the delivery and management of content or information. Delivery in the libraries has become the almost exclusive domain of information technologies, which are now required even to access print materials. SCIT's charge closely resembles that of the SLC, but with a difference the Ad Hoc committee thought important: SCIT is charged not only with recommending on matters concerning information technology; it is also charged with promoting the further use of information technology, and with seeking new ways to deploy and advance information technologies. Minutes of recent SLC meetings reveal that SLC members are concerned about the use of information technologies, and SCIT's charge to advance information technologies, without regard to the ends to which they are put, would not reflect the larger interests in the libraries expressed by SLC members. This indicates an area of possible conflict between the charges to SLC and SCIT, and thus also indicates that the SLC has the scope to consider more general goals of the libraries within the academic and scholarly enterprise and is not restricted, as is SCIT, to considering the delivery or management of information.

Overlap with the Senate Research Committee may lie in the role of the University Libraries in providing access to published materials, and other materials, necessary to coordinate and advance research. In reviewing the charge to the SRC, the Ad Hoc Committee did not see overlap in duties and responsibilities. Instead, the two committees appear to have a parallel mission: the SRC, to promote the development of knowledge; the SLC, to help make knowledge available. Administratively, the two committees do have somewhat different constituencies, the Research Committee being more closely tied to academic matters through a closer relationship with the Faculty Consultative Committee, and the Library Committee having a broader constituency, with more non-faculty representatives and reporting to the University Senate through the Senate Consultative Committee. The Ad Hoc Committee noted that neither charge, to the Library Committee nor to the Research Committee, specifies the general purpose of its object; in other

words, the mission of the University Libraries or of university research is not specified in the committee charges.

Areas open for SLC attention

The Ad Hoc Committee identified several areas that may be uniquely within the SLC's scope to consider: issues of copyright and academic freedom, publishing rights, marketing or promotion of the libraries, libraries' funding, and, generally, the mission of the University Libraries. In a time of great changes in how materials are collected and used, and in how research is conducted, the Ad Hoc Committee concluded there was both the scope and the responsibility within its charge for the SLC to be active both in understanding changes and in advising on them.

An area to be clarified

The Ad Hoc Committee noted that the SLC charge limits its scope to the University Libraries. The relationship between the SLC and the libraries at branch campuses, and the role of committee members representing outside libraries, needs to be clarified. Such members may serve in an advisory role to the SLC and they do have a legitimate interest in the activities of the University Libraries. What remains unclear is their role in advancing the primary charge of the SLC to make recommendations, advise, and evaluate.

3) Composition of the committee

The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that the composition of the SLC does reflect its charge. It includes the specified number of faculty and academic professional representatives (12), a civil service representative, both undergraduate and graduate student representatives, and a variety of ex officio members. However, the Ad Hoc Committee did have a concern about the role of ex officio members. The Ad Hoc Committee was concerned that many ex officio members represent library units that do not report to the University Libraries, many of them from independent branch campus libraries. While this mirrors the composition of the University Senate itself, which includes members from branch campuses, the Ad Hoc Committee was concerned that the large presence of library professionals as ex officio members may bias the committee toward considering library issues from the inside perspective of professional library science and dilute its ability to function as an innovative and independent faculty advisor to the University Senate. The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the SLC clarify for itself the precise relationship between the University Libraries and the branch campus libraries, while

recognizing, as discussed above, that issues concerning the branch campus libraries themselves are beyond the SLC's scope. The Ad Hoc Committee then recommends that the SLC decide what should be the composition of the roster of ex officio members and what their role should be, and, if it so desires, make a recommendation to the University Senate for a change in the roster or composition of its ex officio membership. It may be that the committee should request an increase in the number of faculty members to balance the high proportion of librarians on the roster. Both the composition of the committee and ex officio membership are matters of University Senate by-laws, and changes must be made through a vote of the University Senate.

Conclusion

The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that the its charge gives the SLC both the scope and the responsibility to be a more active representative of faculty, staff, and student interests in the University Libraries than it has been in recent years. It does not see a need to amend the substance of the Committee's charge, although the committee may wish to change its composition. The Ad Hoc Committee does see the need for the SLC to fulfill its existing charge more vigorously and with greater imagination.