



Western  Libraries

Annual Report | 2018/19

A Message from Catherine

The Western Libraries 2018/19 annual report celebrates the great work of our dedicated staff and our contribution to the University's academic and research mission. Initiatives and individuals are highlighted in a way that we hope brings to life the positive impact of this work for campus researchers, teachers, and students, as well as the community outside of Western's gates.

The pages that follow contain just some of the stories we have written together this past year. Some feature new partnerships such as our work capturing data for the Northern Tornadoes Project, while others showcase how we are evolving longstanding relationships, such as with the Writing Support Centre, as we collaborate to teach incoming students information literacy skills. Curated tales of scholarship and heritage have been told through exhibitions of materials from Western's special collections and archives. The results of our LibQual+ survey tell a story authored by you, the campus community, about how we can serve you better, in person and online. We also share strategies to enhance our critical research collections, space planning, and our ongoing work and leadership to support transformations in scholarly publishing and faculty transition to open access scholarship.

Looking to this academic year, we are building on these initiatives and continue to develop programs and provide services to support student success and research excellence. We are migrating to a new shared library services platform as a part of



. We are also pleased to support and participate in the Provost's Task Force on Open Access and Scholarly Communication. And, we have been working with our partners in Facilities Management and architects Perkins+Will/Cornerstone on the Weldon Library Revitalization project to create a space of inspiration and imagination. These initiatives will be key stories in next year's report. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this look back on our accomplishments in 2018/19.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Catherine Steeves".

Catherine Steeves
Vice-Provost & Chief Librarian

Contents

Contributors

Articles written by, or adapted from, Alison Wetheral, Amelia Harkins, Cheryl Woods, Jennifer Robinson, Julie Kiser, Kristin Hoffmann, Michelle Arnett, Peggy Ellis, Roger Chabot, Roxanne Isard, Sophia Belyk, and Tom Belton. Editing by Jennifer Robinson and Julie Kiser. Photographs by Paul Mayne, Rayanne Tipert, and Tom Cochrane. Design by Ryan Cort.

Database Helps Put Canadian Tornadoes on the Map

No longer will important information about severe storms across the country – information that could save countless lives – be simply gone with the wind.

While approximately 60 tornadoes are confirmed in Canada each year, the actual number is closer to 230. Collecting data from these events will help researchers understand their frequency and severity, as well as their connection to global climate change.

Capturing that information is the inspiration behind the [Canadian Tornado Database](#), launched by Western Libraries in June.

Open to the public, the online database catalogues high-resolution aerial surveys, satellite imagery, drone surveys and on-the-ground observations of Canadian tornadoes in real time. Researchers in the field can use the data collection form and guide for ground surveys to share live updates.



“Not only will the ground survey app save the research team hours, it’ll allow them to more easily classify the event onsite,” said Elizabeth Sutherland, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialist and site creator. “Instead of using paper and pen, they’ll be using tablets and phones to enter data directly into a database which instantly feeds into maps, graphs and statistics.”

The first of its kind, the site is a pivotal milestone for the [Canadian Tornado Database](#), a partnership between Western University, ImpactWx and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC).

“It took a lot of emailing, calling, and meeting with different people. Open data sites are common in municipalities, but I wasn’t able to find any other universities with a site like this and using this type of GIS software,” Sutherland said. “Instead, I



had to generate a vision for what it would look like based on feedback from the project stakeholders.”

The site includes damage and aerial surveys conducted in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. These surveys have helped ECCC refine their ratings systems for wind events.

“Having all the data open and available in one location means there’s going to be all sorts of opportunities for collaboration. And that’s what I think is really going to set this project apart. It’s not just one group of engineers working on it, it’s researchers across North America,” said Sutherland.



Some recent, major storms surveyed through the Northern Tornado Project are the 2017 Alonsa Manitoba EF-4 tornado, the largest tornado in North America that year, and the 2018 Ottawa area tornadoes which caused over \$200 million dollars in damage.

Western Libraries is a key partner in the Northern Tornadoes Project, said Engineering professor Greg Kopp, the new ImpactWX Chair in Severe Storms Engineering.

“They are an important participant in our research because so much of it is going to be looking

through archived data – and you can’t do that without the libraries helping us manage all that,” Kopp said. “It’s kind of cool.”

Sutherland hopes the site can serve as a model for how to bring data to life and that other researchers on campus will take advantage of Western Libraries’ GIS services.



