

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S.71-127

MEMORANDUM

To SENATE (FOR INFORMATION)

From B. G. WILSON

VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC

Subject LIBRARY COURSE

Date NOVEMBER 18, 1971

The attached is provided for the information of
Senate.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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MEMORANDUM

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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To Larry Thomas
Assistant University Librarian
Librarian for Collections

From B.G. Wilson
Vice-President, Academic

Subject

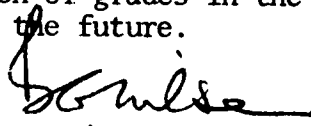
Date October 26, 1971

The Academic Planning Committee has reviewed the proposal for a credit course in General Studies relating to your area, as referred by Senate at its last meeting. Since its initial discussion, your letter was received and I have been directed to write to you about the following points.

Members of the Academic Planning Committee expressed concern about such a course being offered by members of the Library staff apparently without consultation with departments. Apart from consultation over details of the course it would seem appropriate that members of the department might participate in elements of the course if it were offered. Concern was also expressed that the course carried little discernible intellectual content appropriate to its recognition for academic credit; if indeed the course should be assessed for credit, there was concern that 3 hours was excessive. Your letter indicates that you feel the 3 credits are justified but have not provided any evidence other than stating that there is enough subject content to justify it. Many of us feel that the items to be encompassed within each lecture should be reconsidered since the present proposal conveys the impression that far too many items will be covered than could effectively be taken care of in the time allocated.

Although it is stated that the course would not require additional funds or resources, the actual cost of the course has not been identified. It would be helpful to have some elaboration of the actual costs to the Library in providing this course as set out without assuming that these costs will be met by a reduction in other times spent by librarians in similar types of work.

I am personally not convinced that this kind of course could not be given without credit since, if it is clearly advantageous for students to take it, they will do so and no similar experiments in the past have been tried. Reading and Study courses are, for instance, quite well enrolled even though they are not given for credit. I would like to suggest that you offer this course as a non-credit course in the Spring semester of 1972 so that we will have some additional information on prospective enrollment before Senate reconsiders the course. I would also like to have some understanding of the mechanism for evaluation of grades in the course if it is to be offered for credit in the future.


B.G. Wilson

:ams
c.c. D. Baird, University Librarian
Members of Academic Planning Committee
Dr. Strand, Chairman, Senate.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To..... Academic Planning Committee

From..... Larry Thomas
Assistant University Librarian
for Collections

Subject..... Library Course Proposal

Date..... October 6, 1971

The intent of this memorandum is to provide a fuller statement of the Library point-of-view on its proposal for a credit course which Senate debated at the meeting of October 4, 1971.

1. The course is proposed as an "experimental course" in General Studies. As such it is the first proposal of its kind to come before Senate; to date only "programmes" have been considered and approved. It was put forward in the spirit of enlarged receptivity for course experimentation that was explicitly stated as one reason for the creation of the General Studies Division. However when the proposal reached the Senate it was not recognized as a precedent in this context, and it certainly was not discussed in terms of the new out-look that is supposedly part of the General Studies rationale.

2. Should it be a credit course? The Library is asking only for permission to experiment with a credit course; it is not requesting that the course be established as a permanent calendar entry. We feel it should be a credit course to have any value as an experiment because, as a new kind of course, its content cannot be known and appreciated before the fact. Students cannot be expected to volunteer valuable hours to a non-credit course when they have never heard of such a course before and have not experienced its practical value. Even courses with established validity, but no credits, attract small attendance because of the competition for a student's time from credit offerings. Besides this, the Library has used every avenue of approach open to it to teach people how to make better use of its resources. This has been only minimally effective as the daily experience of Reference Librarians and Faculty in their work with students has shown.

