

Library Committee Report
May 18, 2023

This year, the Library Committee discussed library staff searches; FOLIO, the library services platform that launched in July 2022; student access and study habits related to the library; the budget review process; the course reserve system in light of efforts toward providing students with all course materials; and the Open Access Resolution. The Library Committee supports the library's current approach to open access materials, namely offering financial support for open access publishing through the library's materials budget and referring faculty to widely available and discipline-specific open access repositories.

Submitted by Sara Brenneis, chair

On behalf of the committee:

Brittney Bailey
Martin Garnar, ex officio
Clara Hoey '24
Klara Moricz
Lily Popoli '23

2021-22 Faculty Library Committee Report

The Faculty Library Committee discussed a wide range of issues over the course of this year, including open access, the library's strategic framework and reorganization, staffing requirements and student research collections.

Our consensus is that the Faculty Library Committee should remain a standing committee of the faculty. We note that Susan Pierce, the College's consultant, did not meet with this committee nor any of the library staff as part of the College's effort to examine and restructure faculty committee service.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Brenneis, chair
Lori Alarcon '24
Brittney Bailey
Martin Garnar, ex officio
Joshua Kim '25
Klara Moricz

This year the Library Committee has supported our new Director of the Library, Martin Garnar, with Frost's strategic planning process. To this end, the Committee discussed feedback gathered from department chairs, the pre-tenure faculty consultative body and the AAS Senate. The Committee also developed plans to engage the larger campus community in these conversations during the Fall 2021 semester as the Director of the Library visits individual department meetings and the Library offers a series of re-opening events.

The Library Committee also discussed issues surrounding Open Access and the future of the Octagon repository, particularly in light of the increased demand for accessible course and research material during the pandemic as well as the technological demands of hosting the Octagon.

With a review of serial subscriptions under way, the Library Committee made recommendations pertaining to the Library's effort to address budget shortfalls and to encourage the thoughtful cultivation of Frost's extraordinary collection.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Brenneis, chair

on behalf of
Kimberly Agosto '24
Martin Garnar, ex officio
Julia McQuade
Klara Moricz
Maira Owais '23
Witter Swanson '21

Library Committee Report for 2019-20

This year's Library Committee consisted of Joe Moore, Chair (Philosophy and Environmental Studies), Ethan Temeles (Biology and Environmental Studies), Geoffrey Sanborn (English), Susan Kimball *ex officio* (Acting Director of the Library), and three student members—Maira Owais '23, Alexa Garcia '22 (served in the fall) and Michael Slattery '22 (spring). We had a busy year working on a number of issues, most notably:

New Director Search: The College undertook a year-long search for a new Director of the Library. Committee chair, Joe Moore, served as a co-chair of the Search Committee, and the Library Committee supported the search in a several ways. Members recruited for, and participated in various listening sessions the Search Committee held in order to better understand the needs and vision for a new director. Various members participated in zoom interviews with finalists. And the Committee helped Joe and Susan brainstorm various logistical issues involved with the library's participation in the search. The Committee was delighted when the search culminated in the hiring of Martin Garner who will start on August 1st.

External Review: Library Committee members participated in focus groups with the Association of College and Research Libraries consultants as part of the on-campus portion of their external review of the library. The final report from this review was shared with the Committee, who discussed various of its recommendations, with an eye to issues that might be most relevant for the on-going search, and for the eventual director.

Space: The Committee took up the issue of space within Frost Library. This was for several reasons. First, since it's now clear that a new library isn't in the cards for the next decade or so, it makes sense to think mindfully about renovations and space reshufflings that would make Frost a more effective space moving forward. Second, a new student center is in the early planning stages, and this might impact student use of the library as a study space. Susan gave an excellent "Space Framework and Assessment" presentation to the Committee, which led to several discussions about the reconfiguration of space. Joe went to a meeting of the architects for the new Student Center in order to urge campus-wide coordination on issues of student study spaces. And we discussed at length the possibility of "weeding" the collection—sending certain older, little-used bits of the permanent collection from Frost to the 5-College depository so that more space could be made available for other uses. These discussions will carry over to next year's Committee and its work with the new Director.

Open Access & the Octagon: The future of the Octagon, the library's digital repository of faculty publications, was raised and discussed extensively last year. We considered continuing the conversation this year, but thought it best to wait until a permanent Director of the Library was in place. Our hope is that this issue will be re-engaged by next year's Committee. We will pass along our recommendations about how best to proceed.

Gratitude: The Committee gives special thanks to Susan Kimball for her exemplary work with the Committee, as well as for leading the Library so expertly through a year of transition without a permanent director. Of course, this was also a year in which many things in the library were turned up-side down by the pandemic that hit in the spring. So many, many thanks to Susan for holding down the fort!