Meet Liz Sutherland, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialist. Liz works with academic researchers from across campus and beyond to map everything from Tornadoes to Loyalist migrations. She also maintains our geospatial datasets and delivers workshops to students, faculty, and local community groups. Liz is well known in Ontario’s GIS community for her efforts to make spatial knowledge common knowledge. She believes a well-made map can help communicate complex research topics.

Liz has a lifelong love of mapping and sees GIS and geography as a common language that strengthens research and decision-making across disciplines. This September, she traveled to Scotland as part of the _____ and connected with partner universities to share Western’s GIS initiatives and hear about their projects.





software and support from Western Libraries made it easy. It's a big deal for students to be able to publish their work, and having it available online means they can share it more widely," said Marisa Coulton, former editor-in-chief.

The open access movement also seeks to contain journal subscription costs for libraries, so they can invest more in open infrastructure. To this end, Western Libraries, in an effort to be more transparent about our journal prices, made these costs publicly available on our website.

All of this work has laid a solid foundation for Western Libraries to support and guide the activities of the recently created

The Task Force is an exciting

opportunity to further extend our conversations about open access with campus partners and lay the groundwork for a Western University commitment to the advancement of open access and sustainable scholarly communication and publishing models.

collaborates with researchers across campus to advance the creation, management, dissemination, and preservation of research and scholarship. They assist with open access publishing, GIS and statistical data, data management, researcher identifiers, research impact, and copyright.



P.E.I. Goes M.I.A.

Prince Edward Island is not on the map! *Missing the Island*, according to guest curator and Western History Professor, Alan MacEachern, was “a light-hearted look at a small selection of maps and graphics that omitted P.E.I.”

The exhibit, viewed by nearly 20,000 people at the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in Charlottetown, featured items loaned by Western Libraries’ Archives and Special Collections. Eight items were loaned – seven maps, dated between 1550 to 1832, from the holdings of the Serge A. Sauer Map Collection, and *Les Voyages du Sieur de Champlain*, a book published in Paris in 1613 from the James Alexander and Ellen Rea Benson Special Collections.

The exhibit highlighted how some mapmakers over the past five centuries left P.E.I. off of their maps. MacEachern discovered the omission leaving through a book from the 1940s about a woman who rode across Canada on horseback, and noticed P.E.I. was not included on the map of Canada on the cover.

“The exhibit was played tongue-in-cheek, but it gave visitors a crash course on the history of cartography and reminded them that maps are never exact replications of reality, but rather representations that necessarily involve simplification – and sometimes human error or even deceit,” said MacEachern.

MacEachern was interviewed about the exhibit on CBC television and radio, and in local newspapers. In a blog on early Canadian history, he published a post about the exhibit, stating, “in particular the original map from Samuel de Champlain’s 1613 *Voyages*, which received pride of place – was critical to the exhibit’s success.”

Western Libraries’ contribution to the exhibit is one successful outcome of our recent reorganization that brought archivists and special collections librarians together under one team. “This loan marked one of the first times the collections and staff meshed together,” said Tom Belton, Head of Archives and Special Collections. “Integrating the knowledge and skills of librarians with those of archivists helps us highlight resources across our collections in a thematic way.”



⌘ A map of Eastern Canada, 1673.

Belton hopes this is the start of many similar collaborations that highlight the vast array of materials in Western Libraries’ collections and demonstrate Archives and Special Collections’s contributions to teaching and outreach at Western and beyond.

The
acquires, preserves and provides access to
special collections and archives, including rare
and unique materials in all formats, to support the
teaching and research missions of the University.
They also engage with and welcome use of the
archives and special collections by members of
the broader community.



