It was an active year for the AS&E Library Committee. The committee met six times, committee members participated in the search for a new director of Tisch Library, and the chair met regularly with the interim director to discuss ongoing issues. The two issues that dominated the committee’s attention were the director search and the Tisch Library budget.

Director Search
A national search for a new Tisch Library director began with summer meetings to establish search criteria, continued through the fall with advertising and formulation of a search process, and culminated earlier this semester with the selection of finalists and campus visits. The Library Committee was consulted at each stage of the process and kept informed about search progress. One member of the committee (David Garman) was a member of the Search Committee and other members of the committee participated in the campus visits and provided feedback on the finalists.

The search came to a successful conclusion with the April 20 announcement of the appointment of Ms. Dorothy Meaney. Dorothy has been the Director of Tisch Library, ad interim, since last summer and the Library Committee has already had the opportunity to appreciate her problem solving skills, diverse leadership experience and affection for Tufts.

Budget Concerns
The committee paid careful attention to the Tisch Library budget for 2017-2018 and the budget prospects for 2018-2019. This year’s budget was initially expected to be the same as last year’s, but was reduced in August by $761,000 or 5.1% of the total budget (covering compensation, collections and operations.) Since Tisch Library is a lean operation in the best of times, this required making some hard choices. About 90% of the reduction was realized through one-time savings such as delaying hiring for unfilled positions and postponing collection and technology expenditures. Tisch users experienced the results of these cuts most often when they needed staff assistance and when they searched for new materials or new collection areas. Tisch staff members deserve special thanks for their efforts to minimize the impact of the cuts by taking on additional responsibilities from unfilled positions, being open to having their jobs redefined and searching even harder than usual for new sources of savings.

This approach was effective for one year of austerity, but a second year without an increase in the overall budget will result in more obvious service and collection cuts. As of the writing of this report, the Tisch Library budget for next year had not been established and remains a major concern of the committee. At its final meeting of the year, the committee unanimously passed the following resolution and forwarded it to Deans Glaser and Qu.

Members of the Library Committee ask that the Tisch Library budget for 2018-2019 be adequate to:
fill open positions so that library staffing is not reduced,
cover inflation in the collection budget so that it is not necessary to reduce acquisitions in key areas,
maintain the level of research support provided to students and faculty, and
meet the increase in demand for library services brought about by increasing student enrollments.
Additional Issues and Discussion Topics

ILMS/Catalog Change
The June 2017 transition to the new Integrated Library Management System (ILMS) went very smoothly for such a major change. Library staff members made special efforts to provide information and assistance to individuals and departments concerned about the changes to the catalog interface and the search engine. The large changes required in the “back office” operations took place over the next several months and will increase the long-run efficiency of those operations.

Single Service Point for Questions, Reference Help and Research Consultations
A long-planned restructuring of research assistance that began this year caused some initial confusion. Reference assistance that was formerly provided in the Research Hub was moved to the Circulation Desk and many users were not aware of the change or how to request assistance. This change was prompted by a large drop in inquiries fielded through the Research Hub and the need to make more effective use of librarians’ time. Early experience prompted the formation of a working group composed of staff members from Access Services and Research and Instruction. This group held weekly meetings and developed a plan for improving the support process and the training for staff. By the end of the spring term, many of the initial problems had been addressed and the working group was focusing on monitoring performance and identifying additional improvements. Members of the Library Committee raised many questions about this transition and Tisch Library administrators and staff were always open to learning about our concerns and worked hard to improve the service and the user experience.

Library Engagement Model
A new engagement model for Research and Instruction staff was begun this year. Staff members have been reorganized into three clusters (Arts and Humanities; Social Sciences and STEM) to improve the availability and response time for “Ask a Librarian” inquiries. Users with discipline-specific needs still have the option of booking individual appointments with content specialists.

Textbook on Reserve Pilot
The “Textbooks on Reserve” program continued to serve students in a set of large lecture classes requiring expensive textbooks, but was not expanded. Several AS&E units are interested in helping students deal with high textbook costs and it is hoped that these units can collaborate on improving and expanding the program.

Improvements Slowed by Funding Issues
Several proposed initiatives have been postponed. These include: reconfiguration of the front entrance and lobby of Tisch Library for improved security; renovation of the Tisch Library classrooms; structural changes in Tisch Library to meet new space utilization needs, and additional investments in the SMFA’s Clark Library.

Thanks
The Library Committee benefits from its engaged members and the support of the Tisch Library administration and staff. We are grateful to Dorothy Meaney for consulting with us on important issues and to Harriet Chenkin for all manner of committee support.

Submitted on behalf of the committee,

David Garman (AS&E Library Committee Chair for 2017 – 2018)
May 7, 2018