

Final Report of The Library of the Future Committee May 2011

The 2002 Hamilton College Strategic Plan called for the development of a “plan for renovation and expansion of Burke Library.” Subsequently, a Library Task Force was appointed and charged to “investigate the constraints and challenges and to articulate a programmatic vision for an expanded Burke Library through 2035.” Since that report was written in 2005, a number of changes (e.g., the continued expansion of digital technology, the economic downturn, and Randy Ericson’s imminent retirement) have occurred that make it advisable to revisit Hamilton’s plans for the library. Accordingly, the current Library of the Future Committee was charged by President Stewart to “explore future directions for the Hamilton College libraries in light of trends in teaching and scholarship, electronic presentation and access to information, and the costs of information resources. The final report of the committee should recommend key strategies on which our Library should focus in the next 5 – 10 years.” (See Appendix A for the complete charge.)

To carry out our charge, the Library of the Future Committee spent the fall 2010 semester reading extensively about challenges currently facing academic libraries (see Appendix B for a list of references), consulting with Hamilton resources including library personnel and the standing Committee on the Library, attending workshops, and visiting libraries. We identified a number of issues that we believed deserved further investigation and broke into sub-groups in the spring 2011 to examine these from the points of view of three groups: external and internal experts, Hamilton faculty members, and Hamilton students. The sub-group soliciting input from experts interviewed 15 external library and IT experts (Appendix C contains a list of those interviewed and the questions they were asked), read numerous books and articles, and had two open meetings with the library staff; the sub-group soliciting information from the faculty conducted a committee of the whole discussion on the future of the library during a faculty meeting and administered a survey to all faculty members asking questions about their usage of the library and the ways they work with library personnel (see Appendix D for survey); and the sub-group working with students sponsored a design charrette to solicit students’ visions for the library of the future and conducted a survey of student opinions on the library (See Appendix E for their materials).

In this report, the committee focuses on three areas: enhancing the Library’s connections to the academic mission of the College, increasing opportunities for collaboration between the Library and on-campus and off-campus groups, and evaluating possible directions for the Library’s collections, both print and electronic.

The Centrality of the Library in the Academic Mission

The Library will continue to play a major academic role on campus, both as a physical and a virtual space. Providing scholarly resources in print and electronic format will remain an important part of the library’s function, but resources alone will not secure the Library’s role in the academic mission of the College. To maintain its vital role on campus, the

Library will need to expand its mission and reshape its existing collaborative efforts with faculty, students and other academic support units. This will necessitate a re-envisioning of many of the library's traditional roles, while preserving its core values, and will require the ongoing development for personnel of new skills and approaches to library work. As the Library adjusts to the many challenges facing libraries, it would do well to understand the ways that faculty and students view and use the Library.

Faculty Thoughts on the Library

Hamilton professors make extensive use of our library resources, both print and electronic, in their teaching and scholarly work. They continue to value the Library as a physical space; and they have considerable respect for the individuals who work in the Library. In the 2009-2010 academic year, 4,652 items were charged out of Burke to faculty, staff, and administrators (there is no way to disentangle the groups for items charged). Faculty members alone requested 2,776 items from Inter-Library Loan, including both books and journal articles. Despite changes in technology and the rise of user-friendly tools to search for and locate information, the Library remains an important physical place/space on Hamilton's campus for faculty. Of the 103 faculty members who responded to our survey, 78 percent reported physically visiting the library at least a few times a semester. There are disciplinary differences in rates of visiting the library with 96 percent of faculty in the humanities reporting they visit the library at least a few times a semester, while 52 percent of those in the sciences report that they rarely or never visit. Faculty members also have virtual or distance interactions with the Library. As one faculty member in the humanities wrote, "I make extensive use of the library but do so via the internet (use of the catalogue; book requests; electronic copies of journals; etc.)." Faculty members appreciate the convenience of having books delivered to their offices and make widespread use of the library's data bases and online journals.

In their teaching, faculty report that they give assignments that require students to use e-resources licensed by the library (74%), printed sources in Burke (62%), and Inter-library Loan (37%). Professors (43%) have librarians visit classes and note the value of such interactions. Faculty members value most the librarians' professional research skills such as demonstrating how to use library databases, teaching students to evaluate the reliability of sources, and providing help to students in refining or revising their research topics.

