Librarian's Meeting.   May 23, 2006   notes by Fran Rosen

Present: Richard Cochran, Julia Buryk, Joe Weber, Melinda McMartin, Scott Atwell, Rick Bearden, Fran Rosen, Ray Dickinson, Leah Monger, Deborah McGowan, Yuri Konovalov, Ann Breitenwischer, Maureen Watson.

[Note: I missed the beginning of the meeting.]

The meeting quickly moved to discussing library Technical Support. Rick and Richard discussed what FLITE should do in response to a situation where we can't necessarily rely on ATS for support of some of the library's complex computer requirements. We need to make the case for the support we need, and we need to propose an alternative model that actually meets the needs of the library. ATS does work with some departments that do their own computer support for more complex systems. Richard says we are doing some of that now since Rick does some IT work for the library. Rick pointed out that libraries are changing and their needs are changing, some of the documents we've all been reading on the changing role and function of libraries are important background for us to use to look at what technical support needs to be.

There was some discussion about whether we could hire somebody, or could somebody learn to do some more technical activities. But we are already stretched thin, and we have already decided to hire a Reference/Instruction librarian. Richard suggested that we would need to make a case for a new position, based on statistics. Julia mentioned the Higher Education commission on online learning, and the role that the library has to play to support online learning, and Richard wondered if we could separate out statistics to show how we support distance education. Fran suggested that library usage even for non-distance education has moved so heavily to online resources that maybe we don't need to separate out those statistics, but we can make the case based on both on & off-campus use of electronic resources. We discussed that this is a new learning environment, with lots of new faculty with new demands. Ann has been working with new faculty who are looking for specific databases and journal aggregations; even if we have the full-text that they are looking for they don't find it because we don't present it the same way as the library they are used to. Ray provided some history & told us that in 1968 Ferris had 6000 students, no off-campus component, and the same number of librarians that we have now.

It was pointed out that over the past year many people have spent a huge amount of time dealing with problems caused by not having a cooperative relationship with the IT people, and trying to solve problems caused because other people don't understand what we do.

Finally, Rick suggested that we discuss some of the other topics suggested for discussion.

Julia pointed out that we are near the end of the trial for RefWorks. We are planning to get a subscription, so we should talk about whether to bring somebody in to give a training presentation, and about how we will do training. Rick said that setting up users

from off-campus is really difficult, and we'll have to figure out a way to make it easier for our off-campus students.

Julia also suggested that we have "Brown Bag" discussions when people come back from conferences and meetings (where appropriate). This would allow for a more casual atmosphere, and a chance for interested people to learn what is going on in different areas of librarianship and for us to discuss important issues of the day (as librarians see the day). Plus we could see what everybody eats for lunch. There was general agreement that this would be a good thing, and Dave was volunteered to start with a report from the Millenium User's Group meeting.

Rick announced that he has seen a number of complaints recently that links aren't behaving themselves in PubMed, so he is investigating that. PubMed was working great with the new version of SFX.

Rick also mentioned that Ebsco has implemented a visual search and made it available with their databases. Unfortunately it doesn't work consistently through III's proxy server, so Rick has turned it off until it works consistently.

We talked a little about Cinahl. We will be able to stick with WebSpirs from Ovid for a while longer, but we will have to switch to Ebsco. Ebsco is providing free access in parallel with our current access until the end of 2006. MLC is working on a group purchase. There is also the option of Cinahl, or Cinahl with fulltext. Fran isn't very excited about the fulltext content, because there is a lot of duplication. The main point is that we want to wait until Alison gets here and let her help figure out how to do the switch to Ebsco, and what product would best serve our needs.

Ann brought up the question of direct links to the big journal packages that we subscribe to, such as Blackwell Synergy and Wiley Interscience. We have package deals so we have access to all Blackwell titles, and to all Wiley titles. Some libraries provide a direct link so that patrons can search across all Blackwell titles, for example. GVSU does this. Some of our new faculty expect to find such access and when they don't, they think we don't provide the content. Rick said there have been various issues in the past, such as low quality of the search interface, and inconsistency in domains which causes off-campus access to break (since there is no automatic update; automatic updates are a wonderful feature of SFX). He can look at these interfaces again. Julia said that one thing patrons are looking for is a subject search across content. She asked if the new version of SFX has subjects assigned to journals & whether it might provide a way for patrons to search for all journals on a particular subject. She proposed that we look at how some other libraries are providing these services. She was also concerned about how our patrons might find non-indexed stuff that we have access to.

Rick said that we have a demanding user base so it is important not to provide tools that might break; he said they are more upset when things break than they are when things aren't there. Fran said we need to have indexes for the subjects that are covered in the curriculum but we don't have indexes to everything. Part of the deal with the Big Deal

journal packages is that we are getting content that we would not get otherwise and which is not directly relevant to the curriculum; and so we are going to have non-indexed content.