

**Memo to the Policy Planning Committee
From the Academic Review Committee
February 16, 2014**

The Columbia University Library/Information Services is currently undergoing a periodic academic review and Dean Rittenberg has asked our three-person committee to prepare an internal report. As part of the review, CUL/IS has prepared a self-study whose implications will have significant impact on the entire university community.¹ We seek to gain feedback not only on the library's performance, but also on its plans for the future. To this end, we'd like to highlight some salient points from the self-study and from our insights in hopes of learning about your experience with the library. The consequences of the proposed changes will vary dramatically depending on how one uses the library and we want to ensure that all communities have a voice in the discussion.

What follows is a summary of the major areas of library planning, as presented in the self-study report.² We request that each department provide a 1-2 page statement that highlights how the faculty and graduate students view these proposed change. (Please email these documents to tmf2@columbia.edu). Each section concludes with a series of questions to help your department to formulate a statement for us, but please feel free to raise other issues and make other suggestions as well. We hope that these discussions will help to preserve Columbia Library's well deserved reputation for being one the best in the world.³

1. Access to Content

The shift from physical to electronic materials is well underway and will accelerate across the entire library system. CUL/IS has concentrated most of its institutional strategizing and budgetary allocation over the past 5 years on new media and technology, both in terms of access (online search engines, modernized information services, processing metadata) and in terms of content (subscriptions to online journals and publications, digitization of print media, data archiving projects). Of the 22 "noteworthy accomplishments" of the last decade reported by CUL/IS during the self-study process, 14 have to do with digital technologies; every year since 2008, the library has spent more on electronic resources than on physical resources. The university has created Centers for Digital Research and Scholarship in a number of disciplines that are seen to be quite popular. Many of these initiatives have been welcomed and have helped keep CUL/IS at the forefront libraries worldwide.

Yet, in some quarters there is considerable concern about the pace and breadth of the move to digital matter. Research styles vary dramatically across disciplines and the division between disciplines that rely heavily on physical and digital matter is likely to remain. For example, faculty and students in the humanities have been particularly concerned about the perceived lack of a robust commitment to that part of the print collection that is not "unique," "archival," or "special," but nevertheless essential to workaday scholarship in the humanities: *the stacks*. Indeed, there seems to be a consistent effort throughout the CUL/IS' self study to understate the library's responsibility to maintain a standing print collection for research. The self-study refers to the "preservation" of

¹ The committee is Brent Stockwell (Biological Sciences, representing the hard sciences), Tim Frye (Political Science, representing the social sciences) and Molly Murray (English, representing humanities and history).

² The self-study in its entirety is available in PDF format upon request from Dean Rittenberg's office.

³ We also include the 9 big questions around which the Library framed its self-study.

“legacy analog collections,” suggesting that this task is contingent on, and possibly in conflict with, developing a “sustainable funding model” for the digital collections. To refer to printed books as an implicitly antiquated “legacy analog collection,” to be preserved only if funding permits, is to reveal how far the maintenance of robust scholarly print holdings has fallen in the list of the library’s priorities. Many faculty and students will continue to work with printed matter, particularly as not all of which is available on line.

The CUL/IS acknowledges that “in aggregate Columbia users clearly prioritize unmediated access to...electronic and print information.” But it downplays the importance of the latter (print), suggesting that users’ preference for printed books “might be driven by the lack of availability of functional digital surrogates.” But again, this likely varies significantly across disciplines. For example, in discussions with faculty and graduate students in English, it seems clear that this assessment is simply incorrect; while search engines and full-text access to archives and journals are of course important, the response so far in English confirms that scholars in our field continue to require “unmediated access” to physical books, lot of them, both primary and secondary, in one physical location. To envision the replacement of printed books by “digital surrogates” is to fail to grasp the function of well-maintained and up-to-date open stacks in humanities research, which involves browsing shelves, happening upon titles that did not appear in an initial online search, comparing and collating multiple texts at a desk (not on a digital desktop) and so on.