3. Should it be a 3 credit course? Simply, there is enough subject content to justify a 3 credit course. Traditionally there has been a bias in the academic community against the suggestion that knowledge of libraries is complicated enough to require a formal course. The work experience of librarians has contradicted this general belief consistently over the years. It is a notion that is now anachronistic because of the

rapid growth of libraries in the last decade. With growth has come unforeseen complexity, and libraries, though originally organized to be self-evident systems from a researcher's point-of-view, have become harder to use, placing the burden of a greater need for knowledge on the reader.

4. Will the course require additional funds or resources? No, not in the sense that the total Library budget would have to be increased; and, no, not in the sense that it would cause the Library to spend less on collections or other services. The Library already has a staff of 12 people who lecture a large number of hours per semester. Many of these talks are on an elementary level. We hope, by the introduction of the course, to reduce the number of non-specialized lectures now being given. Though we don't want the staff to cease being available to lecture by faculty invitation, we expect to shift enough hours now being used in this way to the course so that the total number of hours will not increase.

The Library already has all the book and media materials it requires for the course, as well as rooms for the classes to meet. A small audio-visual services budget is available to pay for the occasional showing of a film, or use of an overhead projector.

5. Is this an attempt to insinuate a programme of librarianship at S.F.U.? No. Professional librarians in B. C. are keenly aware that the Library School at U.B.C. is currently producing more librarians than the local market can absorb. Also, the librarians of the three universities, through their informal organization, TRIUL, have been urging that the universities do a better job of making curricula complementary rather than competitive. Librarians would, in fact, lead the opposition if another school of librarianship were seriously proposed.

6. Is this a back door attempt to gain faculty status? No. Only one name, that of the Assistant University Librarian for Collections, would be put forward to the President for a semester appointment as lecturer and course coordinator. Though other librarians would participate in teaching the course, they would have a relationship to the coordinator that is similar to that of a T.A. in other departments.

Though, in a very limited and controlled way, a temporary appointment of a librarian to the faculty would set a precedent at S.F.U., a distinction must be made between the precedent and the

intention behind it. In this case the intention is simply to have the mechanical means to offer a course experiment for which there seems to be a need, and which we feel would benefit students.

Increasingly, at universities on the North American continent, librarians are being given faculty status, and many S.F.U. librarians are in sympathy with this trend. However, if it ever would become our intention to apply for faculty status, this we would do directly and openly as a separate issue presented to Senate. Nobody, to my knowledge, is naive enough to believe that an approach by subterfuge is a better course to follow.

7. The detailed schedule for the course, in terms of vector hours, is as follows:

Weeks 1-5: general lectures, three times a week (sample outlines for lectures in the proposal are not conceived as outlines for hour-long lectures; but the total of ten lectures will be completed in 15 hours.)

Weeks 6-13: two hours of seminar and one hour of laboratory-like work in the Reference Collections per week; time divided approximately equally between two specialized literatures.

Evaluation: students will be graded on their performance in the seminars and two bibliographical research projects.

Physical facilities: (1) the Board Room, now being turned over to the Library will be used for the general lectures.
(2) seminars (max. of 9 hours per week is possible) will meet in the Board Room and the Archives/Special Collection Reading Room.
(3) laboratory-like work will be done in the Reference Areas and in the offices of individual librarians.

8. Brief history of the proposal:

- a) Suggested by librarians and also student assistants who felt that after working in the Library such a course would be useful. First discussed in mid-1970.

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- b) Small committee of librarians drafted proposal.
- c) Final draft was presented to Senate Library Committee on June 28, 1971 and was unanimously endorsed.

Moved by L. Druehl, seconded by C. Hamilton

"that the Senate Library Committee recommends to the Dean of General Studies that this course be implemented as soon as possible."

- d) Endorsed by the Canadian Studies Programme Committee, the Mid-East and African Studies Committee, and Latin American Studies Committee as an acceptable elective for these respective programmes.
- e) Approved with modifications and sent to Senate by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies.
- f) Referred to Academic Planning Committee by Senate at its meeting of October 4, 1971.

LET/dap