U.B.C. LIBRARY NEWS

Volume III, No. 2 February, 1970 Vancouver, B.C.

This newsletter is published as an information service for UBC faculty, students and other readers outside the Library. It contains feature articles and news about developments in the library system which we feel will be of interest or concern to the larger community. The News welcomes all comments, criticisms and suggestions for future articles.

MORE FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT

On January 14 the Librarian's Annual Report was presented to the Senate. Highlights from the first half of the Report were reprinted the following day in the January Library News. This month's News contains extracts from the final sections.

Copies of the Report are available from the Librarian's Office or from any dean, department head, or departmental library representative.

* * * *

[III. Library Services.]

5. Student Opinion

The results of the survey of student opinion conducted by the Student-Library Committee in 1966 were widely distributed, and have played a significant part in library planning and . . . operational changes. A similar survey was undertaken in the Spring of 1969, in connection with the planning for the new Undergraduate Library . . . .

One major concern of students was the frequent unavailability of desired materials. This was not so much a question of the items not being in the collection, as it was of [their] not being present on the shelves at the right time. This often expressed opinion verified the Library's calculation . . . that the liminal adequacy of the Sedgewick Library collection in 1968/69 would be 152,000 volumes, compared with its holdings of about 85,000 volumes. Unfortunately, space will not be available for the larger collection until 1971/72. However, within the limits of space, the collection is being developed by a computer analysis of loan records, described in a later section of the report. . . .

The present physical plant came in for heavy, sometimes bitter and sarcastic, criticism. The main complaints were directed toward insufficient air and overheating. Students were unaware that tens of thousands of dollars have been spent in trying to improve the situation, but the problem is apparently technically insoluble: the Main Library was designed as a closed-stack book storage facility, which was the fashion in 1926, and the resulting low-ceiling areas were never meant to house thousands of people every day. One of the side effects of the completion of the new Undergraduate Library will be to reduce the population in the Main Library.

In the same vein, over half the respondents remarked on the "chaotic", "disturbing" and "noisy" atmosphere that is a simple by-product of over-crowding. . . .

Sampling of opinion has proved to be an invaluable aid in improving the Library physically and operationally. As the planning of new buildings proceeds, the opinions of the users will be sought again and again.

IV. Collections

1. Funds

In 1965/66, supported by the far-sighted and unprecedented gift of Mr. H.R. MacMillan, the Library spent $1,613,087 on books and periodicals. Since that time, the trend has been in a contrary direction, the University being unable to find the resources to sustain that level of expenditure: in 1968/69, $998,414 was spent, including $21,183 in gift funds and $33,206 from the Canada Council, whose policy of library grants has now been suspended indefinitely. Ironically, U.B.C.'s period of affluence has acted as a spur to other institutions, with the result that while budgets declined here, they have been on the rise elsewhere: last year the University of Toronto spent $1,913,448 on acquisitions and binding, and the University of Alberta spent $1,466,419. In the present year, expenditures at Alberta may exceed $2,000,000, and budgets of over $1,000,000 have been set at Calgary, Windsor and York Universities as well as at Toronto. Fortunately, the direction has now been reversed at U.B.C., and slightly over $1,000,000 will be available from the University for collection development in 1969/70.

This bibliothecal game of snakes and ladders has not been easy for either faculty members or librarians to play . . . . The consolation lies in the immensely improved resources of the Library's collection. Amazingly, it is physically more than twice as large as it was only seven years ago. Although the gross size of a collection is but one criterion of a library's strength, it is an important one, the effects of which are felt in all faculties and departments.

2. Collections

At the end of August 1969, U.B.C.'s collections numbered over 1,100,000 catalogued volumes, with probably as many or more bibliographical items again stored in micro images. . . . Collecting policy is in tune with the academic programme, and kept that way with a budget that takes into consideration the needs of every discipline represented in the curriculum. If anything is missing, it is the extraordinary financial support needed for research collections in the humanities and social sciences. . . .

