

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

BERKELEY DIVISION of the ACADEMIC SENATE

Annual Report 1996-97

The Library Committee of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate met monthly during the 1996-97 academic year. The Bylaws of the Berkeley Division charge the committee with "advis[ing] the Chancellor regarding administration of the Library and perform[ing] such other duties relative to the Library as may be committed to the Division."

- In accordance with this charge, the Library Committee took action on the following topics:

Faculty Borrowing Privileges: The committee drafted and circulated a memo to all faculty members informing them of the new policy which blocks a faculty member's borrowing privileges if overdue/recalled books are not returned within the appropriate time frame. The new policy was designed to increase Library efficiency and cut administrative costs.

Letter to the Faculty on the State of the Library: Committee members drafted a letter that delineated their findings and their stance on the current condition of the UC Berkeley Library. In formulating the letter, the committee intended to increase campus awareness of the budgetary crisis that The Library is facing. The letter was sent to Senate members on November 11, 1996, and then published in *The Berkeleyan* of February 5, 1996, alongside The Vice Chancellor and Provost Christ's response. The debate elicited responses from individual professors as well as groups of faculty.

The Library Planning and Action Initiative (LPAI): Throughout the spring semester, the Library Committee discussed the issues raised by the LPAI advisory task force, a systemwide entity, and the resolutions it developed. The LPAI resolutions delineate a commitment to a UC Digital Library as well as the task force's recommendations for resource sharing and cooperative planning between campuses. The Library Committee deliberated the issues involved in implementing a digital library and in collaborating between campuses. Committee members determined that any approval they would give to the LPAI resolutions would be contingent on a firm, concrete commitment to increased funding for print collections.

- In accordance with its charge, the committee considered and discussed the following issues:

Compact Shelving: Compact shelving does not permit the traditional type of browsing which many committee members see as integral to a research Library. However, 70% of the main stack capacity is stored in compact shelving. Compact shelving increases the efficacy of Library space, allowing more books to be kept in the Library and fewer books to be shipped to storage areas. The Library administration plans to track circulation and use the gathered data to determine which books are used most frequently and should therefore be stored on regular (not compact) shelving.

Northern Regional Library Facility (NRLF): The NRLF currently houses 53% of the main stack collection and is located in Richmond. The committee considered relocating the facility to a closer area so that it is easier to access the books stored there. Buildings used for library stacks must be specially designed in order to accommodate the weight of the books and the specific climatization needed, so relocating the books in NRLF would be difficult and costly.

Branch Libraries: The Library Committees of the Astronomy-Math-Statistics, Physics, and Chemistry branch libraries (not affiliated with the Library Committee of the Academic Senate) began to meet monthly in order to address the operating problems the three branch libraries are facing. Their primary concerns included the lack of subject librarians and the possibility of branch library closures. The Library Committee sent a representative to the meetings of the Physical Sciences branch libraries and reviewed the concerns expressed. Committee members considered the merits of a single Physical Sciences Library modeled after

The Life Sciences Library. Committee members deemed ongoing discussion about branch libraries invaluable and affirmed the need to involve as many members of the faculty as possible.

Journal Pricing and Budget Cuts: The inflation rate for journals, averaging 13%, makes the budget crisis particularly acute in the domain of journal subscriptions. The Library administration requested an increase in the collections budget in order for The Library to maintain its purchasing power; however, that request was denied. The Library Committee discussed raising faculty awareness of the for-profit status of most publishers and the degree to which those publishers benefit from the charitable support of prominent academics. Members also considered the possibility of organizing a boycott with other University Libraries of some of the most expensive publishers.

- The following presentations were given by guest speakers at Library Committee meetings and constitute part of the committee's ongoing exploration of the issues that affect The Library.

Bancroft Library Strategic Plan--Professor Charles Faulhaber, Director of the Bancroft Library: Director Faulhaber described the five-year strategic plan for the Bancroft Library which was formulated by at least 75 individuals, including Library staff, Library friends, Berkeley students and faculty. The plan included elements of outreach to the faculty (making the services available more widely known) and to potential donors of both collection material and funds. Director Faulhaber also explained the intention to increase the use of technology in The Bancroft Library and to strengthen Bancroft's relationship to the campus and its academic programs.

The Library Planning and Action Initiative--Anthony Newcomb, Dean of Humanities, College of Letters and Science: Dean Newcomb presented the strategies that the LPAI task force developed for maintaining access to print collections. (These strategies were the forerunners to the LPAI Resolutions.) The systemwide task force proposed new funding from the state for digital materials, the removal of barriers for resource sharing among UC campuses, and cooperative collections building as the three main methods of preserving access to Library material in light of the budget cuts.

The Library Budget--Mike Rancer, Director of Financial Planning and Analysis for The Library: Director Rancer provided committee members with details regarding the breakdown of expenditures in the Library budget. He reviewed the personnel costs, the collections budget, permanent and temporary sources of revenue, inflation issues, and capital investments.

