



Faculty Senate

Faculty Senate Libraries Committee
Interim Report AY2021-2022
Presented by Holly Dugan and Jannet Lewis

Members of the committee:

Natalia Dolgova	CCAS	Voting
Asefeh Faraz	SON	Voting
Harald Griesshammer	CCAS	Voting
Gaetano Lotrecchiano	SMHS	Voting
Maureen McGuire-Kuletz	GSEHD	Voting
David Scalzitti	SMHS	voting
Ronda Schwindt	SON	voting
Andrew Smith	CCAS	Voting
Puja Telikicherla	CPS	Voting
Marinella Temprosa,	GWSPH	Voting
Kathleen Thoma	SMHS	Voting
Victor Valdivia	CCAS	Voting
Nicholas Vonortas	ESIA	Voting
John Warren	CPS	Voting
Geneva Henry	Libraries	Nonvoting
Anne Linton	Himmelfarb	Nonvoting
Scott Pagel	Law Library	Nonvoting
Ken Rodriguez	LAW	Nonvoting
Abigail Francis	Student	

The Library Committee was assigned two charges during this time period:

- “(1) scheduling at least one regular monthly meeting for each month of June, July, and August, 2021. An individual meeting may be canceled no earlier than ten (10) days prior to the monthly meeting; and
- (2) advising the administration on fall reopening decisions involving education and research, which are areas of faculty specialty. This includes decisions about the manner of on-campus or hybrid instruction/research (or about remaining online) as well as the establishment of any procedures and rules for in-person and online teaching/research, with mutual effort to achieve consensus.”

The committee met three times over the summer and worked closely with Deans Henry, Pagel and Linton to discuss challenges and issues connected with the reopening of Gelman, Eckles, Himmelfarb and Burns Libraries.

These included a number of issues connected to budget mitigation during AY2020-2021. Early budget projections, for instance, did not provide Eckles to reopen at all or for Gelman and Himmelfarb libraries to be open 24/7 (as it has been in years prior to AY 2020-2021). This outcome, thankfully, was avoided; Eckles has reopened and Gelman and Himmelfarb libraries are now open 24/7.

GWU libraries were among the first buildings on campus to reopen; the staff and librarians are to be recognized for their service during the period of online learning and during the transition to in-person learning. LAI was integral to the success of GWU's online learning and student and faculty research during AY 2020-2021. The return to campus this summer, however, emphasized a number of on-going issues connected to facilities, staffing, and the collections.

Facilities: Our libraries are among the most utilized buildings on campus, which has exacerbated on-going issues connected to the facilities. Gelman Library's building envelope and HVAC systems need **immediate** repair, as several instances of flooding during the Fall semester have put collections at risk. The committee recommends that discussion and planning of renovations to Gelman Library's facade be shifted towards repairing the building envelope immediately.

Staffing: The shift to shared services impacted LAI in two key ways. First, facilities staff were moved into shared services and reduced. The result is that librarians and library staff often performed labor connected to facilities maintenance as well as additional labor connected to the facilities issues outlined above (such as emptying the dehumidifiers in the loading dock during flooding in the summer and fall). This, in addition to the substantial work involved in reopening the libraries in the summer, has impacted staff morale. Event planning staff were also moved into shared services and reduced, resulting in either librarians and library staff members performing additional labor previously done by events planning staff (such as organizing rooms in Burns Law Library to facilitate the proctoring of the bar exam) or in services being cancelled or moved online (such as the early career teaching workshops at Gelman Library).

Reports from this committee in [2018](#), [2019](#), and [2020](#) call attention to how the underfunding of the LAI system has impacted our collections. This committee's reports [from last year](#) emphasize the need to hire more librarians to support online learning. The dramatic reduction of staffing during the 2016 budget crisis has made it all but impossible to navigate the current budget crisis without the collection being impacted. Librarians are vital to the research and teaching missions of the university and we cannot proceed without addressing the substantial backfilled positions. As documented in reports from the committee in 2019, research collections were directly impacted by budgetary decisions prior to the pandemic and budget mitigation of AY 2020-2021; these were compounded

by budget shortfalls created by the change in student fees in 2019 and they've only grown during the budget mitigation of last year. The budget for LAI needs to be increased if GWU is to continue to pursue research excellence as one of its pillars.