Despite the roles that library resources and librarians currently play in the teaching process, there is room for greater integration of the Library services and personnel in the academic endeavor. Only 16 percent of faculty report consulting with librarians on course development, and 14 percent of the faculty members responding to the survey do not use the library for teaching in any of the ways listed on the survey. Although faculty members recognize the role that library personnel can play in terms of helping students, they seem to be less likely to recognize the roles that librarians might play in the development of their courses.

Nationally, librarians are increasing their involvement in the research enterprise through collaboration with faculty and students. In our survey, about half (47%) of the faculty

respondents say that they rarely or never involve the librarians in their research. Those who do consult librarians tend to be older faculty members and primarily consult with librarians for help with finding resources. The outside experts to whom we spoke suggested a number of additional ways librarians could assist faculty and students with scholarship, teaching, and learning including the following: working on copyright issues, creating metadata, working with databases, facilitating the digitization of data, creating institutional repositories, and expanding digital publishing. Other suggestions include developing archives of institutional scholarship, hosting digital journals, moving toward an open source environment for textbooks and research, helping to identify open access materials that can be used for scholarly communication, and continuing to investigate and make available digital research methods.

It is critical as we discuss the faculty to note that we found several important disciplinary differences in use of the library and library services. Faculty members in the humanities are more likely to visit the physical library, to browse the book collection, to support maintaining and building the print collection, and to view Burke's print collection, including bound periodicals, as important to their research. Scientists are more likely to report that they rarely or never visit the library, do not browse the collection, and are less likely to find the print collection useful in their scholarship. The social scientists fall in between the humanists and scientists, and too few members of the art faculty replied to draw meaningful conclusions about their Library usage. As the Library considers possible changes to services, collections, and space, these differences need to be taken into account.

Students' Thoughts on the Library

Hamilton students' ideal library of the future is a place of study that blends comfortable and aesthetically pleasing spaces that work for their academic needs with the provision of a variety of academic services. Experts advocate for the availability of high quality, friendly academic support services for students in settings that are flexible, multi-purpose and comfortable, while our students are focused more on issues of comfort and atmosphere.

It is clear from our analysis of the charrette designs and the information from the student survey (200 respondents) that students particularly value the library as a place for study. Comments such as the following were common: "The library should remain quiet. It should be devoted to individual, quiet study space. Students have tons of other places to be loud." "Burke Library is one of the only study spaces on campus that guarantees quiet no matter what time or day of the week." "We have other places on campus that are cool to sit in and do work. The library is where you GET DOWN and work." In addition to appreciating the study ethos in the Library, students also appreciate the presence of books, the computer workstations, and the helpful staff. To make the library function better as a place to study, students recommend additional space for individual and group work and more access to power and the Internet.

When asked about what they would like to see changed in the Library over the next ten years, the overwhelming answer from students was the physical appearance of the Library and the level of comfort in the Library. To be blunt, they find the Library's physical

appearance uninviting, uncomfortable, and outdated. Students specifically suggested more comfortable and moveable furniture and better designed workplaces; aesthetic upgrades, including more natural/better lighting, new color schemes, and new rugs, (as well as more whimsical ideas such as wood-paneled reading rooms, waterfalls, fish tanks, etc.); and space for relaxation and refreshment, at a minimum access to coffee.

One challenge the Library faces in meeting some of the desires of the students is the limited space available in the library. Although not facing the immediate space emergency that was previously predicted, the Library does face long-term space concerns. Given the current campus plans for other new construction projects, it is unlikely that constructing additional space for the Library will be a possibility in the next 5-10 years. Consequently, the Library will need to find other possible ways to manage space. The use of off-site repositories (either for the institution alone or collaboratively with other institutions) is a strategy being used by some libraries to manage their collections and recover space to be used to support students, as are compact shelving and culling the book collection. Off site storage, the deaccession of books from the collection, and to a lesser degree compact shelving, do inhibit browsing, and the trade-offs of space and collection availability will need to be negotiated carefully.

Library Personnel

The roles of librarians are changing as technology affects the purpose and use of libraries, and librarians are in the process of reconceiving their job descriptions to adapt to changes in the field. As digital information becomes more available, librarians are needed more than ever to help students and faculty locate and navigate through unfiltered information in informed ways. As the nature of the relationship between information and technology evolves, librarians will need to rethink their roles in communicating and delivering information and technology to students and professors, in courses and in scholarly work.

