The meetings of the New Brunswick Libraries Faculty (NBLF) serve as a forum for general discussion and planning among the public service librarians on the New Brunswick/Piscataway campuses. Supporting the academic excellence of the Libraries and the University is always the ultimate goal of our efforts, but our activities during the 2007-2008 academic year could be more narrowly classified under the strategic plan goals below.

Reflecting the larger RUL and RU context, the shadow of budget cuts loomed over our activities and hampered our ability to move forward as an organization. Most notably, our careful planning and discussion of hiring priorities was vitiated (one can only hope temporarily) by the need to suspend our recruitment process and reprioritize under several fiscal restraint.

1. Collaborations and communication

   a. Invited presentation by Rhonda Marker to discuss RUCore’s functionality and its relationship to academic departments and library liaisons.
   b. Invited presentation by Natalie Borisovets to discuss chat reference program at RUL, laying the groundwork for participation in the Spring semester by many NBLF members in the successful launch of chat reference using Meebo.
   c. Invited presentation by Harry Glazer to discuss Libraries’ marketing plan and the role of the liaison. Gathered useful feedback from librarians on the plan.
   d. Communication and updates from the Committee on Scholarly Communication were presented by Jim Niessen.
   e. Reviewed the New Brunswick Libraries website with the aim of integrating content with RUL when possible, archiving dated material, and updating useful databases and information. The NBL website reflects the pre-Research and Instructional Services organization and is not well-linked from the main RUL site. However, NBLF affirmed the usefulness of the information and databases on the NBL site. The group made recommendations to move certain content to the RUL site and to then work on migrating the live database applications such as the instructional repository and selector’s database. Static documents in well-defined categories like minutes and reports have been placed on a test page within the RUL site, and the completion of this phase of the move should occur soon in the next academic year.
   f. Began distribution of minutes to RUL everyone.
   g. Integrated NB Information Services Group agenda items into the NBLF meeting schedule to maximize participation and discussion. The group was able to discuss several issues in this manner, but immediate budget woes interfered with our ability to engage in larger discussions about long-term goals and new services. It did not make sense to bring forward some of the important issues identified by the Information Services Steering Group, such as workload issues and the use of RAs, to the larger group for discussion when our short-term future would not allow us to implement any decisions.
   h. Continued regular reporting from Access Services, NB Collections Group, and the AUL for RIS, allowing sharing of information among a wider audience.

2. Financial Resources (for example: external support, budgeting effectively, leveraging resources)

   a. The Travel Committee has begun regular reporting and discussion of its budgeting and planning process at NBLF meetings. At the beginning of the year, an overview of the budget and allocation process was provided, followed by updates at subsequent meetings.
This has increased the transparency of the process, and improved the ability to plan and spend out the travel budget in an equitable manner.

3. Organizational effectiveness (leadership, staff development, area expertise, recruitment

   a. This year saw the departure of four of our valued colleagues in NBLF: Howard Dess, Pat Piermatti, and Lourdes Vazquez due to retirement, and Ferris Olin, who transferred within Rutgers to the Institute for Women & Art. We also welcomed four new members of the faculty: Tom Izbicki, Donna Schulman, Judit Ward, and Tao Yang.

   Within NBLF, Ryan Womack became Data and Economics Librarian, assuming the responsibilities of the vacant Social Sciences Data Librarian position as well as continuing his subject responsibilities for economics. Jackie Mardikian assumed responsibility from Pat Piermatti for Pharmaceutical Sciences in addition to Medicine. Many NBLF librarians are providing temporary coverage for subject areas due to retirements and departures. Since we are at an extremely low point in staffing, our ability to effectively serve existing needs and simultaneously undertake new initiatives is severely limited.

   In consequence, the NBLF spent major effort in the fall and early spring on reviewing and refining new position descriptions for its vacated and reassigned lines (Business Librarian, Instructional Technology Development Librarian, Physical Sciences Librarian, Area Studies Librarian, Environmental Sciences Librarian). All five of these positions were posted, and search committees that included many NBLF librarians were formed.

   Unfortunately, due to our dire budget prognosis, our searches were suspended, and we devoted subsequent discussions to reprioritizing the five posted lines with the understanding that, depending on the final budget, we might have to give back or delay hiring on these lines for some time. This round of planning included a “special session” of NBLF held during the NB Collections Group meeting to provide rapid feedback for Valeda Dent and the Cabinet’s budgeting process. The faculty responded to this potentially dispiriting situation with careful and serious deliberation.

   The resulting line priorities have begun to be acted upon, with recruitment restarted for the Physical Sciences and Area Studies positions. Next in priority order are the Business Librarian, Instructional Technology Development Librarian, and Environmental Sciences Librarian. One can only hope that we will be able to fill these lines, which also represent urgent needs for RUL, in the not too distant future.

   b. In the fall semester, as part of the process to provide recommendations to the University Librarian and VP for Academic Affairs on potential new lines, special task force meetings of NBLF officers and the Exploratory Committee were held to brainstorm about new positions. This discussion was continued at the NBLF meeting. The priority lines identified were then incorporated into the RUL-wide discussion and decision document.

   c. As part of the same process, NBLF discussed the issue of non-tenure track lines and provided input to the University Librarian.

   d. An invited presentation by Lila Fredenburg on the Libraries Diversity program and Visa and work requirements raised awareness of these issues and generated discussion on how the libraries can best recruit from different potential pools for different kinds of positions.

Submitted by Ryan Womack, Chair, New Brunswick Libraries Faculty, 2007-2008