

August 8, 2001

TO: Gerald J. Munoff
University Librarian

FR: LAUC-I Ad Hoc Committee [J. Ariel, D. Anderson, A. Frank, J. Gelfand, L. Heiman, J. Horn, S. MacLeod (Chair), P. Manaka, J. Sisson, Y. Wilson]

RE: Issues and Concerns

BACKGROUND:

Earlier this summer, a number of librarians contacted John Sisson, LAUC-I Chair, with concerns about communication and decision-making processes. Foremost among these recent concerns were how new departments had been established, how positions were filled and how LAUC-I might help improve these processes. John Sisson brought these concerns to the LAUC-I General Membership meeting on Monday, July 9th. At that meeting an Ad Hoc Committee was established with the goal of writing to the University Librarian about the issues raised and identifying strategies for improving communication between LAUC-I and Library Administration.

The discussion was further informed by the LAUC and LAUC-I Bylaws which define LAUC as “advisory... to the University on professional and governance matters of concern to all librarians...[and to] the library administration on planning, evaluation, and implementation of programs, services, or technological changes in the libraries of the University.” The LAUC-I Bylaws specifically provide that LAUC-I will “advise and assist the University Librarian in developing outstanding library service and collection building through optimum utilization of the professional talents and potential of librarians on the staff...; to provide a means for determining appropriate courses of action to identify, set, and reach appropriate goals and objectives,” and “[t]o secure a voice in decision making processes for librarians at UCI.” [LAUC Bylaws Article II Sections 1-5; LAUC-I Bylaws Article II]

The following summation attempts to articulate issues, concerns and suggestions from the perspective of the LAUC-I General Membership as expressed at the July 9th meeting, in full recognition of not only shared governance but also our shared responsibility.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS:

In summary, the issues and concerns that were raised at the General Membership meeting include:

1. Position Creation, Recruitment and Reassignment:

Issues:

- The process by which new positions are created and filled, especially at the Department Head level.

- The process by which new departments are created and organized, and the need for awareness of the resulting impact on other departments and staffing.

Concerns:

- If improved communication is a goal within this library then Library Administration should provide LAUC-I with the opportunity to comment on major actions and plans before they are executed. Decisions made in relative isolation without the benefit of larger contextual information or consultation with the affected parties are often much less successful, at times presenting new obstacles to effective implementation.
- The decision process was not clarified, and recent input on these decisions was very limited. These decisions were announced with little discussion and without a clearly articulated decision process.
- Open recruitment provides a forum for discussion of the requirements of a position and how those fit into existing and future programs. This leads to smoother implementation, greater role clarification, and better interaction with the many affected staff.
- Appointments without recruitment especially at the department head level deny interested librarians a rare opportunity to move into a management position.
- Many felt that major restructuring and reassignment without LAUC-I input is demoralizing and disrespectful of our professional knowledge and experience. In contrast to the tradition of shared governance, it alienates us and inhibits our understanding of how new positions are integrated into the short and long-term goals of the Libraries.
- There is an established practice of open recruitments at the UCI Libraries, and concerns were raised about the erosion of the significant values inherent in that tradition.
- There was little discussion regarding the relationship between the new Education & Outreach Department and other departments within the R&I Division, and none with Collections.
- According to APM 360-9 recruitment for positions “shall proceed in accordance with campus procedures developed in consultation with the Librarians Association of the University of California [and] [a]ll positions shall be open for outside recruitment unless the University determines that recruitment shall be limited to University employees at a campus.” Concern was expressed that the APM was not followed in recent personnel actions because at least one of the Department Head positions was a newly created position.
- The APM (360-20e) and the MOU (Article 6.B) both have sections involving reassignment of librarians. Concern was expressed about whether these procedures were fully followed in the case of the reassignments.

2. AUL and Research Librarians Search Process:

Issues:

- Lack of communication and consultation, resulting in little understanding of the reasons behind the adoption of a "screening committee" model in place of search committees for recent recruitments (i.e. AUL and Research Librarians).

- Decision to exclude the requirement for the MLS from an accredited library school in Research Librarian searches.

