

to Gordon Arnold, Kimberlee Cloutier-Blizzard, Cheri Coe
cc Leonie Bradbury, Laura Tonelli
from John McVey
what notes on and excursions from Library Committee meeting, 15 October 2008
when 22 October 2008

These notes both fall short of, and exceed, a strict minute-taking of our meeting. I did not keep careful notes during our discussion, and hope that others can augment these. Notes have given way to musings, which I have refashioned into this letter to my colleagues, in seven sections :

- 1 Library Mission
- 2 The Master Plan
- 3 Locating the Library — conceptually
- 4 Locating the Library — physically, near term
- 5 Collections
- 6 References
- 7 Appendix — Map of Hardie, first floor

Detailed notes of our meetings — and *vers libre* ruminations like this — are useful for later reference, particularly when it comes time to draft any reports and “visionary” documents for the College.

I have not yet posted my notes to our previous (joint Gallery-Library committee) meeting on our web page (at studio.montserrat.edu/faculty/lc.htm); would this be appropriate?

We tentatively agreed to meet on Wednesday, 5 November, at 11:30 in the Design Seminar room, H-309.

The intersecting concerns of both the Library and the Gallery are large and even urgent. I suggest therefore that even when we do not meet jointly with Gallery Committee, we invite Leonie to come if able, and to invite Shana or another member of Gallery Committee if not, to join our meeting.

We began our 15 October meeting by discussing the curatorial status of objects (books, artifacts, works of art, archival material) held by the Library and the Gallery. See Section 5 for a report of that discussion.

1 Library mission

Cheri pointed out that *our library does not have a mission statement*. This came as a surprise to most of us. The creation of a mission — should we take on that task — will be an interesting project, at this time of change in the library and in education; the information seeking behavior of students, faculty and others; increased and near instantaneous availability of information outside of formal library channels; and rethinking about the role of books, artifacts and works of art in learning, particularly in a studio arts setting.

Why a mission statement? Cheri notes that it would be required should any kind of grant be sought. The creation of a mission for the Library might want to start with a definition of “library” — our library. A mission and/or definition of the library could frame the library — or functions associated with libraries — vis-à-vis the gallery and our liberal arts and studio activities. It might point to ways we could be distinctive for our holdings and usage of cultural and other objects — their centrality, say, in courses related to the Book Arts, or

science. It would need to take into account the actual information and inspiration-seeking behavior of the Library's constituencies. We might focus more on use of archives in artistic and scholarly activity, as a role the library can usefully play, particularly given our commitment to the visual arts. It would need to identify what this institution is, but also what it is not.

Gordon suggested we think about the library and gallery, and their respective collections, in terms of inputs and outputs. He referred to Armand Mattelart's *The Invention of Communication* (1996), where we find a discussion of institutions as open system(s) of inputs and outputs, in "constant interaction" with their environment. Can we think of the library and gallery in this way? What are these inputs and outputs, for the library? Institutions, and certainly the library, are porous and/or shapeshifting.

Gordon mused about a **Venn diagram** way of looking at the library and other units / functions / activities in the College,. Each "set" would be colored, a higher chroma/saturation in the center would lighten out toward the peripheries, and the overlapping intersections of the various sets/functions would yield an interesting mix of colors, I suppose. These kinds of ideas might be useful should we proceed with a mission/definition for the Library.

Leonie sends this for the Gallery —

"Montserrat College of Art Gallery presents innovative exhibitions of contemporary art that feature regional, national and international artists ranging from emerging to established.

"Our core mission is to cultivate learning, celebrate artistic excellence, and to inspire a lifelong involvement in art and design."

This language does not provide for a collection.

A passage encountered by accident, in Diane Hillmann, "Falling off the Metadata Edge" (2007), with its emphasis on primary materials, might be useful in our thinking about Library mission, as well as conceptual connections with the Gallery :

"...in academic libraries we are increasingly seeing calls for re-examination of the library mission, particularly as it relates to the mission of the larger institution. As part of this there is a new focus on library collections, based on the impact of new technologies on patterns of use. In a recent article for LRTS, Mark Sandler writes:

"Fast forward now to a world where a single digital copy of an article or book can be delivered to multiple users, anytime, anywhere. This is a world in which publishers can deliver in real time the books or articles as needed by users—electronically or in print—rather than libraries or retail booksellers stockpiling the content on consignment; a world in which a user can locate and buy a print copy of almost any known book—new or used—and expect delivery the next day; a world in which a single catalog of books (and non-books) can be searched at the word level, leading users to library holdings and purchase opportunities. This is the world today, or the world that we know to be close at hand. It is potentially a world of disintermediation for libraries of all types, but especially for those research libraries that have historically defined themselves in terms of the extent of holdings rather than the relevance of services.'