The Donation that Shaped Western Libraries

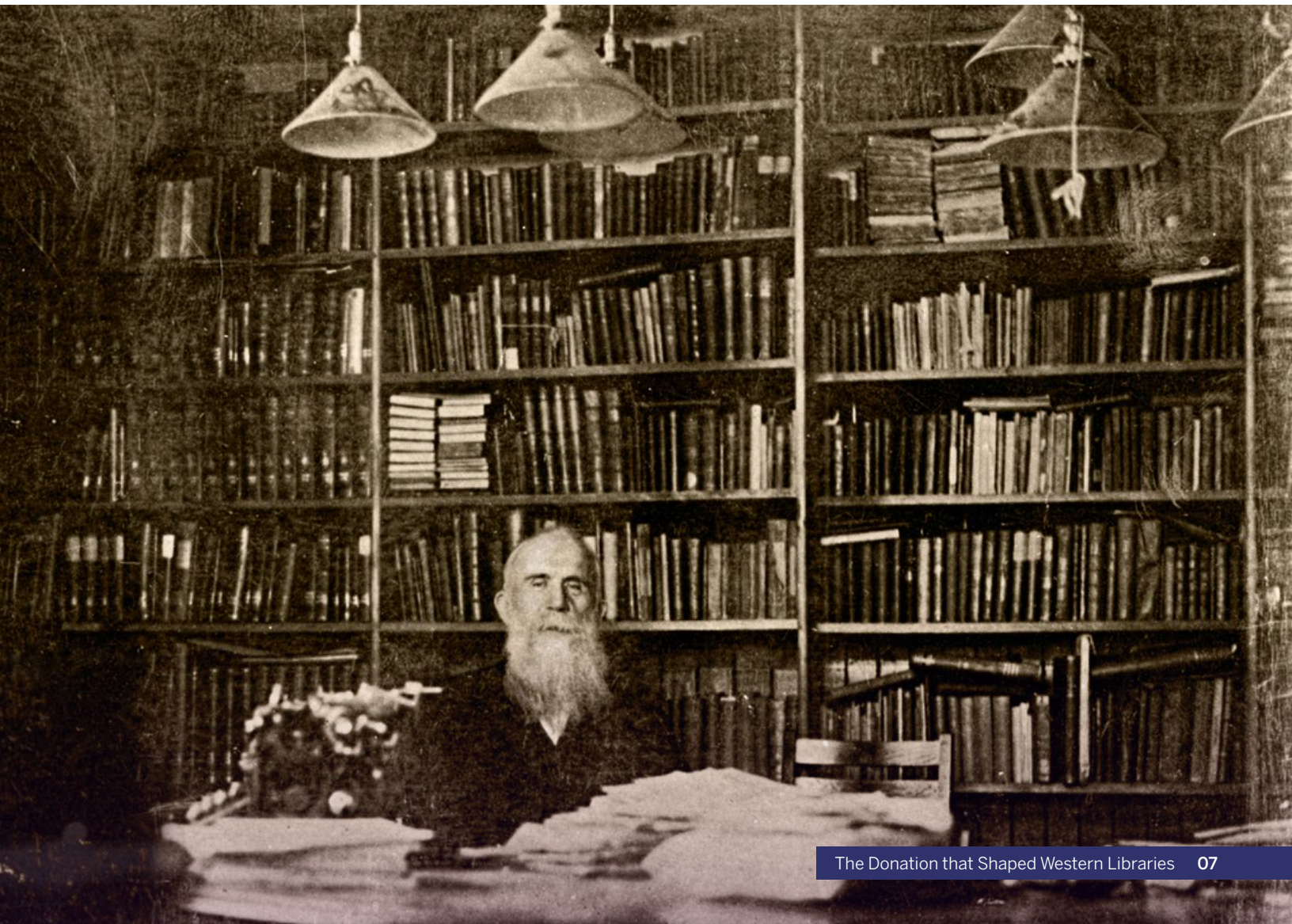
In 1918, John Davis Barnett donated 40,000 books and other items to Western, transforming our 3,000 volume collection into a true academic library. In 2018, Western Libraries celebrated the 100th anniversary of his extraordinary gift and commemorated Barnett's life and vision.

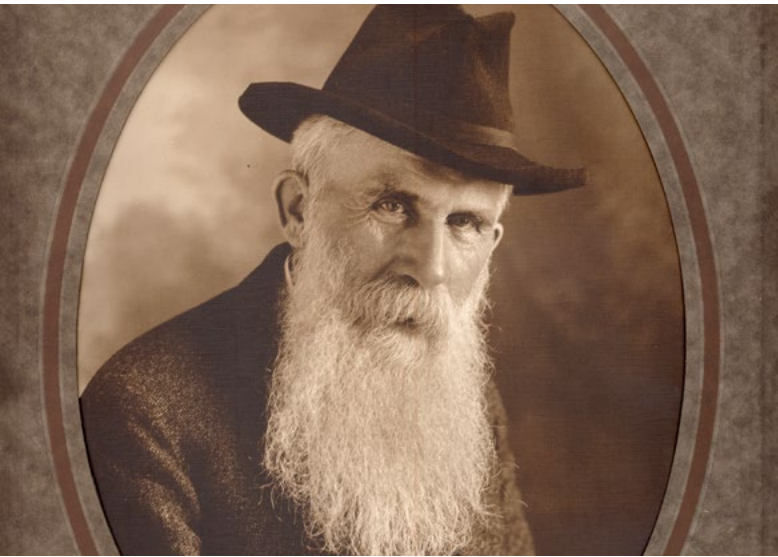
Barnett, an engineer with the Grand Trunk Railroad, travelled across eastern North America collecting a surprisingly wide range of books, from