The shift to shared services and the reduction of staff (due to budget mitigation last year) has negatively impacted LAI. Librarian morale is low; the skill and experience of our librarians is high. The result is that a number of our librarians are being recruited by our competitors. Retention is now a top priority, especially given that our hiring process is slow. LAI has been able to fill a number of key positions but this process is timely.

The committee met twice during the Fall semester (on October 29th and on December 2, 2021). In October, the committee received its charges for AY 2021-2022:

- (1) Clarify the work scope covered by LAI and that covered by GW IT, monitoring the Academic Technologies and Classroom Technologies transition;
- (2) Monitor the libraries' online presence;
- (3) Address any deficiencies of the physical library spaces (including HVAC);
- (4) Assess staff and librarian positions and the impact of a limited budget on these, weighing this against adjustments in library collections.

After discussion and asking clarifying questions, the committee has prioritized its work for the spring semester in order to focus on charges 1 and 3.

Charge (1): Clarify the work scope covered by LAI and that covered by GW IT, monitoring the Academic Technologies and Classroom Technologies transition.

As discussed above, the shift to shared services directly impacted LAI and has caused a number of nested issues. The first has to do with the continued importance of Blackboard and zoom during in-person learning. LAI has provided excellent support for online pedagogy, training faculty and students on how to optimize learning management systems. The committee continues to advocate for faculty education on how to effectively store these lectures. However, the scope of GW IT

Charge (3): Address any deficiencies of the physical library spaces (including HVAC)

The committee emphasizes that the physical library spaces (including Gelman Library's building envelope and HVAC system) need **immediate repair**. The minutes from June-December (attached) outline numerous flooding and HVAC issues and the need for additional facilities staff to help grapple with these issues. We strongly advocate that discussion and planning of the building's facade be delayed and all budget allotments for renovation be prioritized for immediate repair. These are not new issues and were documented in 2019 end of year report of the committee. The committee

does not have the authority to address the deficiencies other than to advocate for repair, which it does so strongly.

Charge (2): Monitor the libraries' online presence.

LAI maintains an engaging and effective online presence on a number of social media platforms. LAI also unrolled a thoughtful redesign of the landing page that encourages user-feedback, improving metadata and creating opportunities for diversity and inclusion through community engagement. The committee was thus a bit confused by this charge. Upon clarification with members of the EC, the committee learned that this charge asks us to monitor how LAI is integrated into GWU's online learning. Discussion of Blackboard storage issues continues in the committee, given its expense and the need for more faculty education on this issue. Discussion of educational policies about the recording of lectures is outside of the scope of the committee, but the committee plans to work with educational policy on these debates. We emphasize that LAI is integrated into almost all courses offered in the medical school; lectures are recorded by default and LAI librarians are embedded in course development and delivery. This labor is *highly skilled and timely,* so it requires budgetary support. This topic also connects to charge (4) ("assess librarian positions and the impact of the budget on these positions, weighed against collections"), discussed below. Likewise, the law school has faculty and librarian experts about many of the issues of intellectual property and copyright raised by online learning and recorded lectures.

Charge (4): Assess staff and librarian positions and the impact of a limited budget on these, weighing this against adjustments in library collections.

Retention is of utmost priority. The minutes from July and August meetings document that staffing shortages [directly impact library hours](#). Hiring takes time and there is tremendous competition from other Universities who are offering work-from-home options. A number of our librarians have competitive offers from other universities. The overwork resulting from the shifts to shared services (outlined above) has caused low morale. These conditions exacerbate longstanding, systemic issues in GWU's approach to Libraries and Academic Innovation. In 2016 the University budget prioritized collections, which resulted in a 30% reduction in librarians and staff. Most of these positions remain backfilled and have not been replaced. New hires last year have allowed the University to deliver quality online learning and to facilitate faculty research and hiring continues this year (including librarian for the College of Professional Studies, a digital services manager, however staffing remains a top priority especially as the university transitions to in-person teaching and learning. The LAI budget cannot be reduced further without a dramatic impact on either the quality of teaching or the quality of research, both of which are pillars of our university's mission. We thus emphasize that the choice between staff or collections is a false one; we advocate strongly for hiring and retaining our excellent librarians and staff.