For many years, the Canada Council has assisted Canadian university libraries in developing research collections through the awarding of annual grants for specific projects. It has been a matter of concern and regret . . . that this practice has been discontinued. In 1968/69 U.B.C. spent over $33,000 of Canada Council funds then available to it, and received a grant for 1969/70 of $70,000. This assistance, in the majority of cases, made the success of particular graduate programmes possible. If this much-appreciated supplement can no longer be expected, either the University must make up the difference or research in the humanities and social sciences will suffer. . . .

3. Processing

. . . The backlog of uncatalogued volumes accumulated during the years of heavier spending was reduced by close to 30,000 volumes in 1968/69. At the end of the fiscal year, only 30,000 more remained in the backlog, which will be completely eliminated in . . . two more years.

The effects of the boom-and-bust era were felt most directly in the processing divisions, which have undergone a period of continuous review and reorganization. Coupled with the introduction of automated procedures, this reorganization has produced a flexible and efficient working unit. The major problem that has not been solved in the processing divisions is one outside their power to solve: space. [They] are located in a stack area which will soon be needed for collection storage. Yet no satisfactory site is available for their relocation.

4. Use

Although statistics of use are imperfect, in that they do not reflect in-library use, they are an important indication of the worth of a library collection.

In 1968/69 measured use increased by another 16.73%, from 1,389,916 loans to 1,622,451. In keeping with an established trend, the Sedgewick Library recorded a 23.9% increase; at 434,890 loans, business has more than doubled in only three years. The rate of increase has not been so great in the case of the Main Library collection, but . . . was nevertheless 21.6%. . . .

It is not often that satisfaction can be taken in a significant decline in use, but one such instance was the 32.4% decline in . . . use of books from the Reserve Collection in the Main Library. . . . Using the [circulation] system's book-by-book analysis, the Reserve Collection was reduced almost by half. Faculty members, equipped with use figures for the books placed on reserve for their individual courses, responded by making fewer reserve requests: 3,513 in 1968/69, compared to 5,284 in the previous year. At the same time, the Library is using [these] statistics as a basis for the purchase of additional copies of needed titles. Thus the computer is being put to use for the purpose of fashioning a collection in keeping with established demand.

The graph of use holds other messages. In 1960/61 the Library began to lend more books than it had in its collections, and this gap is continuing to widen, indicating a greater intensity of use. . . . This . . . can probably be attributed to four factors: the decentralization of services and collections; the automation of circulation routines; the increase in enrollment; and the heavier reading assignments demanded of students . . . . Clearly, the benefits of a collection made better by recent purchasing are being realized by the university community to a constantly increasing degree.

V. Administration

1. Organization and Relationships

In 1968/69 the [Senate Library] Committee gave its usual attention to the allocation of book funds, and to all of the necessary small changes in policy and procedure. Much time was spent in a careful review of loan policies and regulations; the result was a new code which was better adapted to current requirements. . . .

In 1968/69 no separate Student Library Committee was formed, principally due to the inability of the Alma Mater Society to find a sufficient number of interested students in a year when there were much larger issues of concern. Fortunately, this gap was well filled by the three students who were members of the Senate Library Committee, one of whom also served on the Users' Committee for the new Undergraduate Library. Their assistance and advice was greatly appreciated.

The head librarians of the three public universities continued their quarterly meetings, and proceeded with arrangements for creating compatible automated systems and complementary collections, and for sharing resources. . . . [They also] laid plans for a meeting with the librarians of the regional colleges, in the hope that mutually beneficial policies might be adopted as the newer libraries struggle to maturity.

2. Personnel

In the introduction to this Report, the point was made that good libraries are more than books and buildings. It is a point worth restating, that good libraries depend for their successful daily operation on the capabilities and attitudes of individual staff members. The quest of the Library is to find intelligent and helpful people, to train them and retain them, so that the . . . patron will feel that he has been well and fairly served. . . .

In 1968/69 there were 387½ staff positions in the Library's establishment, 95½ of which were . . . for professional librarians, the remainder being . . . for library assistants, technicians, clerks and keypunch operators. This approximate ratio of 25% is significantly lower than the average of fifty major U.S. and Canadian libraries, which stands at 37%. . . .

