Cornell University Library

Council of Librarians

Minutes, Meeting of November 19, 1997

10:30 a.m. Room 106 Olin Library

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by the University Librarian, Sarah Thomas, who asked that the minutes from the previous meeting be approved. Sarah described the agenda of the day then introduced the main topic of discussion, the state of the Library Gateway.

Ed Weissman described some of the work that has gone into the planning, design, and implementation of the Library Gateway, which is largely the result of the efforts of the various committees and with some interaction with staff.

Zsuzsa Koltay, chair of the Public Services Design Committee, displayed screens from the Gateway to illustrate the work of the committee and the problems that they had to address. She noted that the Gateway provides access to over 1,100 resources, besides providing a variety of other information, including library services. The Gateway is an attempt to provide a single point to enter and access the libraries of the University, replicating and enhancing the physical pointers, signs, and aids to its resources.

The current screen design, displayed for illustration, lists the main resources, and user opinion will be sought for reaction and advice. Noni Vidal provided help and advice on the screen design, and this resulted in some improvement in general layout. As there are 30 main subject headings to be displayed for accessing network resources, there are problems of clarity and congestion. The main headings were split into four general categories, suggesting various ways to search or browse. An example of greater space economy was the use of the logo box for "button" captions. Zsuzsa listed and described the contents of the "buttons," and stressed the amount of information about the library system and its policies and procedures. In response to a question from Lenore Coral on the type face displayed, Zsuzsa pointed out that the present screen is rigged for demonstration, and that the fonts and other features will be refined later. She also noted in response to a question from Gordon Law, that the current form of the subject headings is, at this stage, supposedly final. Both Susan Currie and Steven Rockey had questions about service information, and Zsuzsa noted that information that sometimes changes, such as library hours, should not appear in too many files, as updating is problematic. In response to questions from Don Schnedeker and Susan Barnes, Zsuzsa said that only minor changes can be considered at this time as the system must become operational on January 5th. Susan Currie suggested that aa Access Services group meet with the Public Services Design Committee to discuss last-minute changes.

Karen Calhoun presented further information on the Gateway design from the cataloguing perspective. She described some of the cataloguing issues associated with access choices, especially subject captions and their ability to facilitate searching and browsing. The Committee looked at a number of subject caption examples before deciding to merge existing captions to reflect the entire library system. Karen cited the Metadata group's work, and noted that they had recommended the use of 12 broad subject headings, although there are always problems of where terms belong and concern about the uneven representation of the various disciplines. Perhaps a broader, more representative list might provide more balance than 12, so 30 have been chosen. Karen proceeded to describe the catalogue records and the way that they convey information describing electronic resources. The Gateway record is linked with the NOTIS system through a number of "buttons" and the two databases are reconciled by use of a Web

format which avoids any double-keying. The Gateway is really an interim solution until the Library is able to mount a new Library Management System. Karen noted that the time for change requests for captions has already passed, and that considerable work still remains to be done to bring the Gateway up on time.

Ed Weissman stated that Bear Access menus will change before the spring term, but that Bear Access will use the same path through the spring term. By May, it will migrate to the Gateway.

Sarah Thomas thanked Zsuzsa and Karen, and reiterated for the group that the time for further tinkering with the Gateway design had gone. Sarah briefly introduced the subject of the Inclement Weather Procedures, which are similar to previous procedures. Ross Atkinson is now at the top of the notification telephone tree.

Lee Cartmill briefly described the Departmental Safety Representative program, and noted that, for a number of reasons, it is often difficult for libraries to fully comply with University policies in this area. The endowed library units will each have Departmental Safety Representatives (DSR) who will be identified by December. The DSRs will ensure that the policies are implemented in the units, and the Safety Manual will be updated.

Sarah mentioned that the ARL statement on the National Humanities Association's "Basic Principles for Managing Intellectual Property in the Digital Environment" will be distributed to faculty for their comment, and that Pat Court had been asked to provide a summary identifying those issues relevant to Cornell. The Council will now meet bi-monthly and it is hoped that there will be more interaction and information exchange, and a request was made for discussion topics before the next meeting, which will be in January.

On other matters, Sarah noted that she would announce the appointment decision for the new AUL for Technology sometime next week. Sarah refered to the Library's loss of Jan Olsen, but pointed out that the resulting organizational changes might present fresh opportunities for rationalization of the administration. Sarah is giving the matter of a new AUL for Science appointment considerable thought, but said that recruitment would begin at some point, and that she was discussing the matter with faculty.

The meeting closed at noon.

Recorder: John Dean