Shakespeare to astronomy to regional history. He lived in a small house in Stratford, Ontario that was so full of books he joked the "books held up the house."

In 1918, he became concerned about the future of his collection. An early will had left all the books to McGill University with the proviso that if McGill did not accept the collection, it be given to the Dominion Government. He changed his mind that

✧ John Davis Barnett, founder of Western Libraries, in his personal library.





summer and travelled from Stratford to London to discuss the matter with Fred Landon, librarian at the London Public Library. Included in that discussion was C.R. Somerville, Chairman of the Board of Governors of Western University. "As the

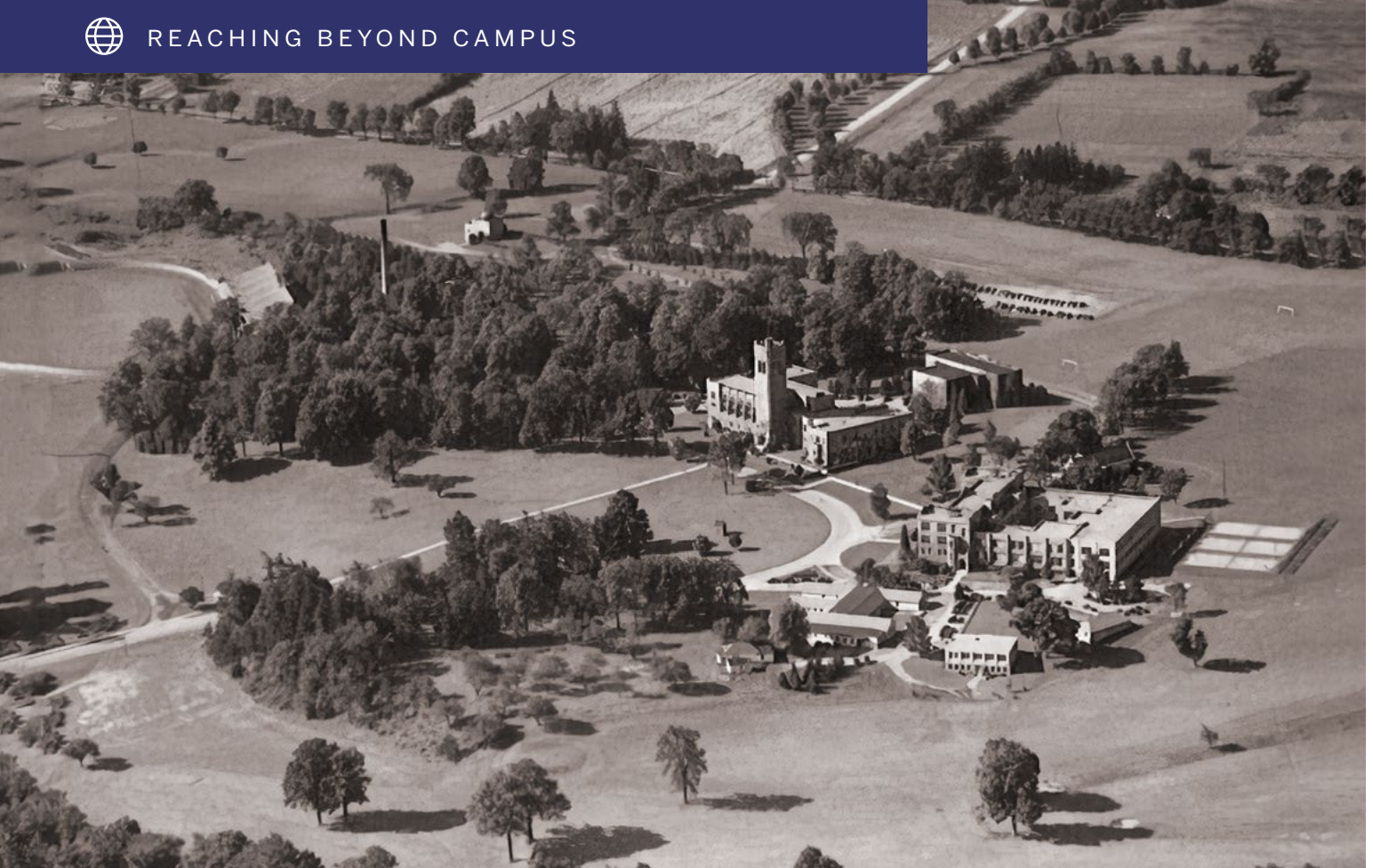
collection had swelled he had hoped that it might become the nucleus of a national library but in the end the persuasive voice and smile of Mr. Landon had brought the collection to London," Somerville said. His only condition in giving his personal collection of 40,000 books was that it be available to "any earnest seeker of knowledge."

