



March 14, 2014

To: Jose Wudka, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Lynda Bell, Chair *Lynda S. Bell*
Graduate Council

RE: UCR Libraries Strategic Plan – Draft

A subset of Graduate Council members met in a special meeting on March 13, 2014, to discuss the document entitled “University of California Riverside Libraries Strategic Plan: Working Draft for Campus Community Feedback.” Members who could not be present were invited to submit comments via email. We want to emphasize at the outset of our comments that our Graduate Student Assembly member, Preston Williams, made a special effort to attend the meeting, thus signaling how much the role and functions of UCR Libraries matter to our graduate students. We will divide our comments into two parts. The first part deals with the broad scale and scope of what the draft document either explicitly or implicitly suggests about the future direction of the UCR Libraries; the second part has some very specific recommendations about what our members feel the Libraries should be doing concretely to facilitate both research and teaching.

Our broadest point is that since this draft document makes some very large claims about both showcasing and facilitating the research mission of UCR faculty and students (goals which we applaud), there must be sustained and systematic involvement of both the Academic Senate and the Graduate Student Association in further work on the plan. Our GSA rep, for example, said that any committee charged with developing this plan further, should have more than one graduate student representative so that student views from various disciplinary perspectives could be best represented. Also, we think it obvious that the Academic Senate Committee on Library, Information Technology & Scholarly Communication must be engaged in a systematic way with further work on the Strategic Plan. We do not have a firm idea of what sort of joint body is needed that will best represent librarians, faculty, and graduate students, but we do believe very strongly that substantial input from all of these three major stakeholder groups, as well as cross-fertilization of ideas, will be necessary. More faculty and student involvement in a systematic way (not through focus groups, but rather through structured committee channels), would give the document “a more concrete feel and more educational value” as one of our members put it. A second big point that we believe worth making is that we do not know from this document alone how the UCR Libraries fit into a UC systemwide plan for library development. This is critical from our vantage point because a few years ago, faculty were told that hard decisions to cut back on the purchase of journal subscriptions and research monographs (even from major presses) had to be made, and that more use of the systemwide facilities and Interlibrary Loan would be expected into the future. Is this still the case? In short, what is the overall plan of the UC system for library development and how will the UCR Libraries interface with that plan into the future?

Turning now to specific recommendations stemming from our reading of the document, we find that perhaps the strategic goals 3 and 4 that deal with “Collection Access” and “Teaching, Learning, and Literacies” deserve to be prioritized in the document (i.e., moved forward, certainly

in front of strategic goal 2). From the perspective of what library users, faculty and students alike, want, need, and expect from libraries, these are the points that stand out most prominently in their minds. We do realize that the research libraries of the 21st century will be changing in terms of their goals and strategic missions (as noted in what is now strategic goal 1, for example); nonetheless, on the road to that transition, we hope that the UCR Libraries will pay close attention to what is needed in “the here and now” to make their services even better than they are at present. A list follows of some very concrete issues that Graduate Council members felt need immediate attention, and thus, deserve discussion in the draft Strategic Plan:

From our GSA rep:

1. There should be regular open meetings organized by the Libraries for graduate students on the most up to date ways to search for information related to their research fields.
2. VPN access, for work off-campus with library resources, should be easier; information about it should be very transparent and easy to access. Help should be provided by librarians to users in terms of downloading specific VPN software to their computers.

From our faculty members:

3. Methods to access library resources through quick and easy interfaces with ilearn courses should be developed and made easily available to the faculty.
4. Methods for archiving faculty-generated teaching and research materials within the Libraries’ systems should be developed so that they could be made publicly available.
5. The processes through which “special requests” for specific journal articles can be made should be more opaque and easily completed. Ideally, more journals would be purchased so as to obviate the need for such requests.
6. Access to digital databases for research that only the “big” campuses now purchase (UCLA and Berkeley) should be accessible to faculty throughout the system. Currently, one member notes that there are critical virtual databases in her field that she must physically go to UCLA or Berkeley to access. She hopes that the UCR Libraries might negotiate online user rights for such databases for faculty and students who have legitimate needs for them.

From this brief list of points generated in thirty minutes time, it becomes obvious that faculty and graduate students at UCR should be communicating their hopes for the UCR Libraries through systematic interactions on a regular basis. We hope that as the UCR Libraries Strategic Plan moves forward to its next iteration, such interactions will become a regularized part of the planning process.