During the academic year, the faculty Library Committee performed its oversight role in two major contexts:

1. Reviewing strategies for budget cuts
   Jim Rettig, University Librarian, presented first to the chair of the committee, and then to the committee as a whole, three plans for possible library cuts connected with the FY10 Library Materials Budget. These plans, which outlined strategies for cutting 3, 5 and 7% of the library’s expenses, were prepared at the request of the university administration as questions loomed about needed contractions in spending caused by the financial crisis. Rettig, operating under the assumption that 5% cuts would be mandated, walked the committee through the various plans, indicating where cost-savings were possible to realize (i.e. some redundancies in on-line databases) and where it was unrealistic to expect major savings (i.e. efforts by library consortia to lobby the publishers of science journals to lower subscription costs).

   The committee was concerned by the overall prospect of cuts, especially against the backdrop of long term dynamics whereby the cost of library materials (books, journals, databases) consistently outpaces the library’s budget even in good years. The overall inflation rate for all types of library materials (books, journals, electronic databases) for FY10 is projected to be 8.87%. Cuts in annual budgets that preclude the purchase of needed materials ultimately stunt the growth of the library’s collection in ways that are cumulatively significant and which ultimately threaten the ability of the library to support key university priorities connected with the support of student work and faculty research.

   Rettig estimated that the 3 and 5% options for budget cuts could be realized through fairly routine (if nonetheless damaging) reductions; he also noted that if 7% cuts were mandated, major consultative work would need to be done with the university faculty to identify additional areas for cost-savings. As it worked out, the mandate eventually called for 3% cuts, precluding the need for extraordinary consultations.

2. Redesign of the library’s webpage and interface
   The committee met with IT representatives preparing a redesign of the library’s webpage. Members discussed in a somewhat anecdotal way what was important to accomplish with the interface (simplicity, accessibility, efficiency) and what was possibly unnecessary or underutilized due to a lack of publicity among patrons. IT discussed traffic statistics on what was heavily used on the site and what was not. The committee urged the redesign to heighten the usefulness of the electronic resources by simplifying the menu options on the opening page, while at the same time not inhibiting the convenience of navigating the site in just a few cursor clicks.

   Other minor issues were attended to by members of the committee as well. In particular, at the request of Rettig, David Brandenberger joined the James W. Jackson Award committee and recruited social scientist Jeffrey K. Hass (sociology) to join committee veterans Laura Horne and Olivia Reinauer. Faculty nominate student research papers for the award. It honors a paper that “demonstrate[s] a depth and breadth of effective use of research materials in the social sciences and clear evidence of a thoughtful command of these resources.” This committee ultimately opted to award the prize to Jacob Johnson (History) for his honors thesis, “Enslaved Revolutionaries: Constitutional Rhetoric of Eighteenth Century Irish and American Patriots.”

Respectfully submitted,

David Brandenberger, Chair
Library Committee 2008-2009

Library Committee membership, 2008-2009:

David Brandenberger - History (1st of 3 yrs., expiring 2011), CHAIR
Elena Calvillo - Art History (2nd of 3 yrs., expiring 2010); Peter Kaufman will substitute for 1 year
Tim Coggins, Law Library Director, ex officio
Bill Ross - Mathematics (1st of 3 yrs., expiring 2011)
Monika Kukar-Kinney - Business (2nd of 3 yrs., expiring 2010)
James Rettig, University Librarian, ex officio
Amy Treonis - Biology (3rd of 3 yrs., expiring 2009); Aleksandra Sznajder will substitute for Fall 2008
Gabrielle Misiewicz - Westhampton College student