To honour that century-old pledge and build on his visionary gift, we launched the

. The initiative aims to share knowledge with anyone, anywhere, by digitizing important elements of our unique collection. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we raised enough funds to purchase a high-resolution rare book scanner that allows us to digitize and make available our most valuable resources and extend the reach of our collection further than Barnett could have ever imagined.

Meet Deb Meert-Williston, Special Collections Librarian. Working as a part of the Archives and Special Collections team, Deb is responsible for rare books, and other special collections. She teaches about the collections, researches the materials, acquires new volumes, and manages donation processes. In the past year, Deb acquired several new additions for the collections, and oversaw exhibits, events, and other projects. She also played a central role in selecting unique manuscripts from the John Davis Barnett collection for digitization . "What I love most about this work, is sharing these amazing collections with others, especially students, and the element of discovery that happens every single day," said Deb.





⌘ Western University, 1951.

A Bird's Eye View of Western's History

Have you ever wondered how Western has changed over the years? Western Libraries' Archives and Special Collections (ASC) recently acquired a treasure trove of high-quality images of London and Southwestern Ontario, including Western's campus. The Ron Nelson Photography Limited fonds consists of approximately 50,000 photographs, many taken from the air, which graphically document the commercial, residential, and industrial development of the region.

Nelson's daughter, Martha, says her family is delighted to make ASC the permanent home for her father's photography collection. "We have worked closely with the ASC staff since

November 2017 and have been impressed with their knowledge, experience and the Archives' cold storage facilities which are so critical to preserving old film. Our father's 60-year career in photography was a real labour of love and we are thrilled that ASC are now conserving this collection for the greater benefit of the London community," Martha said.

ASC anticipates urban and local historians, geographers, as well as planning consultants, among others, will make regular use of a collection that graphically documents mid- and late-20th century development in the London region. In addition to its significant research

potential, the Nelson studio photographs could be used to support teaching in areas such as public history, visual arts, and urban geography, to name just a few.

The collection is already being used to support research by the Elgin Museum of London. Curator Mike Baker has been delving into the extensive archive while researching two subjects: Sparton of Canada, a London-based record manufacturing company, and the World War II British Commonwealth Air Training Plan schools at Crumlin (now London Airport). “In both cases I found invaluable images of people going about their everyday jobs. The air school material from Crumlin even includes a one-hour film in colour documenting the operations at the school shot during the war,” said Baker. “The Nelson collection is a detailed record of post-war life in

southwestern Ontario and will prove a valuable resource in the years ahead.”

Western Libraries is proud to help conserve a piece of London’s history and to help advance research in these areas.

acquires unique archival records, including graphic materials, to document the history of Western and the London region. The team is actively engaged with individuals and organizations to promote research using these one-of-a-kind documents.

✧ Masonville Place Mall, 1985.



History at Your Fingertips

Take a trip back in time with the click of a button thanks to our [Maclean's, Time, Life, and Atlantic Monthly](#) featuring North America's most influential newsmagazines of the past 150 years: Maclean's, Time, Life, and Atlantic Monthly.

The magazine archives are a wellspring of information with high-quality digital reproduction and iconic photographs. The articles capture Canadian and American society in the 19th and 20th centuries, with content ranging from social issues, popular culture, economics, and politics. The archive also offers a fascinating glimpse into evolving media biases and the depiction of women in articles and ads.