The Library Self-Study also touches on the value of spending on “special” versus “general collections.” CUL/IS has declared its interest in “building deep research collections, including rare, archival, and international materials; maintaining and improving a robust interlibrary lending service; and ensuring that faculty and students have access to expert librarians with deep subject expertise.” Leaving aside the middle of these stated goals for the moment, the first of these can be paraphrased as “Global and Special Collections.” CUL/IS seems to want to ensure Columbia’s place as a destination for particular areas of specialist scholarship, based on its holdings in specific areas: the Tibetan collection at Starr, or the architectural collections at Avery, or the various archival collections in Butler’s Rare Books and Manuscripts library. Funding is being allocated for acquisitions, hiring of archivists, and housing of such collections, and preservation of “rare, unique, and endangered” physical collections (as well, of course, as their digitization). Yet, there is concern that these gains may be coming at the expense of general collection that is used primarily for teaching and secondary sources research.

How important is unmediated access to physical versus digital material for your faculty?
How important is browsing the stacks – either physically or virtually? How important is access to “special” versus “general” collections? How satisfied are faculty with the replacement of physical books with electronic books?

2. Governance

While library staff are eager to work with faculty and faculty, for the most part, are eager to work with librarians on particular projects, faculty input on larger policy decisions seems to be more difficult to come by. Unlike most universities, Columbia does not have a faculty library board that meets regularly throughout the year whose primary function is to monitor and work with the library. The University Senate has a Library Committee, but given the sprawling and decentralized nature of Columbia and CUL/IS, and competing claims on the time of those in the University Senate, this committee’s ability to provide oversight and input on key decisions is limited.

Are the channels of communication between faculty and CUL/IS sufficient? Do your faculty want more input into how the library is managed?

3. Collaboration

CUL/IS has embarked on a series of broad-ranging partnerships with libraries and other institutions. These programs include:

2CUL: a program that allows “library management” to be shared between Columbia and other institutions. For example, Columbia and Cornell share bibliographers with regional specializations. This arrangement is ultimately aimed at allowing faculty expanded access to the partner’s library.

Borrow Direct: a reciprocal borrowing arrangement among Ivies Plus research libraries (currently used by all of us on occasion, but not as a regular part of research), set to be expanded.

MaRLI (or the Manhattan Research Library Initiative): a new reciprocal borrowing agreement for Columbia, NYU and the research libraries of NYPL (excluding, presumably, the main research library at 42nd Street branch, which is non-circulating). One thing already enabled by this agreement is a book-sharing program, whereby certain presses sell the MaRLI group online access to books at favorable rates, “with print backup at a single institution.” That hard copy, the SSR reports, will most often be housed at NYPL (and thus, if in the main research branch, likely not in open stacks). This strategy also has implications for the sale of academic books.

ReCAP: a program with NYPL and Princeton, begun in 2001, “supporting joint operation of a high-density shelving facility for library materials.” Currently 4 million of our books are stored at ReCAP, with an average of 34,000 retrieved for use each year so far. CUL/IS touts ReCAP as a means of allowing “library collections space to be repurposed for user seating, classrooms, faculty office, and laboratory space,” and this program is set to expand significantly, with an “implementation phase” taking place over the next two years.

On one hand, collaboration with other libraries and institutions allows CUL/IS to take advantage of economies of scale and offer increased access. On the other hand, these partnerships raise questions about commitment of CUL/IS to adding to, maintaining, and storing its printed research collections on the Morningside campus.

Are faculty in your department satisfied with the shift to housing printed matter off-site? Is there demand for increased access to partner libraries? How well are these systems working?

4. Space

The CUL/IS self study also touches on the perennial Columbia issue of space. The Library is seeking to significantly expand its space to satisfy student demand for places to study, particularly for group study. The Library has done a commendable job in adapting to this demand, particularly in Lehman, but it is an open question whether the scale of the proposed expansion in library space is justified and whether CUL/IS, academic departments and institutes, or other organizations should be in charge of creating the dynamic study space that creates synergies between scholars. CUL/IS is keen to stress the need for digital centers and special collections space. But the report seems to

imply that the remaining library space in Morningside simply isn't large enough for both print collections and adequate undergraduate "study space." The choice they are making seems clear: an increased commitment to digitization/offsite storage will eventually permit the Columbia libraries, especially Butler, to become what some worry will be a glorified study hall with a wi-fi connection.

How do your faculty and students use library space? How important for your students is groups study space?

