

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
RESEARCH LIBRARY COUNCIL
ACADEMIC YEAR 2003-2004

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COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

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The Research Library Council held seven meetings during AY 2003-2004: on October 16, November 13, December 11, December 16, February 19, March 25, April 29, and May 18. The meetings served primarily to inform the Council about changes in library policy, organization, staff, initiatives, development, users, Five College library cooperation, and collection development. Chief among the topics under review was the challenges posed by the declining budget for the University Libraries.

AY 2003-04 required the Senate Bylaws pertaining to the RLC to be amended. These were considered in committee, then submitted to the Senate. Two areas to which the Council devoted particular attention were acquisition funding and emerging alternative systems of scholarly publishing. Acquisition funding was hampered by ERM disposition of the state budget, an anomaly which the Chancellor addressed during his meeting with the RLC on 11 December 2003. The Chancellor spoke to the most pressing issues facing the library; and committed himself to improving the libraries. His commitment has been fulfilled tenfold, and his enthusiasm and sound leadership bode very well for the libraries. Chancellor Lombardi reminded the RLC that the library is vital to the university, that any threat to the library is a threat to the campus, that we must create sustainable funding for the library, and that the RLC and the library need to find a variety of sources of funding. As a consequence, the RLC joined library staff in recommending a Director of Development, which the Chancellor endorsed. The position has been created and filled.

The Council contributed to the reorganization of the Physical Sciences and Engineering Library, which opened to general acclaim on 21 October 2003. This AY also saw the retirement of Margo Crist from her post as Director of Libraries. The RLC voiced its congratulations on her outstanding work shepherding the libraries through exceptionally difficult times. The Council was heartened to see Jay Schafer step in as interim Director. He immediately presented the RLC with a series of new initiatives. Among these were a digital initiative, a learning commons for students, a publishing colloquium with UMass Press, and a reconsideration of how long faculty may borrow materials. This last was considered in subcommittee. The RLC contributed advice in the selection of a new Integrated Library system, which promises to be a great success, as well as to the deck replacement project, specifically to the lobby redesign

One continuing disappointment for the RLC is the lack of consistent participation by student representatives. We hope students come to see the advantage of their wider participation. On the agenda for the fall is the publishing colloquium, set to go in AY 2004-05, thanks especially to the efforts of Bruce Wilcox; the question of how the Council can best serve its advisory function; and how the RLC can contribute to raising funds.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen J. Harris, Chair