In 1967/68 the salary floors for librarians were not raised, and although an increase was provided in 1968/69, a gap has developed between U.B.C. and most other Canadian universities. A survey of 31 university libraries reported three with a floor for new graduates of over $8,000, eleven with a floor over $7,500, ten with a floor over $7,000, two at $7,000, and five between $6,500 and $6,900. U.B.C.'s floor is $7,000. Floors for Division Heads were even less attractive. At U.B.C. the floor is $9,600, at Simon Fraser it is $12,000, at Victoria it is $10,800, at Alberta it is $11,800, and at Toronto it is $12,000. This situation, besides creating problems of recruitment, is invidious and destructive of morale.

The position of Library Assistants was greatly improved in the previous year and that position has fortunately been maintained. Although other factors contributed to the phenomenon, salary improvements must account in large part for our falling turnover rate: 68.2% in 1965/66, 54.12% in 1966/67, 43.88% in 1967/68, and 43.1% this past year. Lower turnover pays dividends in the economical use of staff time, and in the improved level of service an experienced staff can render.

The nurturing of personnel is a never-ending process. There are many objectives yet to be attained, among them . . . increases in the length of scales, and in floors; raises for exceptional merit; [and]differentials for shift work. The ultimate objective is to create careers in the Library for individuals whose orientation is toward books, people, education and service.

3. Systems

The University of British Columbia Library is almost unique among large university libraries in having successfully operating automated systems for the acquisition and lending of books and periodicals. The introduction of computer-based systems commenced four years ago, and has proceeded at a steady rate since that time. Today, the list of systems and sub-systems is a long one. The transference of routine operations from staff to machinery has not been the sole result. Perhaps more important have been the benefits to the users: the simplicity of borrowing books, the ease of reference in many locations to library records . . . formerly hidden behind the scenes.

Furthermore, the computer analysis of loan records . . . is enabling the Library to identify items . . . which are under intensive pressure, and to use this information as the basis for collection development. This analysis has also led to a rationalization of the reserve book system, and may result in the production of a list of books needed by undergraduates, which can be used to good advantage at British Columbia's regional colleges.

The next major developments in library automation will involve the conversion into machine-readable form of all catalogue information, and the conversion of some systems to an on-line mode. However, these developments will require such a heavy financial commitment that careful analysis of costs and benefits must be performed before decisions to proceed are made. As in the past, the aim will be to bring into being systems which are economic, effective and useful in human terms.

VI. Concluding Remarks.

Readers . . . will now understand that steady progress has been made in the enrichment of collections, in the extension and refinement of computer-based systems, and in the creation of a specialized library staff. . . . Similar progress cannot be claimed in providing badly needed library space.

. . . After fifty years of development from a simple college to a multi-university, and from a student body of five hundred to one of twenty-two thousand, the University must still rely for the most part on the original Library building, which has become overcrowded and inefficient. Not many universities can make that claim. Few would want to.

Neither the present Main Library nor the projected undergraduate library can provide service to students and faculty who must in some cases walk half a mile to reach the collections they need. Obviously, to the detriment of academic standards, there are [those] who will not bother to make the journey. Nor can the combined shelf space of all libraries, present and projected, hold the rapidly growing collection for long. In two or three years' time thousands of books will have to go into storage. Obviously such a move will be expensive, perhaps most of all in terms of human inconvenience.

The library staff, who cannot be put into storage, must continue to work under steadily more crowded conditions. Technical services, for example, now has one hundred and thirty employees working under a seven-foot ceiling in an overcrowded, badly lighted and heated area which was meant to be used only for book storage. Others do not even enjoy the comparative luxury of a window.

Unfortunately, these very real problems are beyond the capacity of the Library alone to solve. The fate and stature of the University hinge to a considerable extent on the condition of its Library. Even to maintain the Library at its present level will require more capital expenditure than is now planned. To improve it will cost even more. The future disbursement of resources will tell clearly enough how the University feels about its Library, and thus about itself.

ONE YEAR LEFT FOR MAIN STACKS

For the past five years the Librarian's Annual Report has been warning that shelf space in the Main Library bookstacks would be exhausted early in the 1970's. Shortly after this year's Report was made public,

the Circulation Division issued the results of its latest study on shelf space and collection growth. The figures speak for themselves. Books from the main stacks may have to go into storage by the end of this year; the form this storage will take is not yet known. Even construction of a new undergraduate library will not relieve crowding in the stacks or allow books to be brought back from storage. Extracts from the study follow.