"It's an endless source of information and learning, in many different contexts. Even just browsing the covers can lead you down all kinds of interesting side trails. It allows us to see our times,

and the times that have gone before, and situate ourselves in a bigger picture," said Liz Mantz, Collections and Content Strategies Librarian.

In the past, researchers and students had to scour hard copies, microfilm, or microfiche in the hopes of finding information. And even if they were lucky enough to find it, the reproduction quality could render it unreadable. Now researchers can easily search by photos, bylines, subjects, dates, keywords, and even advertisements, and find articles in perfect condition in seconds.

The digital magazine archive is also available publicly to all London residents through the London Public Library catalogue. David McCord, Coordinator, Collections Management at London Public Library spoke with Western News about the shared access. "This collection is a goldmine of content," he said. "It's a great complement to



the digital collections we have on offer for London Public Library users.”

The acquisition was expertly negotiated by our Collections and Content Strategies team and reflects our new collections strategy: continual access without the continual fees. “Initially, we were interested in Maclean’s, but because Time and Life are also in high-demand, we negotiated a bundled deal with the publisher, EBSCO, to purchase much of the archives outright, without any hosting fees,” said Mantz. “We’re also getting creative with the extra value we can get from publishers whether it be added features, doing away with non-disclosure clauses, or expanding access beyond campus.”

Digital access to these materials also means we can house the hard-copy periodicals offsite and free up space for the upcoming renovation to The D.B. Weldon Library .

is committed to providing seamless and convenient access to information to support research, scholarship, and teaching. They work with users to select and acquire materials to meet their changing needs and ensure thoughtful management and preservation of resources for future scholars.

Meet Liz Mantz, Collections and Content Strategies (CCS) Librarian. Liz is responsible for building the high-quality research collections used by Western faculty, students, and researchers. With over 30 years’ experience developing collections, including time spent working closely with the Department of History, Liz has been on the front line of evolutions to collecting practices.

Most recently, Liz and her CCS colleagues have been experimenting with evidence-based collection building, introducing new formats such as streaming video, and collaborations with partners at other university libraries across Ontario.

Liz loves the growth and engagement that goes along with her role. “I always feel like I’m learning something new, every day,” she said. This fall, Liz will benefit from the collection she helped build as she begins her Masters of Arts in History at Western.





Adventures in Experiential Learning



Amelia Harkins – Archives and Special Collections (ASC) co-op student

I'll never forget what University Archivist Robin Keirstead told me on the first day of my co-op: 'your learning is more important than helping us complete work.' And true to his word, my projects were assigned based on their educational impact. For example, I honed my communication and public speaking skills when I led a staff focus group to help improve a digitization service.

I gained experience in community outreach when I created an exhibit for the . I learned how to arrange and describe collections to improve access to archival materials. I also conducted tours of the ASC Reading Room, created a research guide, contributed to the ASC and Western Libraries social media accounts, and monitored the online reference service.



Michelle Arnett – Content Management, Discovery, and Access co-op student

During my co-op I was responsible for the First Nations Studies Library Transfer Project which involved incorporating materials previously housed in the First Nations Studies Library, into the Western Libraries collection. It was an invaluable experience which involved cataloguing, project management, and social media outreach. Not only did I gain competitive practical skills that will be a source of confidence moving into my future profession, I also had the great fortune of working with an inspiring team who have influenced how I think about librarianship and the inherent value and responsibility of information professions. My co-op has been the highlight of my graduate program – on both a professional and personal level, I gained so much from this experience!



“ Sophia Belyk – graphic design intern

I couldn't have asked for a more enriching learning experience than my graphic design internship with Western Libraries! My tasks included creating posts for social media as well as providing both print and web graphics for various other departments within Western Libraries.

There was a great variety of work and a wonderful team of people supporting me and pushing me towards new learning opportunities. I gained new experience with video, photography, and motion graphics, and I was also able to fine-tune my leadership skills by taking the lead on a number of social media projects.

The impact of this internship will stretch well beyond this summer. I've greatly improved my skills with new types of design. More importantly, by making me feel like a valuable addition to the team, I have emerged from this internship more confident in myself and the value of my ideas.

Western Libraries understands the importance of experiential learning and we are committed to providing meaningful opportunities for students to develop their skills and strengthen their employability. We are grateful for the fresh ideas and modern skills our students bring to the table and for the many meaningful contributions they make to our organization.