Concerns:

- The decision to use "screening committees," rather than "search committees" is seen as more limiting and contradicts the development of procedures in consultation with LAUC-I [per APM 360-9] in terms of input to the recruitment and hiring process.
- Although there were various opinions expressed, many had deep concerns about the impact on LAUC-I and the profession of not requiring an MLS degree from an accredited library school in librarian recruitments.
- Many expressed concerns that the MLS issue was not discussed in advance with LAUC-I. Librarians would like a better understanding of why Library Administration took this position and the opportunity for consultation on such decisions in the future.

3. Management, Planning and Decision Making:

Issues:

- Perceptions of increasing hierarchical management and decision-making processes were central to the concerns raised at the July 9th LAUC-I meeting.
- Perception of a lack of direction within the UCI Libraries in terms of goals and strategic planning. Even acknowledging that we have not had a full administrative team in the last several years, there is deep concern that there is a lack of clarity on current priorities, as well as short and long term goals of the UCI Libraries. There is a lack of understanding of how and, more importantly, why decisions are made in the way they are by the University Librarian.

Concerns:

- There were many who raised concerns that there is little communication about why particular decisions are made. It would be helpful for all to have a better understanding of why and how decisions are made, especially as they relate to the Libraries' short and long-term goals.
- There was a general concern expressed that Library Administration is not drawing on the wealth of knowledge, expertise and professional interests of the librarians.
- There is a need for clarification on how Library Council works, what role each Department Head plays in deliberations of Library Council, and why Department Heads do not represent the interests of their department. If Department Heads do not represent the interests of their department further clarification of how those interests are communicated is needed.

4. Professional Climate and Morale:

Issues

- Strong perception that there is erosion of morale and collegiality within the UCI Libraries (possibly due to an increase in hierarchy as noted above).
- Need for increased input in decisions and strategic planning. Even without input, if directions change, better communication about the changes and their rationale is needed, as well as anticipated results.

Concerns:

In addition to the climate and morale concerns expressed in the above sections, the following additional concerns were raised in the July 9th meeting:

- Major restructuring and reassignment without LAUC-I input is demoralizing. It is disrespectful of our professional knowledge and experience. It alienates us from participation in the goals and mission of the UCI Libraries.
- It is demoralizing to move colleagues quickly out of a department without any changes being discussed or shared in advance.
- It is demoralizing to those librarians being moved to new departments as well as to their colleagues, to have so little discussion of or input into those decisions -- let alone time to plan for the resulting impacts.
- Given the dedication, expertise, and talents among UCI librarians, limited participation in decision-making significantly reduces morale and collegiality and risks reductions in productivity, quality, and accomplishment.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

The following suggestions focus on improved communication, shared governance, and increased collaboration and collegiality in decision-making. We welcome further discussion and suggestions.

- The LAUC-I Executive Board should assume greater responsibility for bringing issues forward to Library Administration and should actively participate in identifying and implementing constructive improvements.
- The LAUC-I Executive Board should consider ways of improving communication and decision-making within LAUC-I, with a goal of significantly increasing the speed and effectiveness with which decisions are made.
- LAUC-I should have a role in any strategic planning efforts of the UCI Libraries.
- The University Librarian and the Administrative Team should have regular meetings with the LAUC-I Executive Board to work to create a positive, constructive environment and dialog to address ongoing issues of mutual concern.
- The University Librarian and the Administrative Team should have regular meetings with the LAUC-I General Membership to provide a forum for information exchange, strategic thinking, and to strive for collegiality. Recent collaborations and improvements in the review process for librarians are examples of such mutually beneficial processes and resultant decisions and actions.
- LAUC-I and the library administration should work together to come to a common understanding about which issues are included under LAUC-I responsibilities to “secure a voice in decision-making processes” and “to advise and assist the University Librarian in developing outstanding service and collection building through optimum utilization of the professional talents and potential of librarians on the staff.” [LAUC-I Bylaws Article II]

- LAUC-I should have a representative on Library Council, as is the case at other campuses and has been the past practice at UCI.
- The University Librarian and Library Administration should articulate short and long-term goals and priorities of the UCI Libraries.
- Decision-making processes and rationales should be clearly articulated within the context of short and long-term goals.
- The University Librarian should clarify and articulate the roles of the Administrative Team and of Library Council, including how divisional and departmental interests and needs can best be conveyed and addressed.
- Recruitments for new or vacant librarian positions normally should be open; if recruitments are not open, rationales for more limited recruitment/appointment should be clearly conveyed to LAUC-I.