"Sandler, and others looking at the future of library collections, **see the current focus on the published products of scholarship, where libraries have traditionally put most of their effort, making way for a new focus on primary research materials. These primary materials are not the product of the scholarly enterprise, but instead the precursor to those products.** As more of the secondary products—the books and journal articles—find their way to the web in digital form and are fully indexed by Google, Google Scholar, and other non-library search

applications, libraries will be forced to re-examine whether they are spending their “cataloging” dollars effectively. As libraries shift their collection development effort to acquire, manage and preserve these primary materials, they will also need to shift their cataloging dollars from approaches used now on the published products collected redundantly by libraries, to others more appropriate for the wide variety of resources that are the fodder for most academic research. [my emphasis, JM]

“Most of you reading the points on “primary material” noted above will recognize that what I’m talking about sounds suspiciously like what archivists already do, and that’s one of the interesting things about these visions of library futures. Ironically, archivists went down their own separate path many years ago—they were never very happy with how AACR2 related to their materials, and in response they developed their own cataloging guidelines and formats. While it is certainly true that the strategies developed by archivists to manage their physical assets have been quite effective and efficient, they may not scale well to digital materials, nor be a good basis for the kinds of record sharing likely to be a required part of this new world, where primary materials are the main focus of libraries rather than the interesting margins.”

I like that attention to primary material. In our setting, “research” might need to share with terms like “reference” and “documentation” a role in characterizing the uses of primary materials. Most important, however, is the shift that Hillmann describes away from collection of secondary scholarship — increasingly available via digital means — to collection (and curating) of primary materials.

2 The Master Plan

Library Committee has always assumed that its work would inform development of a Master Plan. So how is the Master Plan going?

Brian Bicknell said that the master plan is not now underway, but being thought about. In a hallway conference with Brian, McVey wondered how a master plan could be undertaken without a thorough assessment of (1) our technology and (2) our space and space usage. He observed that we do assessments for departments, but not for functions like technology, information or space, and wondered if we have mechanisms for making this happen.

(A shortcoming of the AVTF process was that facilities and space were intentionally left out of the picture, perhaps on grounds that to include them would limit the scope of the discussion. A result, however, is that an opportunity to think holistically about how space connects with our curricular delivery was lost. JM)

How is technology used in the College? How might it be used in future? What are optimum configurations for learning space? What needs to be permanent (built-in), and what can be flexible? These questions that concern us in Library Committee, are certainly not limited to the confines of the library.

Laura Tonelli later reminded McVey that the exodus of Illustration and Graphic Design from 292 to Hardie did occasion a survey of all departments regarding their minimum space requirements, so that the smaller Montserrat could be accommodated in 301 Cabot and in Hardie. Some information exists.

It may be that the soon-to-be formalized and expanded **Technology Committee** can play a role in assessing current and future technology usage throughout the College, with an eye to contributing to the Master Plan.

3 Locating the Library — conceptually

Ideas from or prompted by the recent Dartmouth conference *Space 2.0: Small-Scale Library Redesign Projects* came up frequently in the comments of Cheri and McVey.

Question : Is there a danger of focussing overmuch within the confines of the library walls, without considering its relationship(s) with what goes on outside those walls?

In his “First Questions for Designing Higher Education Learning Spaces” (2007), Bennett explicitly excludes from consideration “discipline-specific spaces, even those consciously designed to foster active, independent learning.” Bennett continues,

“Science laboratories, engineering shops, and studio spaces (for instruction in art, architecture, music, and dance) are not considered here, although they have much to teach us about designing for collaborative learning. Other learning spaces outside the scope of this paper are classrooms; auditoriums; museum and other display spaces; intramural sports facilities; and administrative, student services, and health care buildings. These are spaces where people other than students typically control the use of the space, where students are served or acted on.” (p15)

The exclusion of these learning spaces, for whatever reason (even specious, e.g., “where students are served or acted on”), may make sense in some settings (particularly large institutions). They may not, for smaller colleges that, like “special libraries,” are specialized.

Bennett’s essays are smart and useful, but this passage underscores what McVey found at the Dartmouth conference : the librarians there viewed the world from within their library domains, and were naturally concerned with adopting new approaches to learning and technology that could be incorporated within those domains. I saw precious little attention to what formal and informal learning activities, including research and small-group, task-oriented collaborations by students, might be going on outside the library. I came away thinking about how planning for the library should reflect and be part of planning for what is outside the library, as well (and vice versa). (Late addition: I learned today — 21 October — an expression that might be pertinent : “**cognitive regulatory capture**,” meaning, Wall Street in the person of Henry Paulson at the Fed, can’t operate/think outside the wiring he’s spent decades developing while at Goldman Sachs.)

