

2023-2024 University Senate Library Committee Annual Report

One of the most important aspects to consider is that we have been working with a New Dean of the Libraries. Dean Carol Smith has been moving forward with an ambitious plan for the future of the Library System at KU, which had major impact on the topics covered at our three meetings.

In our meeting on 11/09.2023 Dean Smith argued that she hoped her vision would be seen as a “shared vision for the libraries”. She presented 3 key areas where she thinks the Library Committee can most effectively contribute. The first and most important area was getting KU Endowment to add renovating Watson Library, which will be 100 years old in September, and has not been updated for more than 40 years, to its list of capital campaigns. The second area involved updating and improving Anshutz Library to make it more accessible and user friendly, especially for faculty through an iterative phased improvement. The third area involved improvements to the Annex, which has 3 bays, which are rapidly filling up, through construction of a 4th bay.

The committee briefly discussed the possibility of an increased acquisitions budget. Increased acquisitions are an important part of the reputation of KU as a Research 1 institution, because part of accreditation and evaluation is based on the quality of university libraries.

The committee then addressed the issue of Open Access. KU subscriptions make it possible for faculty to publish in open access journals without charge. It seems that many KU faculty are unaware of this opportunity. As a result, the committee discussed ways to inform faculty of the importance of Open Access to their publication opportunities, including members of the committee informing their colleagues during faculty meetings or through department wide announcements. We also discussed co-hosting one or more informational sessions on open access.

In our meeting on January 22 2024, we invited Josh Bolick (Head of Scholarly Communications & Copyright) and Marianne Reed (Digital Publishing and Repository Manager) from KU Libraries to share information about open access and scholarly publishing. Sara Morris (Head of Collections Strategy and Development) also joined. The last Libraries newsletter advertised opportunities for APC-free (no article publishing charge) publishing. Previously, deals involving open access dealt only with reading-only access, but “read-and-publish” deals are becoming more common. People can find details of these online: <https://lib.ku.edu/oa-agreements>. It is apparently quite difficult to provide a list of the journals involved, however many major, well-respected journals are part of the deals that KU has with publishers, which waive the fee that an author can pay to make their article open access, including both professional associations’ journals and other journals. Dean Smith shared that the libraries can offer in-unit workshops with education specifically tailored to the discipline. The committee can also discuss whether they want to link to any of the libraries’ open access webpages on a governance page. It is important to note that Open Access also includes Textbooks, which can save students a great deal of money. Faculty should be encouraged to consider these textbooks, especially if the ones they use are expensive. Faculty choosing OA texts should notify students of this decision ASAP.

Dean Smith shared a position paper that was presented to the Provost, which was developed at her (the Provost's) request. This includes a high-level vision for the future of Watson and Anschutz Libraries and a request for funding for the development of the three libraries. Dean Smith shared that the Provost is willing to fund the program plans, which this document should initiate. In addition, the Libraries' strategic plan has recently been finalized and will be shared with campus soon. A core element will be to increase the staffing that has been lost over the past decade. Another important element is increasing collections funding to catch up with inflation to maintain KU Libraries' status as worthy of a Research 1 University. The Library Committee encouraged its members to share the information discussed with their departments and units. Dean Smith asked members to attend Libraries events so that she can learn more from stakeholders. She is also happy to visit specific departments and units.

In our meeting on February 28, 2024, we discussed a possible recommendation to SenEx for University Governance to host an info session on Open Access. Dean Smith shared that library staff and faculty will be available to assist. We discussed questions what specific content would be shared at such an info session and what would be the best format. Since the remaining senate meetings for FY2024 are already booked for guest speakers, the committee discussed the merits of planning the info session for Fall 2024. The committee took an informal vote and agreed to this plan. Dean Smith reminded us that by end of 2025, all federally funded research AND their associated data must be immediately available in an open and free format.

We discussed and began planning concrete ways for the committee to support the libraries' strategic plan to advocate for 1) mission-critical library renovation projects; and 2) a more robust collections budget. (Update: The Libraries collections budget has kept up with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), but e-resource inflation is occurring at a much more dramatic rate.) We suggested that faculty members of the committee bring up these issues at their individual department meetings. In response to a committee member's question, Carol spoke about the Nelson OSTP memo (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/08-2022-OSTP-Public-Access-Memo.pdf>), which she suggested as a topic for the info session. The core of the memo is: any federally funded research and data must be made immediately available to the public at no cost. KU needs to be ready to accommodate this requirement. The KU Library currently has a research repository (Scholar Works) but not a data repository.

Another topic we discussed was Specific Charge #4: "Consider expanding the Open Access Policy to include staff and students, not only faculty. Discuss the re-establishment of the Open Access Advisory Board (see FY2023 final report)." One topic discussed was whether graduate students' research is open access. Jane Barnette shared that her understanding is that it depends on the field, but it mostly can be open access. There was also discussion about what types of staff positions would be interested in publishing. Chris Bohling shared that many staff may not know that they can publish. If the opportunity were there, staff may be more interested. Dean Smith reported that the Open Access Advisory Board reconvened recently after some time of not meeting and she will find out when their next meeting is so that they can take up this issue.

Charges

Standing Charges

1. We continue to monitor and support the Libraries' long-range planning and allocation of resources—staff, physical space, equipment, collections, digitally-based information, etc.—in light of the needs of different academic disciplines and the budget situation. We also assist in communicating about planning resource allocations to support teaching (including both undergraduate and graduate) and research. Report issues and recommendations for action to SenEx. (ongoing)
2. We have been working to assess and assist with the effectiveness of communication and space utilization between the Libraries and students, faculty, and staff, about topics including, but not limited to, library-based instruction in classes and academic programs in support of university-wide learner outcomes.
3. We are in the process of obtaining a report from the Open Access Advisory Board concerning activities, and long-range planning for Open Access at KU.
4. FY2026: According to the Open Access Policy for University of Kansas Scholars, the policy should be reviewed every three years. The policy was last reviewed and updated in FY2023 (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/open-access-policy>).

Specific Charges

1. Work with the Strategic Action Team to help communicate to campus the difficulties of maintaining access to scholarship with a stagnant Collections budget. We are trying to advocate for an increased budget, but this is probably beyond our influence.
2. Evaluate the accessibility of and access to library resources.
3. Continue monitoring the progress of the Watson Library renovation project, working with Dean Smith.
4. We are also working towards expanding the Open Access Policy to include staff and students, not only faculty (see above).

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Chair of KU Library Committee
4/24/2024