January 05, 2016

Senate Committee on University Planning
Western University

RE: Annual Report to Senate 14/15 and 15/16

It is my pleasure to submit my first annual report to Western University's Senate. I have been asked to report on the activities of Western Libraries for 2014/15 and to provide an update for 2015/16.

The key organizational initiatives for this time period have been: the development of a strategic plan; the completion of a workforce analysis and planning initiative; facilities enhancements and the initiation of a Western Libraries Master Space Plan project; and, an acquisitions cost reductions and serials review process in direct response to the declining value of the Canadian dollar.

Each academic year Western Libraries’ librarians, archivists and staff make valuable contributions to the University’s teaching, learning and research mandates and provide excellent service. This report will highlight key initiatives, activities, and select accomplishments for 2014/15 and 2015/16.


The new strategic plan was completed in the summer of 2015. It was the result of a highly consultative process -- FLIP: Future Library in Progress -- that was spearheaded by a Western Libraries Steering Committee. The resulting Strategies of Excellence now provide a road map to guide our planning and the development and delivery of our services. They are:

- Manage world-class print and digital collections and resources
- Advance 21st century literacies
- Partner in and support research to advance research excellence
- Champion open access and transform scholarly communication
- Cultivate purposeful partnerships on campus and beyond
- Provide user-centred spaces and technologies
- Actively engage with our communities
- Deliver service excellence to library users and the University

**Workforce Analysis and Planning Initiative**

The Workforce Analysis and Planning Initiative project was designed to follow the completion of the strategic plan. The project team’s charge was to conduct an analysis and to make recommendations regarding the alignment of our librarians, archivists and staff with the University’s academic and strategic priorities. The final project report (just completed and soon to be released to our staff) provides background and context for the analysis, outlines benchmarking
and research findings, presents the results of a technology survey, and presents alternate models of service delivery. It outlines Western Libraries’ core and foundational functions, core competencies, and current and potential future structures and service models. It also presents recommendations on how to create and reflect the current and evolving environment in which Western Libraries must work in and thrive.

The project team identified four core user functions that focus on the needs of Western’s students, instructors and researchers, as well as, six foundational functions. The core user functions are: research services; content management, discovery and access services; teaching and learning services; and user experience and community engagement. The foundational functions are: financial management, information technology, human resources, training and development, communications, facilities management, and quality assessment and improvement.

Facilities Improvements and Western Libraries Master Space Plan

Western Libraries undertook numerous renovation and facility projects of varying size and complexity in order to improve physical learning spaces and the overall student experience. Particular focus was on the first phase of the Taylor Library main floor renovations, which created inviting, inspiring and collaborative learning and research spaces to meet the needs expressed by our user community. This phase of the main floor renovation incorporated a new Infodesk, new self-service options, six collaborative learning rooms with various technologies, small group seating in the window area, and a portico area with new casual seating.

Western Libraries will be working with Institutional Planning & Budgeting and Facilities Management to undertake the Western Libraries Master Space Plan (WLMSP) project. The goal is to set out a space plan that will enhance the student and research experience by creating an inspiring and dynamic technology-enabled library environment that will foster learning, knowledge creation and scholarly communication within individual, collaborative and community spaces. We are preparing to launch the project charter and a RFP to engage an architect or design firm early in 2016. This project will extend into 2016-17 and involve campus and library wide consultation. The WLMSP will incorporate existing, ongoing, and envisioned space and facilities enhancements and explorations.