(There was also a perhaps unexamined assumption that “**collaborative learning**” is a universally good thing. The focus of a studio arts school must, at least in the first two or three if not all four years, be placed on development of formal skills and visual judgement. That, plus mastery of tools, is an enormous undertaking. Collaboration is not always, or even mostly, the best way forward at the undergraduate level, although it can work in specific instances. I note, incidentally, that the speakers at the conference did focus on quiet study spaces, and we heard it repeated frequently that group study spaces needed to be small.)

We talked about the borders separating “the library” from the rest of the institution. Our institution *in toto* is smaller than some libraries — and *not even their main libraries* — of larger colleges and universities. McVey wondered if it might be useful, in some respects, to think of the entirety of the Hardie Building, for example, as “the library,” in which some library functions are concentrated in some areas, but other library functions are diffused throughout the building — in the labs where students do their online research; in the Design and Illustration seminar rooms with their private, specialized collections of books, costumes, various historical examples, an etch-a-sketch, etc.; in the classrooms to which faculty bring and show examples (their own, and the College’s), or project digital images; and throughout the building, where different mixes of bibliographic and research instruction are woven into our teaching.

A lead-in to this conversation was the complaint by Mary Giunta, a Columbia University librarian, that students take their research and technology questions first to peers and faculty,

before approaching a reference librarian. She called this a question of “marketing,” the idea being that better marketing would get students to see the superior value of the reference librarian. McVey said he does not readily agree with this: if our whole building is, in some sense, a library, we can all be seen to play roles in directing students to resources. Kimberlee made the observation that we all have expert knowledge in something, have our personal resources either here (in the building) or at home, and know how to find things. As the librarian would refer questions to faculty having specialist knowledge, so will faculty refer students to the reference librarian with other questions. We’re all here in the service of learning.

4 Locating the Library — physically, near term

We discussed two strategies : (1) near-term and perhaps more limited initiatives, to test and demonstrate ideas; and (2) holding out for long-term and perhaps dramatic change. We concluded that these two approaches need not conflict, and could accommodate each other, so long as we are vigilant.

Gordon recently suggested that a tier or two of our stacks be removed to remote storage, thereby opening up some square footage for a quiet study area. McVey wondered if the space gain could justify the trouble of selecting the materials to be moved, and then moving them.

And so we turned to something like an idea, floated over a year ago, to move the Schlosberg Gallery to a different location, and extend the library out into that space. Our new thought experiment goes like this:

- a Some staff/officer functions are moved out of Hardie, opening up (for example) the office area to the right as one enters Hardie. Schlosberg goes in.
- b The wall separating the Library from Schlosberg disappears. A glass wall/door extends from present library entrance, all the way across to the Main Gallery wall.
- c The present faculty office area is newly incorporated into the Library.
- d Existing lavatories remain accessible, but are now within the library space. (There is precedent in the building: the basement lavatories are not accessible when the Printmaking studio is closed.)
- e No opinion with regard to kitchen.

Results

Within Library space, three new functions are located/relocated :

- 1 Special collections (shared by Library and Gallery);
- 2 A seminar/reading/ “print” room; and
- 3 Some faculty offices (for art historians and others who choose to have — or win lottery for — office space within an expanded Library. We thereby bring at least some of our “subject experts” into the formal (concentrated) precincts of “the library.”

The enlarged space would provide an opportunity to test new flexible space and furniture configurations, including quiet spaces removed from high traffic areas.

Stacks might be moved and/or reconfigured (in toto or part). For example, the wall that currently separates Library and Schlosberg might be replaced by books, facing both directions.

The librarian's office might also be moved within the library. The wall separating the librarian's office from the stacks area could be removed, providing visual access to stacks from the front room.

A fourth function might be relocated, into the second floor :

- 4 The Image Library, possibly with carrels/terminal stations available for study and accessing visual materials; the Writing Center might remain, but Career Center move.

Something like this admittedly sketchy scenario provides a feasible nearer-term solution to Library space needs : (1) flexible and quiet study space(s), separated from traffic areas; and (2) a seminar/reading room and archival/artifact storage within the Library.

New walls would be, wherever feasible, glass. See rough map of first floor for an idea of new (near term) space, appended to this document.