Humanities Graduate Service--Jim Spohrer, Associate University Librarian for Humanities and Area Studies: Associate Librarian Spohrer described to the committee the plans for the recreation of a Humanities Graduate Service on the second floor of the Doe Library and the mechanisms in place for reviewing and approving those plans. The plan would create a nexus of services and collections specifically designed for research in the humanities, area studies, and social sciences. Its exact location will be determined by a Library Architect and the scope of its services will be worked out between various committees and working groups, including the Library Committee of the Academic Senate.

Katherine Stroker 6/17/97

Report of the Chair

In fulfilling its charge set by the Berkeley Division By-Laws, the Library Committee has customarily reported, as above, its actions and deliberations over the past year. But this has been no ordinary year in the life of the Library, and as the outgoing chair I should like to underscore one more time the dimensions of the crisis that grips what was once a leading University library. I have tried to reflect the views of the committee, though some members might wish to modify the language expressing those views, but I believe the vast majority of faculty, students, and alumni share my concerns.

The concerns felt and expressed by this committee over the past year are hardly new; they build on the same concerns felt and expressed over much of this decade about the effects of still more reductions in Library funding. The Annual Report of the Library Committee in 1995 voiced deep misgivings about the impact of cuts in collections and warned that further cuts would "significantly undermine" the ability of the Library to service the needs of students and faculty. In a letter to Chancellor Tien, dated November 14, 1995, fifty-four leading scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Berkeley expressed the urgency of their concern about a rapidly deteriorating Library--"our sole laboratory." No major library collection, they warned, would be able to recover easily--if at all--from even a few years of neglect. One year later, on November 11, 1996, in a letter to the faculty, meant as a wake-up call, the Library Committee warned that the crisis had deepened. The library system had reached "a critical juncture" in its history, with cuts in funding, staff, and services that had reduced it to "a level inconsistent with the needs of a leading university" and had distanced it considerably from its peers. With the Library now facing a further erosion of purchasing power, and with an administration that has yet to address seriously the implications of this erosion, this committee must report its inability to stem the rapid bleeding of library resources and the devastating and irreparable damage to the quality of our teaching and scholarship.

Several years ago, Berkeley Librarian Peter Lyman outlined strategies for coping with the funding crisis in a document entitled "Strategic Planning for Library Collections and Information Resources." The report anticipated that technology-based service models would replace browsing in the stacks by searching online information and delivering it electronically. That scenario is rapidly becoming a reality. Employing the language of the marketplace, the recently adopted Library Planning and Action Initiative seeks to make the Library market efficient through resource sharing ("One University, One Library), new organizational models (the UC Digital Co-Library), and maximizing access to electronic information. The Initiative is written in the language of technocrats, and one wonders if the authors have spent much time in a library or in a classroom.

The future of the Library will no doubt lie in some form of digital technology, with technocrats deciding how library funds will be spent and what faculty and students at the University of California will see. Digital access will come to be viewed as a cost-saving substitute for the expertise of professional librarians. But these changes will exact a heavy price. Our students will be deprived of some invaluable learning opportunities and experiences, and our standing as a major research library will suffer enormously, along with the ability to retain and hire faculty. We have already sustained losses in faculty and graduate students directly related to the deteriorating quality of the Library, and this trend will no doubt be accelerated. In our eagerness to implement the new information technology, there is no sense of the need for balance, little or no awareness that different academic disciplines may have different needs, not all of them fulfilled by the new technology. We find ourselves, instead, embracing that technology uncritically, without considering its cost, maintenance, reliability, and value.

Even before the adoption of the Initiative, the usefulness of the Library had been seriously diminished. More than fifty-three percent of the books are in storage at the Northern Regional Library Facility in Richmond, although in many sections of the Doe Library stacks nearly empty shelves confront the browser. If the books were available, however, compact shelving make their use problematical. In deciding which books would be placed in open shelving and in compact shelving, no attention was paid to usage or research needs. Where the books in a particular field came to be shelved depended exclusively on that field's position in the alphabet.

As teachers, we are now being forced to reevaluate the ways in which our students use the Library or give up on it altogether--very much to the detriment of their education. Letters written to this committee from faculty in various fields complain that the library no longer meets minimal teaching and research requirements. What follows is only a sampling of these letters, some of them addressed to the Committee, some to the Provost and Librarian. Most of the letter writers go on to specify in some depth the problems they have encountered in using the Library--"this wonderful resource that we all treasure and that we fear is slowly withering."

