

Oxford Union Society Library Strategy Committee
Minutes for Meeting MT 2018 Fifth Week
Wednesday 7th November at 10.30am – Morris Room

Present: Amanda Saville (*Nominee of Chairman of Board of Curators*), Daniel Villar (*Library Committee nominee*), Fiona Wilkes (*Nominee of Chairman of Board of Curators*), Genevieve Athis (*Junior Librarian*), John Whitehead (*Library Committee nominee*), Laura Johnson (*Deputy Librarian, Secretary*), Lindsey Warne (*Bursar*), Sean Power (*Senior Librarian, Chair*), Stephen Horvath (*President*), Thomas Corrick (*Librarian-in-Charge*).

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Connor Warden (*Library Committee nominee*) and Nicholas Field-Johnson (*OLDUT representative*).

Brendan McGrath (*Librarian-Elect*), Jeremy Worth (*I.T. Officer*), Ljilja Ristic (*Nominee of Bodleian Director*), Sabriyah Saeed (*Ex-Junior Librarian*) and Shivani Ananth (*Ex-Junior Librarian*) were absent.

2. Membership

All those present introduced themselves, including the new President, Stephen Horvath, and the new Junior Librarian, Genevieve Athis.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

5. IT Report

The Senior Librarian wondered if the IT Officer will ever attend future Strategy Committee meetings now the IT report has been removed as a standing item from the agenda.

4. Senior Librarian's Report

The Senior Librarian reported that the fundraising drive was launched this Autumn at an event at the Reform Club. He believed several pledges had already been made. The Union is in the process of determining funding priorities and the Library has a strong claim for securing a portion of the funds.

5. Library Statistics 2017-2018

The Librarian-in-Charge presented the statistics report for 2017-2018.

1. Library Users

There had been a slight decline in active membership, those who had borrowed from the Library within the last 12 months. The peak number of active members occurred in Hilary term, as has been the case over the past decade. Active library membership figures had been compared to the number of new Union members per year, but no correlation had been found between the figures. This is a relationship the Librarian-in-Charge would like

to explore more in future years. The number of visitors to the Library had also slightly declined for the year, but had peaked in Michaelmas term as in previous years.

The visitor numbers for this term so far show an increase from Michaelmas term last year, which the Librarian-in-Charge thought may partly be due to a strong term card with the highest recorded visitor numbers occurring on the day of the popular Dave Chappelle and Jon Stewart event. Amanda Saville asked why people were primarily visiting the Library and the Librarian-in-Charge felt that it was mainly to find a space to work. The Senior Librarian asked if there had been a recent reduction in work space within the Bodleian that might be causing people to find alternative work spaces. The Librarians present at the meeting did not know of such an occurrence, but Amanda Saville confirmed that more and more students were seeking a space to work outside their own rooms. The Bursar confirmed this, recalling that she had received enquiries from both Balliol College, asking if they could send non-Union members to work at the Union, and from individuals asking if they could bring non-Union member friends to the Library to work alongside them. Fiona Wilkes said she had received similar requests from students at Wolfson who wanted to bring friends from other colleges into the library so they could work together. Amanda Saville suggested that the Union could benefit from this development by marketing it as a space where friends from different colleges could work together. The Librarian-in-Charge added that the Union could perhaps consider introducing a Library-only membership option in future.

The number of visitors to see the murals had been similar to last year, with a peak during the summer months. Visitor numbers for Michaelmas Term 2018 have also been similar to previous years.

2. Library Collections

There are currently 46,115 catalogued items in the Library. The majority of these are on open shelves, but also a significant 17,024 in closed stack, many of which can still be borrowed. The amount of retrospective books catalogued dropped from previous years. This was due to staffing shortages, but as the Library is now up to full staff and the Trainee Librarian is currently undertaking catalogue training this figure should rise again next year. A much higher number of books were withdrawn than in previous years due to a deep weed of travel guides and DVDs during the summer vacation.

3. Circulation

Loan figures dropped again very slightly from the previous year, which is a common trend across the University. In a recent college survey it was found that only four libraries had increased their loans last year. Amanda Saville reported that Queen's College was one of these, which she put down to enthusiasm following the opening of the new library and also the acquisition of more new books than in previous years. The Librarian-in-Charge reported that humanities and especially law books were amongst the most loaned books during the year, which was a contrast to previous years when mathematics and computer science books had featured heavily amongst the most loaned. He thought this might be due to the restrictive loan policy of the Bodleian Law Library.

A discussion then took place as to why science books had not been loaned as heavily. Amanda Saville reported that biochemistry and medicine books were amongst the most popular at Queen's as they bought multiple copies of key texts. Daniel Villar also thought

that the availability of multiple copies of the most up-to-date textbooks was what attracted science students to use other libraries, whereas the Union generally only has one copy of the latest editions. The Bursar reported that Union membership had always been lower amongst science students and it had been assumed this was because they had less time to spend at the Union.

It was thought valuable for the Library to learn more about the subject composition of its active users, particularly through a user survey. The Senior Librarian was against the Library purchasing multiple copies of the same texts, however, as the Union Library had a different remit and wider membership base than many other Oxford Libraries. John Whitehead pointed out that the science subject sections of the Library were only smaller than the humanities sections, because science books were replaced on a regular basis by new editions, whereas books in humanities subjects functioned differently and remained relevant for longer. The Librarian-in-Charge confirmed that the purchasing of multiple copies of texts was not supported by current Library policy. Fiona Wilkes suggested that non-science books could be specifically marketed at science students to encourage them to use the Library for non-academic purposes.