A number of actions that other libraries have taken or are considering to reconfigure the role of academic librarian include the following: offering more customized services; moving more services outside the library; combining research and IT skills with pedagogical expertise; blending traditional librarian, research, and instructional technologist roles; rethinking service desk models, possibly eliminating the traditional reference desk or staffing it with paraprofessionals; using tutorials for teaching basic library skills; reaching students beyond the confines of formal interactions and using the communication medium preferred by students; developing alternative staffing models; leveraging special collections as ways of partnering with faculty and of introducing students to primary sources; and digitizing unique materials.¹ Hamilton librarians already provide some of these services, are considering others, and report being willing to investigate others; not all

¹ The following outside library professionals commented on these ideas in their interviews: Bell, Harloe, and Trzeciak on blending roles, Bell and Trzeciak on reference desk reorganization, Lippincott on tutorials, Reyes on communication with students, and Fyffe and Trzeciak on digitizing materials.

of the suggestions made by outside experts would work at Hamilton, and the library staff is in the best position to sort through these suggestions.

Such retooling requires an investment of time and money in the professional development of the librarians. The College should support opportunities for the library personnel to acquire the new skills necessary to adapt to and to shape the changing demands of their jobs.

The Library as a Collaborative Endeavor

As the Library expands its roles in teaching and research through enhanced collaboration with faculty and students, there are other areas where increased collaboration can benefit the College and its academic mission.

Library and Support Services

One way to enhance the vision of the Library as a hub for teaching and learning is to support further collaboration between the Library, IT, and other academic support services. While a few external experts advocate merging Library and Information Technology Services, virtually all of them see a need for very close working relationships between the two organizations. Burke Library and Information Technology Services share space and work closely together in the HillGroup, which focuses on pedagogical issues and innovations. The Library and ITS also cooperated in the establishment of the Information Commons including Multimedia Presentation Center. These two entities work well together at Hamilton and should continue their close collaboration.

Experts suggest that closer collaboration between the Library and other academic support services may aid in providing students with additional access to academic support services in the place where they study, and some students in our survey echoed that idea. Access to help from Hamilton's Writing Center, the Quantitative and Social Reasoning Center, the Oral Communication Center, and peer tutoring programs might prove useful to students as they study. Given the space constraints at Burke, we believe that relocating such centers to the Library is not feasible or perhaps even desirable. Instead, we suggest discussions of models where support services hold "office hours" in spaces in Burke. Collaborations with academic support units are at an early stage but are clearly a focus of interest to the Library, and we encourage the Library to accelerate these discussions to see if greater collaboration is practical.

Special Collections

Special Collections have a multi-faceted position in libraries, contributing to the academic mission of a college (preceding section of report) and representing a type of collection (following section) as well as being a site of collaboration. They can play a vital role in teaching and learning, introducing students to primary resources and providing a hands-on introduction to different eras and cultures. In conversations with the Library of the Future Committee, English, Fyffe, and Harloe all mentioned the excitement shown by today's "born

digital” students when they make contact with physical items from another age. Such collections are also sites where collaboration can be fostered, not only between on-campus groups but also between institutions.

Special collections and archives can be the focus of active partnerships between faculty members and librarians. Several libraries reported increased interest from the faculty in the use of the library’s primary resources and growing success in integrating special collections into the curriculum (e.g., Oberlin, Williams, Grinnell, Bates). Students, faculty, and outside scholars use Hamilton’s Special Collection regularly, and the recent renovation of space in Burke to house special collections and the dedication of an attached classroom makes it possible for even more individuals to work with our special collections. In addition, collections at Hamilton are being digitized to make materials easier to use and preserve and to better access and search these materials.

Making the best use of special collections calls for planned outreach and sometimes for entrepreneurship.² We encourage the Library to search for new opportunities for collaboration around special collections both at Hamilton (e.g., with the new art museum) and at other institutions.

Consortia

Inter-institutional collaborations can involve the sharing of resources, collections, and knowledge. Leveraging participation in consortia will enable Hamilton to improve access to resources and operate more efficiently. Almost all experts with whom we consulted spoke of benefits they were receiving through participation in consortia. For Hamilton, ConnectNY and the New York Six Liberal Arts Consortium (NYSLAC) are the most likely consortia to provide immediate benefits.