SPACE NEEDED FOR THE MAIN STACKS COLLECTION

Late in December 1969, staff in [the] Circulation Division measured the books on levels 1 to 4 of the main stacks in order to determine how much longer we can expect to add to the present collection before additional shelving must be sought.

The total capacity of the stacks was determined by counting the number of useable shelves in the stacks and multiplying this by 35 inches. This excludes a relatively small number of shelves which cannot be used because of insufficient vertical clearance. It also excludes the possibility of adding stacks along the walls and in a few nooks here and there, since such possibilities are limited by the need to maintain seating capacity at the present level.

While the measurements were being taken, the number of books out on loan, in the bindery, etc., was determined . . . . The approximate linear [footage] of shelving which would be occupied by [these] books was calculated and later added to the measurements.

. . . The reader is cautioned to consider the following data as a close estimate rather than as a completely accurate measurement. Comparison with previous measurements . . . indicates that the following is an underestimate rather than an overestimate.

	Capacity of Stacks	Shelving Already Occupied by Books (Including Those on Loan)	Present Rate of Occupancy	Useable Space at 100% of Capacity	Useable Space at 90% of Capacity
Level 1	22,768 ft.	19,565 ft.	85.9%	3,203 ft.	926 ft.
Level 2	15,510 ft.	11,171 ft.	72%	4,339 ft.	2,788 ft.
Level 3	14,560 ft.	10,274 ft.	70.5%	4,286 ft.	2,830 ft.
Level 4	26,845 ft.	20,603 ft.	76.9%	6,242 ft.	3,558 ft.
TOTAL	79,683 ft.	61,613 ft.	77%	18,070 ft.	10,102 ft.

[NOTE: Figures for useable space are obtained by subtracting shelf footage already occupied by books from total capacity of stacks.]

It is inevitable . . . that long before the stacks are filled to 100% of capacity . . . some areas will be so badly overcrowded that reshelving and shelf-reading will become extremely difficulty, resulting in the books becoming badly out of order. Also, many books may be damaged as a result of being too tightly packed on the shelves . . . .

This means that we cannot permit the stacks to be filled to 100% of capacity. Hence we cannot say that we have 18,000 feet of useable shelves left.

Seymour Robb of the Library of Congress suggested that at 75% of capacity a shelf is full. We have already passed that point without a disaster befalling us . . . . Judging from the condition of level 1 where the rate of occupancy is 85%, I would suggest that the limit for an open stack library is between 85% and 90% of capacity. If this is true, then we have no more than 10,000 feet of shelving left before additional space must be found.

Rate of Growth

In January 1967, the main stacks book collection was measured and found to occupy 46,306 feet of shelving. The difference between this and the December 1969 measurement indicates that the annual rate of growth is about 10%. . . .

If we take 10% to be the average annual rate of growth for the main stacks collection, we find that the

stacks will be filled to 85% of capacity by December 1970, and will probably reach 90% of capacity by June 1971 . . . .

Prospects for Relief

It has been suggested that when the Sedgewick Library moves into its new building, [part of the main stacks collection] might move into the space thus vacated. [However] this provides only about six months before additional shelving must be found again. It would be ill-advised to attempt by various stop-gap measures to cope with 95% to 100% of occupancy . . . before Sedgewick moves, in order to return to a barely tolerable situation for only six months.

Thus, it appears that we should consider moving part of the main stacks collection . . . into storage by December 1970, or by May 1971 at the very latest.

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENT ANNOUNCED

Recently William J. Watson, Assistant Librarian for Technical Services, resigned to take up a position as Chief Librarian at the University of Waterloo. He will be succeeded by Robin W. (Bob) MacDonald, who has served until now as the Library's Systems Analyst. Mr. MacDonald will assume responsibility for the technical processing divisions, including the Catalogue, Serials, Acquisitions and Systems Divisions, the Prebindery and Bindery. In this capacity his title will be Coordinator of Technical Processes and Systems.

In order to relieve Mr. MacDonald of some of his previous responsibilities, additional support staff will be sought for the Systems Divisions.

Editor: Mrs. E. de Bruijn Information & Orientation Division