



**Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Libraries Advisory Committee
Videoconference – Zoom
Friday, September 25, 2020, 2:00-3:00 pm**

Attending

Tom Nelson (*chair*), Jean Bailey, Sydney Biondi, Matt Bogenschutz, Lelia Brinegar, Rachel Cloutier, Lex Coelho, T. Corey Davis, Catherine Ingrassia, Aniket Jadhav, Inho “Richard” Joh, Nastassja Lewinski, Valerie Robnolt, Srinivas Sistla, James Smither, Christy Tyndall, Jayaraman Vijayakumar

Absent

Holly Morrison

VCU Libraries staff

Kathy Bradshaw, Jimmy Ghaphery, Teresa L. Knott, Tammy Sugarman, Antonia Vassar (*recording secretary*)

Business

The meeting opened at 2:00 pm with all members introducing themselves. The agenda was approved as presented. Minutes from January 24, 2020 were approved as presented.

Reports and Discussion

VCU Libraries Overview and Update (Teresa L. Knott)

VLAC is one of three advisory committees at VCU Libraries. VLAC committee members are asked to give feedback on policies, assist with problem solving, give suggestions for programming, serve as ambassadors to share library messages, and to share information and feedback from their individual school/program/college.

There are 149 full time employees at VCU Libraries. VCU Libraries budget is split approximately 50% personnel/operations and 50% collections: total FY21 budget is \$23,318,262. While there has been an increase in the library student fee, the VCU Libraries’ budget was reduced 4.6%. The reduction was applied to operating and collections budgets. Additionally, unavoidable cost increases were not funded. This is the first cut sustained to the collections budget in many years. Budget reductions were mitigated by salary savings/hiring freezes, journal title reductions, and reducing spending on events/professional development/travel.

There is still no information to share concerning the search for a new library dean search or if the Provost retiring in June 2021 will impact the timeline for recruitment.

The Board of Visitors voted to remove the name Tompkins-McCaw from the health sciences library and to remove a commemorating plaque at their September meeting. Two of the five namesakes served in the Confederate army. Waiting on clarification about the process to decommemorate and adopt a new name. The plan is to request that the new name be Health Sciences Library.

VCU Libraries moved up two places on the Association of Research Libraries Library Investment Index to 69 out of 116. This places VCU higher on the index than Virginia Tech.

There is no news about off-site storage.

Reopening updates:

- Reduced maximum capacities were set for each building: 800 for Cabell and 150 for Tompkins-McCaw. The highest occupancy for both buildings has been under 50%.
- Fewer library employees are working onsite.
- Reduced seating and hours are in place.
- Masks are required. Mask compliance has been good generally. Problem areas include: after 8 pm at Cabell, group study rooms, and with the dental students at TML. Students are asked one time to put on a mask, after which they can be asked to leave the building
- Night hours at Cabell could be reduced even more even more significantly because of the low building usage. Hours might increase as testing increases.
- No food/drink in the buildings is allowed other than in the limited seating area at the Cabell Starbucks (visitors can briefly remove masks to sip water). Front door delivery of items continues, items also continue to be mailed to addresses outside the Richmond area. VCU Libraries sent pre-paid mailers to graduating students so that books could be returned. Undergraduates report difficulty finding space to attend online classes, group study rooms in the libraries are good alternatives for this and [can be reserved online](#) (remember to bring headsets).

Budgetary impact on collections (Tammy Sugarman)

VCU Libraries has seen a 4.6% cut for collections, resulting in a deficit of \$854K with cuts and unavoidable cost increases

Taylor & Francis journal cancelations: these are not in a package deal and VCU Libraries can cancel as many or as few as necessary. Individual journals can still be accessed through JSTOR or via interlibrary loan. VCU Libraries is working with vendors to negotiate flat or lower cost increases, usually around 1% or 2%. VIVA updated Wiley subscriptions, saving VCU Libraries \$100K.

VCU Libraries is trying to avoid signing multi-year contracts (even if it costs more in the short term) because that limits the flexibility of getting out of those contracts.

There is an attempt to save funds this year due to concern about FY22. VCU Libraries is seeing some unanticipated cost increase due to the pandemic such as spending more this year on Kanopy and other streaming media as requests have increased.

VCU Libraries would not drop major databases due to annual maintenance fees, this is due to the substantial investments that have already been made in these resources. JSTOR has reduced their annual maintenance fee this year. Automatic approvals from university presses continue. There has been a switch to “e-book preferred” but generally VCU Libraries is maintaining automatic approval for most of these resources.

In response to a question about how VCU Libraries decides on subscription cancellations, Teresa Knott reviewed the various measures used to collect data on usage as well as analysis of library services. Asked about collection of data during the pandemic and remote work, Knott noted that the VCU Libraries is tracking information such as the number of online classes taught, the library web team moved the chat box to a prominent location on more library pages. Despite a decline in physical space usage, VCU Libraries is flourishing in the virtual space. Feedback on journal cancellations will always be solicited with as much time as possible.

Untangling the “big deal” (Teresa L. Knott)

The first “big deal” Elsevier contract was negotiated in 2009 in partnership with other universities in Virginia, the Virginia Research Libraries (VRL). The current 5-year contract expires December 2021. Compounding increases each year make this contract unsustainable. VCU’s 2020 Elsevier invoice is almost \$2M for one year of content and maintenance of previously purchased content. If VCU Libraries walks away from this deal, there will be continued access to the core list of titles licensed from 1995 to the end of the contract.

“Big deal” subscription packages are comparable to cable bundles where the buyer must purchase a basic cable package plus the specialized content they want although the buyer may only be interested in certain channels. In breaking the “big deal,” VRL will negotiate to buy core content and reduce the number of subscribed titles. This will be done after evaluating many years of data, determining how much content is public domain, and including costs of acquiring items via interlibrary loan. Some VRL libraries will exercise an early termination clause and walk away; it is unlikely that VCU will be able to do this based on advice of counsel. VCU Libraries may retain the contract for 2020 but it is possible that VCU will be a party to a new smaller VRL contract if Elsevier is willing to renegotiate for 2021 content or a new contract. When VCU Libraries walks away from a “big deal” journal package, needed content will still be delivered via other means. The VCU Libraries is committed to delivering content through interlibrary loan, commercial document delivery services, and open access so library users have the content they need to do their work - paying for items “just in time” instead of “just in case.” VRL will hold a [sustainable scholarship virtual forum](#) on Friday, October 2, 2020.

In response to a comment about how getting rid of certain journals (especially in business, health sciences, engineering) would reflect on VCU as an institution, Knott reminded the committee that VCU Libraries will retain core content and that [many other respected institutions have walked away from big deal contracts](#). Data will be used to determine what is kept and units will be given an opportunity to comment.

The contract for ClinicalKey, an Elsevier product, is subscribed through October 20 of this year. Because ClinicalKey is coupled to the Elsevier ScienceDirect contract with penalties in place for cancelling or changing our ScienceDirect license, VCU Libraries will not renew ClinicalKey. Every effort is being made to extend the resource through December 2020, however, it seems unlikely that a deal will be reached. This is being communicated to faculty by liaison librarians and newsletters.

Topics the committee would like to explore (Tom Nelson)

Due to time, this was deferred to the next meeting. Committee members were asked to consider: what would they like to learn about, what would benefit them, what do they need to hear from VCU Libraries?

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.