Among the potential benefits of consortia are discount purchasing of materials, cost savings from common collection development, rapid sharing of materials, shared external storage facilities, maintenance of lesser used materials, shared services such as cataloging and staff development, and an environment that is amenable to experimentation. There is general agreement that the largest potential benefit of consortium membership is cost savings from common collection development. This is also seen, however, as the most difficult benefit to achieve, happening most often when similar, geographically close institutions have a history of collaborative work.

Hamilton has a history of participating in consortia, and we encourage the continued exploration of ways to increase our participation where useful.

Collections

Collections--print and electronic, general and special—are one of the major components of libraries in higher education. In the past, libraries were the primary repositories of

² From interviews with Trzeciak and Wiemers.

collections, the format of collections was predominantly print, and users came to the library to use them. This is clearly no longer exclusively the case as more and more materials can be accessed electronically and from offsite, leading to an understandable tension between the virtual/online library and the physical library, as well as between print collections and virtual ones. The Library's physical space and virtual space are necessary complements to one another as the library evolves from being primarily a site of collections into a space also emphasizing scholarly activity, and as material becomes increasingly digitized.

Print and Electronic Collections

Our surveys of Hamilton students and faculty show strong support for our print collection. Students value the presence of books in the Library as noted in their comments on their survey. Maintaining and building the print collection is somewhat or very important to 88 percent of all faculty survey respondents, with 69 percent of respondents saying the print collection remains somewhat or very important to their research. Humanists are the most adamant in their support for the print collections, and scientists the least. These disciplinary differences are critical to understanding the roles of print and virtual collections as we move forward. We must recognize that different disciplines engage with collections in different manners and that changes resulting from the shift toward more digitized material may have different implications for various groups of faculty.

At the same time, the survey of Hamilton faculty members suggests that most faculty members have embraced (or at least accepted) on-line journals. The predominance of electronic journals has made journal literature more accessible and searchable. One indication of the shift to the dominance of online journals is that the majority of faculty members in our survey (66%) rarely or never browse the print collection of current periodicals. The removal of many bound journal volumes that are available in safe repositories has allowed the Library to repurpose space for other uses and alleviated the space shortage that was predicted in the 2005 Library Task Force report. Moving to electronic access for journals is possible, in part, because of the existence of trusted repositories such as JSTOR. We note, however, that the move to electronic journals has not alleviated the costs incurred in providing journal resources; electronic journal prices continue to rise placing a burden on the Library's budget. While the Hamilton College Library has been spared the deep cuts faced by many institutions, the Library is heavily affected by trends in scholarly publishing, especially the ever-rising cost of journals, and the budget has not kept up with recent increases in the costs of materials.

The move to electronic books has been slower (though the trend is clear) in college and university libraries than the move to online journals. Currently, most e-books in academic libraries are accessed through connecting to a library website, and purchases are currently package based and relatively expensive. At present, there are no trusted monograph repositories for books in electronic formats along the lines of JSTOR though the Hathitrust may serve this role in the future (English). Libraries are responding to changes in technology around books in a variety of ways. Some libraries (e.g., McMaster) are moving aggressively in this area, others (e.g., Grinnell) have self-described "conservative" print-

based cultures. Some libraries (e.g., Williams and St. Lawrence) are experimenting with patron-driven acquisitions, (i.e., when an e-book is used a set number of times the library purchases it, acquiring permanent electronic access). Library use of dedicated e-book readers (i.e., commercially available devices) also involves difficult proprietary software and digital rights management issues and is not currently seen as a viable option for academic libraries. However, there is some experimentation with using e-readers as a way of providing access to monographs (e.g., Williams).

At Hamilton, most faculty members remain wary of e-books. Only 14 percent of all respondents in the faculty survey say they like them and are comfortable with them; 28 percent say they prefer traditional books; 31 percent say that e-books are useful for some purposes; and younger faculty members are both more familiar with e-books and like them more than older faculty members, although a large percentage (47%) of individuals under forty still prefer traditional books. Despite this wariness, one-third of the faculty (half of the scientists) thinks that e-books will probably dominate their field within ten years.

Technological innovation may eventually push libraries to adopt models for collections that emphasize access over ownership, digital formats rather than print, and digitized special collections. Academic journals have already moved in that direction, although not with a reduction in cost, but monographs are moving more slowly in that direction. On the one hand, the Library needs to develop a strategic approach to e-books that is flexible, recognizes the needs of different groups of faculty members, and involves experimenting with e-books in order to not be left behind as the technology changes. On the other hand, Hamilton's faculty and students are deeply connected to the print collection, which we must be careful not to neglect as we explore e-book possibilities.