Library Committee Report for 2018-19

This year's Library Committee consisted of Joe Moore, Chair (Philosophy and Environmental Studies), Ethan Temeles (Biology and Environmental Studies), Catherine Infante (Spanish), Bryn Geffert *ex officio* (Librarian of the College), and two student members— Madeline Buston ('19) and Waleed Babar ('21). We had a busy year, discussing and taking action on the following issues:

- 1) Student Theses: The Faculty Library Committee discussed and endorsed a proposal from the Registrar's office to collect student theses only in electronic form. The motivations are, first, that other institutions have successfully adopted such policies, and second that this will simplify the submission process for students, the work of the Registrar's office, and the cataloging and storage of theses in the library. The Committee noted that this change will work *only if* the College can provide the necessary labor, funds, and technology to support it. The CEP endorsed the proposal, and the library is working with the registrar's office on next steps.
- 2) Digital Lending: We discussed the recent "[Position Statement on Controlled Digital Lending](#)" and its implication for libraries. The Committee endorsed the position statement, and applauded Amherst's work to launch discussion among liberal arts college lawyers in the Northeast about the initiative.
- 3) Folio: We discussed the [FOLIO](#) initiative, which is a collaboration of libraries, developers and vendors building an open source library services platform. The Committee raised a number of questions and concerns it hopes will be answered as the initiative develops. (Some of these concerns arose from this spring's network outage.) Where will FOLIO be hosted? Will it be in the cloud? Will there be training for faculty to learn the new interface? And when will it be implemented?
- 4) Library Budget: We discussed the outsized demand for big ticket items arising from the research needs of new faculty. The Committee noted that the College awards significant startup money to faculty in the sciences. And it wondered whether the Dean's Office would consider awarding similar funds, to be used for library acquisitions, to new faculty in the humanities and social sciences. This seems to the Committee better and more appropriate than drawing from library's budget as a way to fund these outsize and erratic expenses.
- 5) The Octagon: We spent several meetings discussing the Octagon, the College's on-line open-access repository for research by Amherst College faculty. When the open access resolution passed in 2013, we did not have a sense of the many disciplinary repositories that would emerge, or the rate at which repositories like ResearchGate and [Academia.edu](#) would become go-to sites. Although the decision to create the Octagon was probably right at the time, a local repository may not be relevant now. For one thing, there is very little compliance with the letter of the Open Access resolution, which requires faculty to submit newly published articles to the Octagon or to file a waiver with the Dean's office. All three Committee faculty members were struck by how few papers there are on the Octagon. And all confessed that they had not as of yet posted anything on the Octagon. None of them

would use the Octagon as a way of making their research more available to scholars in their respective fields.

Because of this, there was skepticism about whether upgrading the Octagon to include the functionality of other, disciplinary and multi-disciplinary repositories (usage statistics, maps of users, notifications of use, search optimization) would be worth the time and effort. Programming is very expensive, and local development is probably not the best way to spend money. Despite this, the Committee wondered whether there were other goals that the Octagon might serve. It might serve as a model (for Amherst students and the wider community) of the College's commitment to open access. And it might also be used as a way to showcase the fruits of Amherst's scholarship.

The Committee concluded that the Octagon should clearly be re-thought, but that this should only be done in wider consultation with faculty. To begin this process, the Committee led a discussion of the Octagon at the final Chairs' meeting of the year. We presented the basic issues and took notes on the response of chairs. This response was much like that of the Committee's faculty members: although the Octagon is a nice thing to have, it doesn't serve its intended purpose of making faculty research more widely available than it would be otherwise. There was even some sentiment among chairs that we should just get rid of the Octagon.

Since this meeting occurred at the end of the academic year, this will be the first issue taken up by next year's library committee. One tentative thought (which, of course, requires discussion) is that the Committee should bring a proposal to the faculty to abolish some parts of the Open Access Resolution—namely the requirement that faculty post their research on the Octagon. Then, perhaps at the same meeting, we might have a discussion with faculty about whether the Octagon should be kept in some other form—perhaps transformed into a showcase for faculty voluntarily to post scholarship that they think might be especially interesting to the general public.

- 6) The College Librarian: Finally, the Committee notes with gratitude the exemplary work of Bryn Geffert, the College's Librarian, who will be leaving the College soon to take up a position as Dean of University Libraries at the University of Vermont. We want to thank Bryn for all the excellent things he's done for the College during his years of service, and wish him the very best in his new position up north.

Report of the Library Committee, May 2016

This year, in addition to several wide-ranging discussions about the future of the library, the library committee took the following actions:

1. Reviewed and suggested minor revisions to the library's new strategic plan and the library's goals for realizing that plan. All documentation may be found on the library's website.
2. Reviewed requests for faculty carrels. Unfortunately, no carrels became vacant this year.
3. Reminded faculty of their commitment to post their peer-reviewed articles in the "Octagon," Amherst's open-access repository.
4. Recommended that staff also be allowed to submit peer-reviewed scholarly articles to the repository.
5. Reviewed circulation statistics and began tentative discussions about trends.
6. Discussed Five-College plans for a second, off-site library storage facility. The Amherst library has no need now or in the near future for additional off-site storage.

Respectfully Submitted,

Frank Couvares, Chair

Lisa Brooks

Sheila Jaswal

Bryn Geffert

Here is a report on activities of the Library Committee for the academic year 2013-2014.

- + Discussed ways to simplify the infrastructure supporting the Open Access resolution adopted by the faculty in the previous year.
- + Reviewed progress in the development of the Amherst College Press initiative.
- + Reviewed and approved a statement developed by library staff on principles for library collection management, and forwarded that statement to the faculty.
- + Reviewed a proposed timeline for shifting library materials to make way for the Humanities Center. Helped library staff to develop a procedure for identifying materials to be moved to the offsite repository.
- + Considered issues relating to the library's recent self-study, involving answering Big Questions and developing a vision for the library of the future. A series of open meetings on various topics is planned for early next fall semester.
- + In consultation with interested faculty, developed a policy for future allocation of faculty library carrels.

With best regards,

Cathy McGeoch (chair)
Catherine Epstein
Boris Wolfson