Western Libraries Strategic Plan

Vision: Integration as Key Partners in the Academic Enterprise

Western Libraries supports the University's strategic priorities – enhancing the student experience and the quality of undergraduate and graduate programs, expanding graduate enrollment, increasing research intensity and cross-disciplinary research initiatives, and taking a leadership role internationally in order to have a global impact – by providing value-added library and archival services that are relevant to a 21st century university. Western Libraries will implement strategies to achieve integration as a key partner in the academic enterprise, thereby providing appropriate and effective services to support the University's teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and administrative goals.   To achieve this integration Western Libraries will focus on strategic advocacy, strengthen physical and virtual infrastructure, expand collections, and develop staff. At a more fundamental level, it will define what it means to be an academic library and deliver relevant academic library and archives services in the 21st century. Western Libraries will then take the steps necessary to achieve the required transformation to become that 21st century academic library.

Achieving integration as a key partner in the academic enterprise represents recognition by members of the administrative and academic communities of Western Libraries' substantial and often unique contribution in fulfilling the mission of the University. Integration can manifest itself in many ways, formal and informal, with an example being formal recognition as an academic unit it its own right, rather than as a support unit.

As a key partner, Western Libraries will regularly collaborate with its primary user communities wherever they work. This may be in an administrative or faculty boardroom, the library, classroom, laboratory, office, or a training site, such as a hospital. Western Libraries' contributions will be appreciated by users when planning new or revising existing academic programs and courses, developing or updating curricula, studying, participating in group study/work in a library or elsewhere, accessing digital or physical information resources, seeking reference and research assistance (finding appropriate resources, managing research results, or making them accessible to others in the short or long term), or preserving the university's institutional memory.

At Western successful integration means that the "library" is seen as the primary steward of, or facilitator of access to, authoritative information resources and that "library services" in their various forms are seen by the community as valuable – and indeed essential – to achieving the goals of the University. It also means that Western Libraries staff are recognized for their foundational role in the teaching and research processes. They understand information and its structure, and can organize, mine and synthesize it effectively in support of all manner of academic activity, with particular emphasis on the research enterprise. Thus, through the process of integration Western Libraries staff will be increasingly called upon to work closely with administrators, faculty members and researchers. Given their understanding of how to use collections and services they will make important contributions and add value to educational and research outcomes.   As well, over time librarians and archivists will increasingly make direct academic contributions to the University in their own right.

Academic libraries and archives have been stewards of authoritative information and created knowledge throughout history. Over time the services associated with such stewardship have evolved in response to environmental, political, and technological changes. In the digital age the role is broadened to include providing new services, in such areas as open access and scholarly publication, supporting the research process with data curation services, identifying and

interpreting resources, and using said resources appropriately to foster and maintain academic excellence, including taking on a quality assurance role as trusted information providers.

This new relationship with the University involves provision of resources and services to support teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and effective administration, with the necessary collections and services made available to users in as seamless and customizable a manner as possible, regardless of their role(s) in the academic enterprise. The resources and services will be available at point of need, permitting users to complete their academic and administrative work most effectively and thereby contributing to the success of the University's mission.

The notion of seamless access and customizable service varies from user to user and is both content and context specific. It can mean barrier free access from one information resource to another, from an information resource to another application, from a resource to an associated help service, or accurate and satisfying research help without unnecessary referrals. If collaborating with other researchers or learners, it can mean sharing information (results, data, and knowledge) with partners on campus, or in provincial, national or global settings. It may also mean integrating library programs directly into the curriculum or customizing work environments by incorporating information resources into course management systems, social networking tools, mobile devices, etc. Seamless access requires that the required information is readily available through accurate access points, that associated services are similarly accessible, either physically or from the computer desk top/digital device, and that appropriate staff expertise is available as needed to enhance access and understanding.

To achieve this level of access, while recognizing the practical limitations on staffing, a new approach will be taken and new service models developed and implemented. Increased emphasis will be placed on self-service access wherever possible, complemented by tiered levels of personal (onsite or online) services, ranging from basic orientation to advanced research support.

Western Libraries is well positioned to deliver services and programs that are seamlessly integrated and customizable to support users' work. Western Libraries staff are recognized for high quality service and pride themselves on their customer centered approach to service delivery. Western Libraries also has the infrastructure required to provide services across campus and beyond, and so with appropriate additional investments it is well placed to support new pan-university, international and/or interdisciplinary initiatives, as well as online learning.

Implementing the Plan

Libraries exist to preserve and make available their rich collections, thereby engaging the academic community in intellectual activity and inquiry. Western Libraries' collections are foundational; awareness of and access to them must be a priority. Beyond simply amassing and making available collections, appropriate physical and virtual work environments must be provided, along with relevant information services that meet the needs of the 21st century university.

The various elements of Western Libraries' infrastructure collectively enable its strategic initiatives, as they facilitate delivery of the services that support the University's mission. Western Libraries' human resources, organizational structure, and financial foundation must be aligned with its key priorities and support its collections, facilities, and services.

Without knowledgeable, professional and committed staff Western Libraries cannot achieve its goals. Its intellectual capital is the sum of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of its staff, all of whom play a direct or indirect role in providing knowledge-based services. How Western Libraries

is organized to achieve its goals has a direct impact on its relevance and success, so its organizational structure needs to be dynamic and flexible.

Ultimately the budget is the key strategic resource. It is also a symbolic and very tangible indicator of relevance. Western Libraries requires sufficient resources to accomplish all that is expected by the members of the University community. The Libraries' acquisitions, operating and capital budgets must align with local priorities and those of the University and be managed effectively, with new funding sources actively sought through appropriate development activities.

Western Libraries will raise its profile within the University community in order to achieve its desired goal of integration as a key partner in the academic enterprise by undertaking targeted advocacy initiatives to ensure that the community understands the unique ways Western Libraries contributes to the strategic mission of the University and by fostering effective two way communication and mutual understanding with administrators and faculty members. Western Libraries will also seek partnering opportunities and make connections formally with each Faculty, and informally with individual faculty members and key members of the administration, in part to gain more understanding about its user communities and how they engage in their administrative, academic and intellectual activities. Valid user input, balanced with internal professional knowledge and experience, will enable Western Libraries to identify user needs and design and delivery appropriate services.

Western Libraries will enhance the quality of its physical and virtual infrastructure by improving physical library space so that it meets user expectations for research and study, expanding the digital library resources and establishing the virtual library (encompassing the website, catalogue, chat services, etc.) as a fully supported service point, and further developing other system-wide service delivery practices that meet the needs of the modern university.

Western Libraries will enhance and expand access to collections in support of and response to the needs of users, ensuring that unique research resources are preserved by establishing appropriate digitization, preservation and data curation programs, and improving the quality of access to the contents of the library by ensuring that the various pathways to information resources accurately reflect its holdings.

Western Libraries will enhance its support for staff by re-emphasizing the importance of staff development to refresh or learn new skills relating to technology and customer service, responding to needs identified across Western Libraries, and ensuring that formal reporting structures and informal committee and team/working groups are logical and relevant and support not only the ultimate vision but also specific priorities, goals and objectives.

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