The Library Committee met four times, twice in the fall semester 2004, twice in the spring semester 2005. We concentrated on four issues: the transition from print to electronic journals; the effect that the university budget will have on the library; the effect that the AS&E reorganization will have on the library; and the possibility of joining forces with the Faculty Computer Usage Committee to work on topics and problems that involve IT and library concerns.

Central to all of our meetings was the pressing question of how the faculty is and will be affected by the continued transition in the library from print journals to electronic journals. Clearly, the idea of the library has changed over the last few years, and it can be strongly argued that Tisch Library has improved through this change, able to offer faculty greater resources for research on-line in the many data bases and electronic journals that are replacing print journals. On-line teaching aids like Blackboard links also offer new ways to organize teaching materials while connecting students to the many resources on the web. This progress brings its own challenges, however, and in our meetings, we discussed the need to integrate these changes into our teaching and research. This does not mean that the library has abandoned printed materials, particularly printed books and journals only available in print format. Liaisons between the library and individual departments continue to ask for faculty book requests. But there is no doubt that we have entered an electronic, digitized era.

The committee found that the library has been diligent in providing training sessions for faculty and students alike in learning how to use the data bases and journals. Focus groups serving graduate students have succeeded in not just introducing them to the materials, but in learning from the graduate students their own research needs. A recent library survey shows humanities graduate students least satisfied with the library resources; it will be interesting to see if the electronic resources will better meet their needs. Faculty interest in the electronic materials breaks down in a fairly predictable disciplinary way. Math, sciences and engineering seem to have taken to the electronic journals first, followed by the social sciences, and more slowly, by the humanities, the area with the least material available electronically. Nonetheless, the faculty does seem to be moving in the direction of electronic research, and the library will continue to provide instruction, and also to develop liaisons with individual departments.

One thing that surprised the committee was the growing expense of the electronic journals and data bases. The over-all savings realized from the transition from print to electronic journals is not that high, about $100,000 a year. Worse still, the electronic materials have become even more expensive because of the falling dollar because most scientific journals are published in Europe where the dollar buys less. Many of the journals are produced in Europe. Jo-Ann Michalak estimates that because of inflation and the weak dollar, the library budget needs to increase 11% just to maintain present costs without further expansion. The budget problem has been on the committee’s mind all year. We were disappointed that the budget for next year would not be announced until after graduation, since by then, our committee will be disbanded for the summer.
We will be able to communicate via e mail, if need be. An 11% rise in the budget seems unlikely, but anything below 7% seems impossible, particularly at such a crucial time of expanding graduate and research support. If the library is going to change the way it works and is perceived, it certainly shouldn’t change for the worst.

The committee was concerned to learn about the library’s reporting position in the new AS and E reorganization. We thought that it would be best for the library to report to both academic deans, since the library serves both A&S and E. When we learned that the library would report to Dean Kanarek, Graduate Dean, we worried whether her position would be strong enough to protect the library’s interests. We wrote Provost Jamshed Baruch and Dean Kanarek about our concern, and they agreed to meet with us to discuss the changes in organization. The Provost and Dean assured the committee that the three deans had worked closely together in the past, and that Dean Kanarek’s office would represent the library’s interests effectively. The library will first report to Dean Kanarek, Dean Kanarek will then report on the library to the Dean of A& S, and finally to the Joint Committee. We appreciated the meeting, and will wait to see how things work out.

In April we held a joint meeting with the Faculty computer Usage Committee. We discussed the ways that we can jointly work together to make IT applications more accessible to faculty and students, particularly in areas of Blackboard links and multi-media education. We also discussed the growing problem of plagiarism linked to the web. Students are downloading materials from the web into their papers, and right now, there is no faculty committee authorized to deal with this problem. We discussed the possibilities of getting authorization to invest in electronic anti-plagiarism software to help solve this problem. We agreed to meet again next year, possibly in the fall, to work out ways that we can combine our efforts integrating IT and library initiatives and needs. In our final meeting, after the joint meeting ended, we continued discussing the ways that we could make the library a place to initiate and sustain multi-media education.

Many good things were considered over the year. The Library Café has proved to be extremely popular, the pay for printing program is working well, the library user survey results suggest that undergraduate students are very happy with the library, and that graduate students are happy with some things. The Music Library construction has begun, adding space and resources to the campus. We left our final committee on a high note, pleased with the joint meeting with the Faculty Computer Usage Committee. The problem of the budget, however, continues to haunt the successes itemized in this report. We certainly hope that the budget will allow the library to grow in the direction it has necessarily taken, as an institution that has redefined itself in its commitment to electronic data bases and journals. To not do so would be to go backwards into a situation that would produce fewer print journals and fewer electronic journals, pleasing nobody.

Respectfully submitted,

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