⌘ Incoming students working through puzzles at an information literacy workshop.

Solving the Puzzle of Information Literacy

It is a breezy, quiet summer day on campus. Many students are enjoying the last few weeks of summer vacation. An enthusiastic group of 147 incoming students, however, are gathered in a classroom, huddled around laptops, taking part in the library's escape room research workshop. It is all thanks to a partnership between the Writing Support Centre and Western Libraries.

Beginning in 2007, the collaboration grew out of a request from students to learn about library

resources and build research skills before they start their first university assignments. Librarians have adapted the sessions over time to meet the evolving information landscape and student learning preferences.

This year's escape room approach was the most exciting yet. Teams worked together, in a race against time, to locate a professor's map of migration patterns of polar bears. They answered questions and puzzles, working through portions



work. It also contrasts nicely with some of the more passive activities in our program.”

The Teaching and Learning team taught over 240 classes, reaching over 9,500 students this past year. The team plans to adapt the escape room workshop concept to first-year foundational courses, adjusting the topic to reflect the particular needs of other programs. This contemporary, team-based approach is a creative and engaging way to accomplish our goal of setting students up with life-long critical research skills.

of the research process, in an effort to break the professor’s safe code containing the map. All this to help save the Canadian Arctic. The session engaged the students in fun activities and at the same time demonstrated that research, more often than not, is a messy process.

Yvonne Fuller, coordinator for the Summer Academic Writing Clinic, and her staff are thrilled about the new approach. “It’s a lot more interactive and social. The students have to get up, work together and really put their brains to

creates
learning experiences that empower students
to become successful graduates who are
information literate and able to achieve their
full potential as global citizens and leaders.

Meet Dan Sich, Teaching and Learning Librarian. Dan ensures Western Libraries’ e-learning content is up-to-date, effective, accessible, and re-usable. He also helps colleagues provide effective online information literacy instruction.

Dan enjoys the creative side of his work, including recording voice-overs for videos and learning to use new software. He is currently working with Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) librarians and copyright specialists to create open, accessible, bilingual, legally accurate, online copyright instruction (i.e. videos and quizzes) for Canadian university faculty and staff.





Survey Says: Time for an Update

Brutalism. The prominent architectural style of many Canadian university campuses throughout the 1970s, the decade Western's now infamous D.B. Weldon Library appeared on the Western Road skyline. Students today still refer to the building as "brutal", but not because they marvel at its sleek, monolithic concrete lines; at least, not according to the results of our most recent campus-wide survey, LibQual.

LibQual 2019 represents the sixth time the Association of College and Research Libraries' standardized survey has been conducted here at Western. The survey is one tool that helps us measure our users' satisfaction with the services, resources, and spaces we provide to the Western community.

Through the survey, we learned Western Libraries excels in many areas. Our staff exceed users' expectations in the help and support they provide to students, faculty, and researchers. Overall, our resources and collections support the research needs of our campus community, with room to grow in a few identified subject areas. But, according to 75 per cent of the comments we received, there is one area we need to address: library spaces. With a higher than ever response rate, the increase in comments about space is an obvious difference from past surveys, and it is one we need to pay attention to.

Learning spaces are always at a premium, especially during midterm and exam seasons. So it is no surprise 83 per cent of respondents want more space, and highlight overcrowding

≈ The first floor of The D.B. Weldon Library.



and availability as one of their biggest concerns. Over half of the comments about space focus on Weldon, many of which discuss the aesthetics of the brutalist building and how it affects students' ability to learn. The absence of natural light, the lack of quiet space, and limited seating, are things we will strive to address in the upcoming Weldon Revitalization Project . In the meantime, our new User Experience team will look for other ways to address the feedback and improve the learning experience at Weldon. Flexible study spaces during peak periods, learning zone reconfigurations, and possible seat-finding solutions are all initiatives we will explore during this academic year.

Weldon is not the only space mentioned in the survey. We received valuable feedback about the Music Library, which sparked a space renewal project over the summer months. In September, music students and faculty returned to more learning space achieved through a reorganization of collections. The recently completed multi-year

renovation to Allyn & Betty Taylor Library's main floor also did not go unnoticed by library users who expressed the meeting rooms, conversation-friendly areas, silent study zones, and overall ambience provide them with the space they need to do their best work.