6. Library Budget 2018-2019

The Bursar apologised that she was unable to set a budget for the Library. This was because she had only been able to meet with the auditors yesterday due to illnesses at the firm. The Bursar confirmed, however, that the Library budget would not be any lower than the previous year and indicated that it may be a little higher.

7. Library Strategy 2018-2019

The Librarian-in-Charge presented the Library Strategy for 2018/2019.

Review of 2017-18

Successes: The Librarian-in-Charge firstly mentioned that he had only been in post for the final term of the year and thanked the Deputy Librarian for acting as Librarian-in-Charge during the first two terms. His own appointment and that of a new Trainee Librarian had been important achievements during the year as the Library was now fully staffed. The securing of a higher salary for the Trainee Librarian post had ensured a stronger field of candidates. The involvement of library staff in the membership drive induction tours had been well received and is part of a wider move to strengthen the relationship of the Library to the rest of the Union. Visits from the Bodleian Special Collections and Conservation departments has strengthened the Library's relationship to the Bodleian and resulted in the provision of advice and loan of equipment. Political biographies and the English literature and arts sections of the Library were further reclassified during the year to improve browsability.

Problems: There had also been a few problems during the year. A server crash during the summer had resulted in the loss of a term's work. It had taken several months after the incident for the shared drive to be relocated to a cloud-based server and it was felt that this move could have been implemented earlier. The Eduroam internet connection also stopped working at the Union, although this had not caused too much difficulty within the Library as people had been directed to use the Oxford Union's own network instead. The Librarian-in-Charge also thanked the IT Officer for moving the router for the Oxford

Union's own network into the Old Library itself, which had helped improve reception within the room. The Bursar confirmed that the Union is purchasing new routers, which will make the Eduroam network operational again. The Library's current magazine subscription agent had also been particularly poor during the year and the Librarian-in-Charge is looking into alternatives.

The Librarian-in-charge then reviewed the Library's objectives for 2016-17.

Induction for new Librarian-in-Charge: The Librarian-in-Charge reported that he felt fully settled and informed in his new role and thanked everyone for their help.

Research Morris Room portraits: It was decided that the Morris Room portraits were not a Library priority at the present time. The Librarian-in-Charge had spoken to the archivist who was keen on the idea, but the project is currently on hold. The Bursar noted that she had followed up on a suggestion that the names of the subjects of the portraits might be written on the backs of the portraits. She had taken the portraits off the walls, but no names were recorded there.

Geocache tour of Pre-Raphaelite Oxford: The plan to set up a geo-cache tour has been put on hold and the geocache temporarily disabled. The geocache was very popular, but its location in Frewin Court alley had become increasingly unsuitable for visitors and no control could be exercised over what visitors left inside the cache. The Library would still like to create links between the different institutions in Oxford with Pre-Raphaelite collections. The possibilities will be explored in the coming year. The Bursar commented that the front garden would also be an unsuitable location for a cache as visitors would not be able to access it when the Union is closed.

Review DVD Library: The operation of the DVD Library had been changed, with DVDs now borrowable on the same basis as books.

Objectives for 2018-19

The Librarian-in-Charge then set out the Library's objectives for 2018-19. These were divided into five sections:

Collections: Increase the rate of retrospective cataloguing; conduct a stock check; identify approximately 2000 particularly valuable or damaged items; design and implement a disaster plan; improve publicity of the library's collections; explore the potential for digitising key items.

Reader Services: Improve IT services provision by obtaining more equipment to loan; gain a deeper understanding of library users by means of a survey.

Staff: Expand staff and learning development opportunities by visiting other libraries and supporting training opportunities with relevant professional bodies.

Finance: Re-evaluate magazine subscription service; increase income generation by stocking more saleable items.

Engagement: Increase awareness of the Library within the Union through signage and social media; increase public awareness of the Library through online advertising and partnerships with external heritage sector bodies; Update and

review the Union History Database; gain access to Union membership figures in order to improve marketing of the Library's services.

In relation to disaster planning (under Collections), the Bursar noted that the fire extinguishers in the building were those that were recommended and that they were checked annually. The Library was welcome to acquire more for the Stacks if required. Fiona Wilkes suggested that Harwell has very good disaster plan templates on their website, which the Union could use as a basis for writing their own.

In relation to increasing awareness of the Library within the Union (under Engagement), the Bursar was disappointed to hear that members were still unaware of the Library as it was included in the *Term Card* and *Fresher's Guide*. She suggested that the Library could contribute Library-related articles to the weekly e-mail newsletter sent out to members. John Whitehead commented that making members aware of the Library had been a very long-standing problem due to its location within the building and not to be disheartened if awareness did not immediately increase. The President commented that the involvement of Library staff in the membership drive induction tours had worked well.

8. News from the Bodleian Libraries

There was no report from the Bodleian Libraries.

9. Matters Raised by Library Committee

The Junior Librarian reported that there was currently a move to change the membership composition of Library Committee by increasing the number of Senior Members from six to 12. This would raise the number of Senior Members to that of Junior Members. The move had been prompted by an excess of Senior Members seeking to join Library Committee and would allow those currently on the waiting list to join. The change had been temporarily defeated, but the Junior Librarian was hopeful that it would go through this week.

In response to a query about the overall size of the Committee, the Junior Librarian confirmed that this would increase the potential size of Library Committee, but it had been thought unlikely that this would result in a large increase in the number of members attending on a weekly basis.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date and Time of Next Meeting: 10.30am, Wednesday 13 February 2019

The next meeting of the Library Strategy Committee will take place on Wednesday 13th February 2019, Hilary Term Week 5, at 10:30am in the TV Room.