**"I am writing to attest that the declining library budget and ongoing series cancellations have affected me personally as a scholar and a teacher and continue to do so. Frankly, I consider our library system, and Doe Library in particular, to be in a state so disgraceful that it is hard to believe it continues to function as the main library for the University of California at Berkeley." (Classics & Rhetoric)

**"Let me state at the outset that, except for using the Baker service (which draws on the resources of the Stanford library and of inter-library loan as well as the libraries on campus), and occasional visits to the Bancroft library, I

have stopped using the library altogether. Instead, I make periodic visits to Stanford to use the library there. This is a direct result of the deterioration in the library that has come about over the last few years." (Philosophy)

"As the co-chairs of the Political Science Library Committee we are writing . . . to express our ongoing dismay at the dramatic erosion of campus library collections. . . . Without a first-rate research library it is unthinkable that UC-Berkeley will be able to maintain its current status as a world-class research institution. This is an extraordinarily serious matter that speaks to the very heart of the conception of this campus and its mission." (Political Science)

"The cutbacks to date in staffing and collections have seriously compromised the quality of education and research opportunities we can offer at this university." (Institute of Urban and Regional Development)

"While the collections have been supported to what the campus administration feels is adequate in severe economic times, they are nonetheless diminished in real and comparative terms." (Librarians Association of the University of California, Berkeley)

"As a former member of the college of Engineering Library Committee, and as a frequent user of our excellent library facilities, I am very concerned about the plight of the Library, collections, staffing and facilities." (Engineering)

"At a time when the campus is glorying in its fund-raising success, I find it incomprehensible and extremely troubling that so small a percentage has been allocated to the library." (English)

"I think that you are right to sound the alarm. Please add my name to the list of those who advocate increasing the funding for library acquisition and operation." (Plant & Microbial Biology)

"We are about to lose [name of professor] to the Harvard Government Department. One of the primary reasons given to me for her departure was concern about the decline in acquisitions during the last several years." (Institute of East Asian Studies)

"I would be more than happy to contribute my voice and my vote to increase the acquisitions and staffing budgets for ALL libraries on the Berkeley campus." (Molecular & Cell Biology)

"It is a relief to know someone out there is aware of the gravity of what is going on, and is trying to call the attention of the community to this serious situation." (librarian)

I would add a personal note. During my more than 30 years at Berkeley, as a student and as a faculty member, the Library has been the backbone of my research and teaching. Now I find myself relying almost exclusively on my private library for research and lecture materials. And after some 15 years of requiring my students in the large survey American history course to use the Doe library to write research papers based on original sources, I have been forced this semester to alter that requirement. I will no longer send students into the Doe stacks, as the stacks in their present condition are nearly useless for sustained research. Instead, the more than 700 students in this course will be confined to newspapers and periodicals, government documents, and the manuscript collections in the Bancroft Library.

Provost Carol Christ has appointed a special committee to consider the state of the library. The need for this special committee is not altogether clear, as an Academic Senate Library Committee already exists, and I was profoundly disappointed to learn that the new chair of the Academic Senate Committee was not asked to serve on Provost Christ's special committee. In any event, this special committee, we hope, will continue to raise consciousness on this campus about the State of the Library and act on that raised consciousness. It will need to address carefully the same concerns echoed by faculty, students, and library staff, and by this committee, among them:

1. The Library continues to bleed, with a new budget that "accepts a decline in the quality of the collection and in the quality of service as the inevitable by-product of decreased state support for the Library." The proposed reductions in the print collections and staffing seriously compromise the University's teaching and research mission.

2. Browsing in the stacks has been effectively discouraged, made essentially meaningless.
3. Books lost are not being systematically replaced.
4. The professional Library staff is both overworked and demoralized.
5. The Reference Room, still indispensable in the humanities and social sciences, faces an uncertain future. Staffing and hours have been cut back, the collections have been dispersed, and what will happen after retrofitting remains unclear.

The gravity of the crisis cannot be overstated. Without sustaining our print collections, Berkeley is simply not in the top tier of research and teaching universities. We may have an impressive, even a beautiful physical plant, but with diminished library resources and library staff and the difficulties in browsing it is a library without a soul. If the library is, as many acknowledge, the heart of the University teaching and research program, it has suffered a major stroke that threatens to incapacitate it in meeting the minimal needs of students and faculty.

In closing, I should like to reiterate some of the principal points made in our letter to the faculty. Nothing has happened since that letter to make them any less relevant or urgent.

*** The damage inflicted by the reduction in acquisitions is likely to be irreparable. Books not purchased and subscriptions dropped are seldom, if every, restored. The result is diminished educational and research opportunities for students and faculty.

*** The quality of a Library rests not only on the excellence of its collections but on the expertise of its professional staff and their availability in sufficient numbers to service our students and faculty..

*** A decline in the stature of the Library represents a decline in the intellectual life and reputation of the University, and will have a significant impact on faculty recruitment and retention.

*** Protecting the excellence of the Library demands a firm and vigilant commitment from the faculty. The bargaining position of the Library needs to be strengthened in the annual competition for endowed funds, and it must become a special priority of the new Chancellor.

What is at stake is no less than the culture of teaching and scholarship at Berkeley, the heart and soul of our instructional and research programs, and the academic standing of this university. That standing will be measured not by the rapidity with which information may be accessed and retrieved electronically but by the quality and depth of the Library's collections and the extent to which they are readily available for browsing and reflective perusal.

Leon F. Litwack