5 Collections

We agreed that the existence of documented policies and procedures regarding artifacts and works of art, and particularly those acquired as gifts, wouldn't necessarily protect them. There must be shared understanding within our community about how these objects are used in and support learning at Montserrat. By "community" is meant faculty and students, officers and staff, trustees, potential donors. We agreed that "visibility" is an important means to this shared understanding. By the visibility of our collections, our community can get a sense that we do indeed have collections, that we treat them appropriately, and we use them. And we need to know what we have, if we are to use it.

And so we will be gathering examples of collections policy. Leonie Bradbury has already begun researching and locating resources on the same topic; some of them are listed in Section 6, References.

In an earlier meeting, I likened raiding a collection of art works to walking through the library stacks, and pulling books off the shelf at random, on the argument that the removed items would do the college more good on eBay than on our shelves. That's not quite accurate.

Works of art appreciate in value, the average reference volume does not.

The minefield question of whether artifacts and works of art in our collection, can be deaccessioned to generate funds, is touched on in a 1992 paper by James Cuno, formerly head of Harvard Art Museums. I quote three paragraphs from that document —

"But the laziness of my studies was interrupted last November by the sale of fourteen pre-twentieth-century works of art from the collection of Brandeis University's Rose Art Museum. These had been deemed by the president and trustees of that university, and one supposes by the director of the museum (although one wonders if the art history faculty was consulted on this), as no longer appropriate to the museum, which was now going to focus exclusively on the art of the twentieth century.

"Such deaccessioning is not in itself a questionable act by professional museum standards. The guidelines of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD)—as well as those of the American Association of Museums and the College Art Association—approve of deaccessioning, but only if the resulting proceeds are used to purchase additional works of art. The problem in the Brandeis case arose only when it was learned that the proceeds of the sale were to be used to offset the museum's operating expenses, which included but were not limited to the costs of conservation and academic programs."

Cuno concludes —

“If we are not to be ‘expensive architectural ornaments,’ as Andrew Ritchie warned we might, we deserve sufficient and consistent support in both word and deed. Unfortunately, while this is clearly understood and even loudly championed by the leaders of some of our institutions, especially the president of my own, it is not sufficiently understood by others. Those who do not understand this still look upon their museums and galleries as operational liabilities rich in fungible assets. This should not be the case. Now, more than one hundred years after the founding of the earliest college and university art museums, we are forced yet again to proclaim: yes our collections are assets, but assets of a very specific, pedagogical kind. They are not just one ‘good’ among many, but are vital components of the teaching and scholarly resources that comprise the very heart of the university or college itself. That, and nothing less.”

My own conclusion is that deaccessioning must be understood by all as a potentially profound act — particularly in a school of visual art. Rules, procedures, principles alone will not protect against raiding a collection, but are a necessary part of a general and ongoing effort to instill a common understanding of their role in pedagogy, and even as symbolic artifacts in a college dedicated to the visual (and literary and tactile) arts, much like collections of historical scientific instruments, not to mention specimens (birds and bird nests, meteorites and minerals), and even realia, are retained and curated in the science departments of colleges and universities.

Cuno’s paper is one of four in an Occasional Papers series, from HUAM, listed in Section 6.

More thoughts about collections

What language do we have, with regard to gifts, restricted and unrestricted and anything in between?

Do we have language about what would go into our own collection (drawings, to start with)?

What gallery and “print room” setups have you seen, that you like?

What would we collect, for whom, at what cost or intensity ?

The question of what is to be collected is partly strategic, and partly a function of chance (someone — a William Davies King? — offers a collection of cereal boxes), or an enormous cache of comic books. Do we take it? Can we afford to process and hold it? Would it be of use?

Could a collection support our science courses?

Leonie has begun to find resources that can help in our collections policy planning. As she writes, “No need to reinvent the wheel.” Several such resources are listed/described in Section 6 (References).

Some of these resources are available via these organizations, of which we are a member :

NEMA (New England Museum Association)
<http://www.nemanet.org/>

AAM (American Association of Museums)
<http://www.aam-us.org/>

ACUMG (Association of College and University Museums and Galleries)
<http://www.mpcer.nau.edu/acumg/index.html>

6 References

Most of the items relating to library and learning commons were mentioned in Dartmouth library conference presentations, or discovered in follow-up research. Most of the articles and links relating to museums and collection planning were suggested by Leonie Bradbury.

Mission

Diane Hillman. "Falling off the Metadata Edge." *Technicalities* 27:1 (January/February 2007)

<http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/7610>

We have not discussed eCommons or Institutional Repositories, as they would pertain to Montserrat.