Acquisitions Cost Reduction Strategy

The drastic decline in the value of the Canadian dollar coupled with publisher price increases significantly reduces Western Libraries’ purchasing power and requires ongoing cost reductions to our acquisitions and serials subscriptions. A short term cost reduction strategy has been implemented for 2015-16 to reduce a projected deficit and a near term strategy is in place to manage expenditures through 16/17. For more information please see the recent Western Libraries news release. Western Libraries will address acquisitions cost reductions through an acquisitions and serials review and cancellation process. To minimize the impact on research, teaching and learning subject Librarians will consult with their faculty and share lists of resources under consideration for cancellation along with supporting evidence.
Teaching and Learning

Western Libraries’ contributions to teaching and learning and to student success are many and varied. Our libraries contribute to the student experience by providing teaching and learning spaces, collaborative and independent study environments, scholarly resources and information technologies, and research help services. Librarians and Archivists provide instruction in information literacy and research skills in support of our academic and research programs. 418 instruction sessions and workshops were provided in 2014/15 reaching over 10,000 participants. They also develop and integrate e-learning strategies for information literacy and create online learning modules and research guides. A new platform for the delivery of 346 online research guides (designed for courses, subjects and topics and for integration into OWL) has seen 200,000 visits in the last six months alone. There were over 2 million visits to our physical libraries in 2014/15 and virtually the same number of visits to our website. 5000 chat-based research help queries were answered and 12,000 in person research help questions were received across our locations.

I’d like to highlight one particular open education and e-learning initiative of note. Western Libraries collaborated with the Faculty of Education in the development of the Student2Scholar: Academic Literacies and Research Skills for Social Sciences Graduate Students learning modules project. This inter-institutional collaborative project also included partners at the University of Toronto and Queen’s University. The project was funded through the Ontario Online Initiative (e-Campus) funds. The nine learning modules aim to build core competencies in academic literacy and research skills for graduate students and an instructor guide provides strategies for integrating the modules in curricula. S2S is openly available for use, to share, and to adapt under a Creative Commons license.

In 2015/16 the Copyright Office was established within Western Libraries to promote copyright literacy on campus and an understanding of copyright legislation, fair dealing and the appropriate use of copyrighted materials in education, research, personal study, and publication. More information can be found at Copyright@Western.

Research

Western Libraries is contributing to the advancement of research excellence at Western by fostering new modes of scholarly communication; through the stewardship of research collections; through statistical and geo-spatial data services and collections; and with the provision of research skills workshops and research consultations including literature searches and systematic reviews, research data management, and research metrics analysis. Our Librarians and Archivists conducted 987 advanced research consultations over 2014/15, 35% for graduate students, 10% for faculty and researchers, and the balance for undergraduate students. They also provided 193 workshops and instructions sessions developed for graduate students, post-docs and faculty.

Scholarship@Western, our institutional repository, provides for the dissemination and discovery of Western’s scholarly output including online journals, scholarly papers, and electronic theses and dissertations. As an open access repository, Scholarship@Western is also an avenue for compliance with the new open access policies of research funding agencies. To date the 13,708 items in the repository have been downloaded a total of 2,690,869 times by scholars around the globe. Since May 2014, 2250 items have been added to the repository.
Usage of our digital research collections and electronic scholarly resources in 2014/15 continued at a high-level with 4.2M online article downloads, 1.6M uses of e-books (an 88% increase over last year), and 20M database searches. In 2014/15 Western Libraries’ collections were enhanced to support academic programs and research areas with the addition of over 156,000 new titles. 227,000 print items circulated in 2014/15 and over 18,000 interlibrary loans requests were filled to meet scholars’ needs. As previously mentioned, due to the low value of the Canadian dollar, new acquisitions for 2015/16 and 2016/17 will be relatively limited and serials subscriptions will be reduced in order to work within budget parameters.

Please accept this report on the academic and scholarly activities and service developments of Western Libraries. The key organizational priorities outlined above will continue through the balance of 2015/16 and into 2016/17, indeed through the balance of the four-year planning cycle. We will continue to work on the implementation of Western Libraries 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, consider the Workforce Analysis and Planning Initiative recommendations and report and its implications for how we can best align our organization to serve Western’s students, researchers, and instructors, complete the Western Libraries Master Space Plan, and conduct the acquisitions and serials review and cost reductions process. Our librarians, archivists, and staff will continue their contributions to teaching, learning and research through their instruction, the creation of online resources and learning objects, the development and management of research collections, and the provision of research services and consultations.

Respectfully submitted by,

Catherine Steeves
Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian