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Testimony for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries:

Focus on Staffing, July, 22, 2022

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts on the staffing situation at the Eliot D. Pratt Library of Goddard College. I have been the library director here since February 2021 and was previously the Assistant Director of the Hartness Library, CCV.

Goddard is a low-residency Master's Degree and Bachelor's Degree-granting institution centered in Plainfield, VT, with program and residency options in Washington State. The library primarily serves students remotely through digital resources and online research assistance, with physical materials circulated by mail. During our residency cycles in summer and winter, we see students in-person within their program cohorts. Total enrollment is typically in the area 350-400 students, but generally not more than 60 on-campus at one time.

The college has been in a state of flux for the past several years, with some notable financial crises resulting in the downsizing of staff. Since I have been here, the library staff has consisted of:

- Director of Information Access (myself) -- Full-time, non-Bargaining unit member. MLS required
- Materials Access & Acquisitions Librarian -- Full-time, Bargaining unit member. MLS required.
- Residency Library Assistant -- Part-time, temporary, Bargaining unit member. MLS not required.

The library lost its Technical Services position several years ago and I continue to try to get this added back to our budget, unsuccessfully. We also had a part-time Archivist for the College Archives, which I have not been able to get approval to re-establish.

We are woefully understaffed. At current staffing levels, we are able to maintain basic services for our users and strive to be responsive and flexible. Original cataloging is a challenge given the skillset of the current staff, and we collect several fairly unique items. We are doing a fairly minimal job at managing our electronic resources and don't have the time or expertise to truly maximize our discovery service or our web presence and UX.

As a low-residency college, we are not able to rely on student workers to take care of typical, non-MLS daily tasks like performing routine circulation, book processing, and stack maintenance functions. These tasks fall on MLS librarians, with some back-up assistance by the part-time residency assistant when that person is available several weeks of the year. Our typical hours are Mon-Friday, 9-4, with some extended hours during residencies due to the presence of the part-time assistant. There are often times in-between residencies when we have to close because both staff members are unavailable. We typically lock the doors to the building when students are not on-campus, requiring appointments for in-person access because we cannot guarantee staff availability unless we know when someone is coming. This limits our ability to provide a welcome space for local residents who may prefer to drop in unannounced.

The library is also in charge of archiving digital senior and masters' theses, which is time-consuming. The student theses are part of the much larger college archives, which are in danger of deterioration because we do not have the staff time, the space, or the financial resources to reorganize, rehouse, and otherwise make accessible our very crowded room full of print materials and other media. Hiring an archivist or even a part-time archive assistant would be extremely helpful, but the college is under constant financial strain and this is never seen as a priority.

I recently got approval from the staff union for an unpaid MLS intern at the library, hoping that I'd be able to attract a grad student who may need an internship for the experience, but I have not been able to attract anyone. Obviously, it would be better if we could make it a paid internship, but I am counting the pennies here.

Thanks for your time. Let me know if you have questions for me.

Best,

Eileen