

Recommendations and Priorities for the Library

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Though it is a truism that the library is the heart of the institution, the Folke Bernadotte Memorial library genuinely serves as the intellectual common ground of the college. The building and its resources are heavily used, its electronic resources are accessed throughout the campus and beyond, and the librarians and staff are committed to ensuring that our library is designed around enhancing student learning. We encourage the development of inquiry skills and dispositions in our students that will serve them after graduation both as liberally educated individuals and as engaged citizens.

Our *strengths* are in instruction, responsive and innovative service, a robust program of assessment and applied research, and collaboration with campus constituents and with library consortia} including Minitex and the Oberlin Group. Our chief *weakness* is in lack of funding for staff and collections. We have the *opportunity* to advance teaching and learning through closer collaboration with faculty and by embedding research skills strategically into the curriculum; we also are collaborating with others on our campus and beyond to enable innovative and low-cost use of new digital opportunities for teaching and research and to further the mission of the college. Among *threats* is the commodification of scholarship and the high and always-increasing price of licensing access to publications by corporations, a problem that carries with it a concurrent loss of control over the content and the terms of access to information. In the next decade libraries and scholars must find a more efficient and sustainable means of sharing research and must work together to emphasize the importance of scholarly knowledge as a public good.

Priorities

Section 0.3 of the college's academic strategic plan recommends that we develop a five-year plan to bring funding for the library up to levels consistent with comparable institutions. Using the most recent comparative statistics available for Oberlin Group college libraries¹ (2009-2010), we would have to increase our budget by around a third to reach the top of the lowest quartile of libraries in this group. In 2009-2010, reaching this goal would have required spending an additional \$604,000 over all, with an increase of \$217,000 for acquisitions. This figure is, of course, a moving target. Costs for books, journals, and database subscriptions are expected to rise 7%-9% in the next year, an inflation rate that is not likely to drop greatly in coming years. Also, in order to have a comparable number of staff per student as libraries in the lowest quartile, we would have to add five positions.

Based on the library's Strategic Plan of 2009, on annual assessment data, and on the recommendations of a working group of faculty called together to discuss library priorities, the library confirms that both increasing the acquisitions budget and the numbers of staff are high priorities. Discussions with faculty suggest that they would like to see more resources (with particular attention to access to journals for the sciences and social sciences, but also an adequate budget for materials in the humanities, including print and digital collections); faculty also would like to have more opportunities to work with the librarians both to enhance opportunities for student and faculty scholarship, to embed research skills

¹ The Oberlin Group of 80 liberal arts college libraries offers a realistic benchmark for our college and our aspirations. Though many of the institutions in the group have far greater resources than we do, there are many that have endowments of a size similar to ours or smaller. The Oberlin Group includes, for example, Alma, Augustana (Rock Island), Eckerd, Knox, Beloit, and Lake Forest as well as four other Minnesota institutions: St. John's/St. Ben's, St. Olaf, Carleton, and Macalester.

more effectively into the curriculum, and to help them keep on top of developments as researchers. Adding more collections without adequate staff would not be a wise use of resources.

To meet the need for equivalent funding within five years/ we recommend the following steps:

- Within the next year, create one new faculty position within the library; within three-five years add a second faculty position and a staff position specializing in support for digital collections.
- Within the next year, increase the library/s acquisitions budget by 22%; in each of the subsequent four years increase the library's acquisitions budget an additional 15% until we can reach our goal. Thereafter, the budget will have to regularly increase by approximately 7% annually to cover annual increases in the costs of library materials.

We should also within the next five years study best practices for planning and designing an addition to the library so that it can serve the increasing need for both collaborative and contemplative learning space and to bring faculty and learning support services into the library as described in our strategic plan. This may involve locating the Kendall Center, instructional technology, tutoring services, the Writing Center, and additional technical support for such activities as data curation and manipulation, poster production, geographic information systems, support for digital humanities projects and video editing and production. Co-location of learning and technology services within the library will enhance learning for students and will provide opportunities for student-faculty interaction, a proven high impact practice.

In the meantime, we need better storage facilities for the College and Church Archives and funding to construct secure and attractive cabinetry for a renovated Special Collections room located on the main floor. This project will make rare and special volumes more visible and more easily incorporated into courses and research. It will also allow for the construction of an inspiring study area for students. This would be an ideal naming opportunity.

With a stronger resource base and with improvements to the physical environment, the library can pursue the following goals.

To support student research and creativity, the library will collaborate closely with departments to determine where information skills belong in the curriculum and will work toward creating a critical information literacy curriculum embedded into each program and major. We have a prototype of such an embedded design in the Political Science department's POL 200 course. Without additional staff, it will be difficult to scale up this initiative.

To support faculty research and creativity, librarians will work closely with their liaison departments and with the Kendall Center to offer a regular suite of faculty development opportunities, ranging from the informal and personal to formal campus-wide opportunities. Supporting the ongoing needs of faculty as information formats and research opportunities undergo significant change is an important role that the library currently is unable to meet.

To support our institutional memory and to preserve the history of the college, the archivist will preserve historical records of the college and the church, will work with constituents to ensure our history is preserved going forward, and will make materials of interest to the local community and the world

available through programming, exhibits, and through digitization. Though the current archivist has made a good start, more environmentally secure storage and digital infrastructure is needed.

To support the library's continuing importance as an intellectual and cultural resource, the library will monitor trends in scholarly publishing and will actively support both the preservation of the cultural record and advocacy for a healthier, more sustainable future for the sharing of knowledge as a common good. We have made initial steps toward creating an institutional repository to showcase and promote the work of our faculty and students; we are encouraging faculty to be mindful of fair use and open access as they share their work and as a member of the Oberlin Group, we are exploring opportunities for founding an innovative liberal arts press so that we can collaborate on developing sustainable publishing models for the future. These efforts, and increasing support for the creation, preservation, and dissemination of scholarly work, will require infusions of digital expertise that we currently lack. For example, the National Science Foundation now requires researchers to have a digital data management plan in order to promote sharing of data and open notebook science. As digital humanities projects grow more and more important, the library needs to be able to provide support for using cultural materials and sharing them digitally. In the social sciences, quantitative literacy and the use of geospatial mapping of data is likely to grow in importance. The library must support these efforts but is not currently in a position to do so. That said, our track record for being partners with faculty in the classroom positions us well to work with faculty as the information environment evolves.