5. Information Services

Information Services seeks to play a much larger role in teaching by supporting MOOCs, building up COURSEWORKS, and the like. It also would like an expanded role as a "partner" in research by helping scholars comply with federal regulations to share data and results, advise on copyright matters, help manage open access to research, archive large data sets etc. For example, CUL/IS is keen to promote Columbia PARC, a program which will allow the Center for Digital Research to partner with partner with faculty to help aggregate about researcher activity, measure the impact of research efforts, aid in grant applications, and support compliance with grant reporting.

How does your faculty use Information Services? Is there demand for greater collaboration? Should CUL/IS oversee these efforts? Or are they better managed elsewhere in the university?

6. Budget

Of course, in thinking of how to improve CUL/IS there is a need to recognize very real constraints on space and funds. At a time of retrenchment in libraries across the country, CUL/IS has experienced great expansion over the last decade. Spending increased by 59 percent over the last decade which is the second largest increase in our 12 member peer group and this does not seem to be due to starting from a low base. Relative to Columbia's peers the growth in terms of staff and collections has been almost unmatched. While staffing in almost all peer institutions remained flat or fell, CUL/IS managed to increase its staff by about 15%, with the greatest increases in the professional staff. Yet, the library is also reporting a serious budget crunch, keyed to the general recession's impact on endowment revenues. There has been a \$1,000,000 reduction in the operations budget, which has affected CUL/IS's ability to maintain its physical plant to desired standards. Forty-three staff positions have been eliminated, and the library's collections budget has been radically reduced below the rate of inflation (from an annual 8% increase to an average annual 4% increase – and only 2% in 2011. And as we all know space is a finite quantity on the Morningside campus. We hope that you will keep these considerations in mind in answering these questions.

BIG QUESTIONS CONFRONTING CUL/IS

The following questions represent the large-scale issues, or Big Questions, confronting Columbia University Libraries/Information Services (CUL/IS) in the near-term future. These questions were formulated during an intensive self-study of organizational activities covering the previous two strategic planning cycles. The organizational accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities discussed in the subsequent section provide the basis for setting priorities and identifying budget drivers for the upcoming strategic planning cycle, which will begin following the completion of the strategic review process.

1. How will CUL/IS redefine itself as an academic research library to effectively support the evolving research and educational missions at Columbia? What opportunities for reallocating resources will emerge to support new priorities aligned with these evolving missions?
2. How will the faculty and students served by CUL/IS change in their needs and expectations for information content, services, and library spaces? How will technological and cultural trends and evolving research, teaching, and learning behaviors drive collection development, service provision, and space utilization within library facilities?
3. How will the development of scholarly communications, in particular, the changing natures of scholarly journals and monographs, alter the definition of research library collections at Columbia (i.e., what is collected and the methods by which materials are acquired, stored, and accessed)?
4. How will changes in federal and global information policies, in particular copyright, privacy, and the accessibility of government-funded research, influence the methods by which CUL/IS serves the Columbia community?
5. How can CUL/IS effectively recruit and develop the expertise required to support emerging research and educational activities within an extremely competitive market?
6. How will Columbia develop and advance academic technologies in support of teaching, learning, and research? Will CUL/IS increase its role in providing academic technology services; and if so, how will this enhanced role be funded in a sustainable way?
7. How will the rise of online learning platforms and massively open online courses (MOOCs) alter how CUL/IS supports teaching and learning at Columbia?
8. How will CUL/IS continue to support the long-term preservation of the cultural and scholarly record? How will CUL/IS continue to preserve and provide access to legacy analog collections while developing a sustainable funding model for

archiving, preserving, and providing access to digitized and born-digital primary source content?

9. How will the collaborative relationships among U.S. and international research libraries develop; and will engaging these collaborations help CUL/IS reduce redundant collection building and maintenance, achieve economies of scale, improve service quality, and increase access to information for researchers and educators at Columbia?

These Big Questions and the strategies developed in response to them will define the relevance and impact of CUL/IS to Columbia and to the wider educational and scholarly communities. Over the course of the *Strategic Opportunities* section to follow, the challenges inherent in these questions are explored and key opportunities and barriers for advancement are identified.