Regardless of the exact mix of print and electronic resources making up the collection, access to these materials requires a well developed and maintained web presence. The College devotes considerable resources to housing and organizing the Library's physical collections. As more and more of its users interact with its resources online, the Library will also need to demonstrate a strong commitment to providing a robust virtual environment.

Music and Media Collections

In addition to Burke's print, electronic, and special collections, Hamilton also has a music library and a media library. Increases in digitization and streaming may affect use of some of the media and music collections, but currently many of these materials are not readily accessible online, may not be digitized anytime soon, or are of a quality of streaming audio/visual material that does not meet teaching and research needs. For example, although the Library subscribes to Naxos, an online site for streaming music, Naxos' collections are primarily classical; there is still a need for collection development in areas that are currently not available in streamed format. The current question concerning both branch libraries is that of access to the collections. The Music Library seems to be well-located and convenient for its users, who are primarily students in music classes and the Music faculty members; on the other hand, the Media Library draws students from across

many disciplines, and some students believe it is inconveniently located and its hours are limited.

Recommendations

The Library at Hamilton faces a number of challenges as it plans for the hire of a new head librarian and for the changes that the next five to ten years may bring. These are difficult economic times, and the pace, nature, and impact of technological change for the Library are unpredictable. Technology is changing the landscape of the libraries, both physically and virtually, but there has been little cost savings to such changes. Rather, costs have continued to increase. Despite this complicated situation, the Library must move forward to address the evolving situation it faces, and the new head librarian should be intimately involved in crafting a long-term vision for the Library.

I. Maintain the Library as central to the academic mission: The consensus of all those from whom we collected information was that the future of academic librarianship lay in fostering teaching and learning through partnering with students, faculty, and other academic support units. We recommend that:

1. Library personnel expand their outreach to faculty, students and other academic support organizations to form partnerships in teaching, scholarly work, and the provision of services.
2. The College provide funding and opportunities for professional development to help library personnel keep pace with changes in technology and digital scholarship and to develop the professional skills necessary to work with faculty and students.
3. When considering changes to services and ways of managing the collections, the Library consider the diverse needs of faculty members in different disciplines and doing different kinds of scholarly and creative work.
4. The College refurbish the Library to better suit the needs of the students and to maintain the Library as a place of study, including providing more comfortable and moveable furniture, aesthetic upgrades, and the creation of more study spaces.
5. Keeping in mind the students and faculty members' commitment to the presence of books in Burke, the Library should examine ways to create more space, including off-site storage, culling the monograph collection, or installing more compact shelving.

II. Stress opportunities for collaboration: Collaboration, both on-campus and off, will be increasingly necessary for the Library to function effectively and efficiently in lean economic times. Sharing information, resources, and expertise can be more effective and inexpensive through collaborating with others. We recommend that:

1. While maintaining its own identity, the Library continue its good working relationship with ITS and enter into dialogues with other academic services on campus about the possibilities of closer collaboration among these units.

2. The Library take a proactive role in promoting its Special Collections with students and faculty at Hamilton, as well as outside scholars and other libraries.
3. The Library continue to explore opportunities with consortia, especially around the issues of collections.

III. *Maintain a balance of print and virtual collections*: The Hamilton community appears committed to maintaining a print collection for the near future, although primarily using online formats for journals. However, in order to not be left behind as technology changes the nature of collections and because more and more users expect to interact with resources electronically, Hamilton must think and act proactively in regard to Library collections. We recommend that:

1. The Library remain committed to maintaining a balance between print and electronic collections for the next five to ten years; at the same time, it should begin developing a strategic approach to electronic books that is flexible and recognizes the needs of different groups of faculty members.
2. The Library examine how technology may affect the Music and Media Libraries as both physical and virtual libraries.
3. The Library commit the necessary resources to developing and maintaining an online presence to meet the growing needs and expectations of its users.

As Hamilton begins its search for a new Couper Librarian, we believe that the individual hired should have the abilities to work collaboratively with different constituencies on campus, to negotiate the divergent visions that these constituencies may have for the Library, and to embrace the challenge of the changing world of academic libraries. However important technological changes may be, we also hope that the new Couper Librarian will protect and promote the library as a special, quiet place to study amidst a browsable, printed collection. We expect the new Couper Librarian to build and expand upon the Library's strong legacy to help it remain a central part of the academic mission of Hamilton.

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