Minutes

Attendees:
Paul Anderson (University Lecturer, Darwin Fellow)
Elaine Gray (Deputy Student Librarian)
Kathryn James (Munby Visiting Fellow)
Espen Koht (College IT Officer)
Elisabeth Leedham-Green (College Archivist)
Girish Nivarti (Student Librarian)
Ben D Raynor (Moses and Mary Finley Fellow)
Dacia Viejo-Rose (Fellow Librarian)

1. Apologies were received from Giles Shaw (DCSA Representative, DCSAR).

2. No declarations of interest were raised.

3. The draft minutes of the meeting of 17 February 2016 were approved with minor corrections.

4. The Fellow Librarian, consulted with the Committee on the plans for the John Bradfield building, a long discussion ensued. Based on this discussion the Committee agreed that it had grave reservations regarding the current plans; two issues of principle and various practicalities were a concern. The most concerning issue of principle is that the Library Committee has at no point been informed or consulted regarding the plans despite these considerably affecting the Study Centre and Library facilities. The Fellow Librarian and the Committee responded to the general public consultation but the Committee has not been informed of how or indeed whether the concerns raised on that occasion have since been addressed. The Committee was furthermore concerned that the precedent set by the construction of the John Bradfield building is not ideal. Given the College’s limited green areas it was deemed that improving the existing facilities – the Granary and the Study Centre – and naming one of these after John Bradfield would be preferable to building on of these green spaces and encroaching on the already limited space of the Study Centre.

As the Library Committee has not been kept informed of planning developments we based our discussions on what various members of the Committee have learned through their participation on other committees. A number of practical concerns were raised the most critical of which were the two following:
- It is our understanding that the plans have been redrawn and that the proposed Librarian’s office is no longer, literally, a broom-closet but that it is still significantly smaller than it is at present. This was deemed unacceptable, the Librarian’s current office space is inadequately small for not only does it need to constitute adequate work space but also to house the more valuable volumes in our collection and other items not available for general circulation.

- Concern was expressed about what interim arrangements were being considered to guarantee our students an adequate study space during the period when construction work would be carried out on the Study Centre and in its immediate vicinity. The Committee was especially worried that this might coincide with exam period. At stake is not only the students’ ability to access books, which they can arguably do in other University Libraries or if an agreement is reached with another College library to welcome our students for a brief period, but our ability to guarantee them a quite and dedicated study space.

If plans for this new building are to go forward despite our reservations then we ask to be kept regularly informed so that we can ensure that the basic requirements of the Library and Study Centre are respected such that this facility does not suffer a deterioration of its ability to cater to students’ needs.

The Fellow Librarian requested that those Fellows on the Committee attending the next Governing Body raise these concerns there.

The Fellow Librarian then presented to the Committee the results of a meeting of the Cambridge Cataloguing Advisory Group on how to best support, strengthen, and standardize library cataloguing practice across Cambridge and the recommendations outlined in a report by Céline Carty “Scoping the Future of Resource Description in Cambridge”. The Committee agreed with the first recommendation of the report to “wherever possible, aim to take records without any local editing”. The Committee agreed that the Fellow Librarian should get back to the Advisory Group with a question regarding how changes recommended might impact on existing cataloguing. It was agreed that Darwin has no particular expertise on this matter and that our priority is to maintain a straightforward workflow appropriate for a small library.

5. The Archivist’s report was received. The possibility of housing the student records currently in the former Archivist’s Office in the Study Centre off site was once again tabled as a necessary step. This will be especially crucial if current plans for the redistribution of space in the Study Centre go forward as no provision seems to have been made for storing these documents and there is no space available for them in the current archives.

6. The Student Librarian’s report was received. The culling of books had proceeded, with obsolete books being replaced in the Law section in particular.
Exercise-sitting balls requested by students as an alternative to the current, aged, chairs had been purchased from the Library’s budget but were subsequently withdrawn due to health and safety concerns; the Committee will take up the issue with Buildings and Grounds and Health and Safety.

The Student librarian reported that the Study Centre windows have finally been cleaned much to the joy of all, reading stands and a magazine rack had been ordered, and the entire CUP budget (£1800) for the year had been used and the new funds (£1600) received. The Archivist recommended the CUP World History as a purchase.

The Student Librarian also reported that the use of the library was consistently high, but that the Finely room had not been booked often although requests had been received from students in other Colleges to consult some of our holdings therein. It was suggested that issues of non-Darwin students using the Study Centre and of cups and cutlery being left behind be addressed with new, pleasant, and if possible humorous, signs that are both clear and friendly.

Finally, the Student Librarian suggested making creative use of the blackboards in the computer rooms. The Committee discussed the suggestion and agreed that an annual photography competition could be held in the Michaelmas or Lent terms on the topic of the Darwin Lecture series and that the winning entries could be exhibited here. It was agreed that the Committee could judge the entries and that some funds could be found in order to make good quality prints of the winning images, with the possibility of the winner being published in the CUP edited volume of that year’s lectures.

7. The Computer officer’s report was received. It was proposed that the new Koha software be trialed and tested for the checkout system leaving cataloguing aspects to a side until it becomes clearer what the University-wide agreement will be. It was agreed that the annual stock-check to be carried out this summer would be a good opportunity to up-date the circulation interface.

Funds to realize the proposal to install an adjustable standing collaboration desk in the last ground-floor room in the Study Centre were being sought. Discussion continued as to the possible use of this room as a group-work room.

8. Over the summer the hand-over to the current Deputy Student Librarian will begin.

9. The next meeting is scheduled for early in Michaelmas 2016.