Library and Learning Commons

Scott Bennett. "Editorial: The Information or the Learning Commons: Which Will We Have?" *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 34:3 (May 2008) : 183-185

Scott Bennett. "First Questions for Designing Higher Education Learning Spaces." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 33:1 (January 2007) : 14-26

Scott Bennett. "Designing for Uncertainty: Three Approaches." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 33:2 (March 2007) : 165-179

Diana G. Oblinger, ed. *Learning Spaces*. Educause, October 2006

Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger, eds. *Educating the Net Generation*. Educause, February 2005

full contents of both can be found via

<http://www.educause.edu/books/635>

McVey circulated copies of Bennett's "Information or the Learning Commons" (2008) and "First Questions" (2007), as well as the tables of contents of two Educause publications — *Learning Spaces* (2006) and *Educating the Net Generation* (2005). Both books are held for our Committee use behind the Library circulation desk.

Collaborative Learning Commons : Bibliography and Links. Compiled by Bryan Sinclair.

<http://facstaff.unca.edu/sinclair/spaceplan/clcbib.html>

Also during the Dartmouth conference, reference was frequently made to :

John Palfrey and Urs Gasser. *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (2008)

Gallery, Collections

Tang Museum (at Skidmore) :

<http://tang.skidmore.edu/195/collections/doc/360/>

"A teaching museum [with] an innovative approach;" **the photograph of the "Collections Project Summer 2007" speaks volumes about their treatment of the collection.**

On collections policies

John Simmons. "Managing Things — Crafting a Collections Policy." Originally published in *Museum News* (January/February 2004).

http://www.aam-us.org/pubs/mn/MN_JF04_ManagingThings.cfm

<http://icom.museum/ethics.html>

Only Leonie has direct access to Collections Planning documents available via AAM, but she has PDFs of the following :

Writing a Collections Management Policy (Information Center Fact Sheet, 2 pages)

Outline for a Collections Plan (Information Center Fact Sheet, 2 pages)

Collections Planning : Strategies for Planning & Implementation (Information Center Fact Sheet, 2 pages)

Elise V. LeCompte. Why? Because We Said So! A Guide to the Development, Implementation, and Enforcement of Museum Policies.” (Reprinted from *Covering Your Assets: Facilities and Risk Management in Museums*. AAM, 2005)

Collections Policy, Pearl River (Mississippi) Community College Museum (5 pages, 2007)

Digital resource management

http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/policies_collections

<http://library.vassar.edu/vcl/cmr/policy.html>

College archives

<http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/archives/mission.htm>

Other

James Cuno. *Going Public: Art Museums and Acquisitions, Now and in the Future*. 1998.

James Cuno. *In the Crossfire of the Culture Wars: The Art Museum in Crisis*. 1995.

James Cuno. *Defining the Mission of the Academic Art Museum*. 1994.

James Cuno. *Assets? Well, Yes—of a Kind Collections in College and University Art Museums and Galleries*. 1992.

all at : <http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/professional/occpapers.html>

William Davies King. *Collections of Nothing*. (University of Chicago Press, 2008)

Wonderful book, but nothing specifically useful to our needs. Here’s a passage —

“...My collections resonate a VOID, a sudden, stop-the-check aporia.

“What I collect are such things as envelope linings, “Place Stamp Here” squares, dictionary illustrations, price-look-ups, and the miscellaneous stickers that come through the junk mail. I also collect product labels, everything from **cereal boxes** and water bottle wraps to toothpaste tubes and the little stickers you find on bananas. Now, others collect such things as Wheaties boxes, and Robert Opie made an entire museum in England of product labels. However, those people typically go on a collector’s hunt for their prizes, and they will haunt eBay or dealers to complete their sets, whereas I never do. I only collect from what I use or find, such things as a 1980s-vintage Glamour Puss Fish and Liver Cat Food can label, in vg + condition. My cats, as I recall, did not like this brand, but I liked the label. The whole gist of my collecting is that I have paid nothing for my objects, beyond the cost of the cereal, which I eat, or the fish and liver eaten by the cats. I’ve been doing this for about thirty years, so I have a lot of nothing, and out of it has come this university press book, which is something.

“So, apparently, I am an expert—in what? Or, apparently, I am an exemplar—of what? It’s an odd gap in which I find myself, both authority and specimen, yet neither the one nor the other.”

7 Appendix — Map of Hardie, first floor

Note:

This drawing reflects no knowledge of load-bearing walls, etc., and assumes that the Schlosberg Gallery (and some gallery storage) is moved to larger quarters in the area currently occupied by Brian Bicknell's and other offices.