While we cannot rid Weldon of its brutalist characteristics (and there are many who would not want us to!), we can certainly do our very best to transform all of our spaces to inspire generations of students, faculty, and researchers to come.

The supports evidence-based decisions about the library, keeping user perspectives and observed behaviours at the forefront when it comes to the design and development of library spaces and services.





At Your Service

It used to be the only way to *use* the library meant actually going *to* the library. Thanks to technological advances, those days are long gone. Still, our six locations welcomed over two million visitors last year; these visitors arrive with changing information needs and expectations, and Western Libraries aims to deliver. This requires working with our users to identify and introduce contemporary services, and developing library staff to work in an interdisciplinary information environment that transcends physical library locations.

This is where staff like Adam Kidy come in. When you visit Western Libraries, Adam is one of the

friendly faces who greets you at the service desk. He can help you with your research, show you how to print, or direct you to someplace quiet to study. Feel more like helping yourself? Adam can also introduce you to flexible and convenient self-service options, such as self check-out and online renewals.

You can find Adam ready to help in both the Weldon Library and the Business Library. This gives him the opportunity to broaden his skills, and helps ensure you have a consistent experience across our locations. You also interact with Adam, and staff like him, when you use popular online library services such as course

✧ Library assistant Adam Kidy helping a student at the service desk.





readings or chat. Both in person and online, the team strives to connect our students and faculty with the information they need to be successful.

What does Adam think about this? “One-on-one service gives me great satisfaction. I get immediate feedback and can tell I’m making a difference.” It is thanks to staff like Adam that Western Libraries answered over 13,000 reference questions last year, provided students with over 9,000 electronic course readings, signed out over 200,000 books, and received a satisfaction rating of 80 per cent in our recent user survey .

designs and delivers a suite of virtual and in-person library services that support the teaching, learning, and research goals of the Western community. The team continually studies and assesses user behaviours, needs and interactions to design services that deliver an optimal user experience.

Connections and Community



GIS Day

In November, we hosted Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Day in The D.B. Weldon Libraries' Map and Data Centre. The event was a big success with over 100 attendees, including graduate, undergraduate, and high school students, faculty, and community members. Highlights were a digital sandbox from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, the virtual reality demonstrations from the City of London, and the drone technology on display from our partners in Engineering, Anthropology, and Geography.



The History and Future of the Book

In October, we hosted an academic panel to explore the history of the book and the future of literacy. The discussion was moderated by Catherine Steeves, Vice-Provost & Chief Librarian and the panelists were Scott Schofield, an English and Cultural Studies professor at Huron University College and Mike Ridley, Librarian at the University of Guelph.



A Reading and Interview with Cherie Dimaline

In November, we had the privilege of hosting Cherie Dimaline, Metis author, Western Writer in Residence, and winner of a Governor General Award and Kirkus Prize. Dimaline read excerpts from her dystopian novel *The Marrow Thieves* in a packed atrium in The D. B. Weldon Library, then engaged in conversation with Creative Writing student, Dave Monture, and answered audience questions.



Exhibitions

Archives and Special Collections (ASC) curated and installed several timely and interesting public exhibits in the John A. Schweitzer Gallery during 2018-2019.

In the summer of 2018, staff in ASC and Dr. Scott Schofield of Huron University College curated an exhibit celebrating the 100th anniversary of J.D. Barnett's transformational donation of 40,000 volumes to Western Libraries in 1918. This exhibit featured dozens of rare books, many with international significance

In the fall of 2018, ASC launched an exhibit on the Wawanosh Family papers. The display was timed to coincide with Indigenous Awareness Week in November.

In the winter of 2019, Western students assisted with the installation of an exhibit celebrating 100 years of nursing education at Western.

ASC also contributed display material, including photographs and rare books, to off-site events such as London Words Festival, the London Heritage Fair, Western's Founder's Day, and the 60th anniversary celebration of Fanshawe Pioneer Village.



Planning for the Future

It is early March and the weather outside, dark, damp and dreary, is in stark contrast to the bustle of activity in the Allyn & Betty Taylor Library instruction room. Colourful construction paper, pipe cleaners and yarn spill across a table beside a 3D foam rendition of a familiar floor plan – the main floor and mezzanine of The D.B. Weldon Library. At five stations arranged around the room, small groups of students, faculty, and staff from across Western take in their 3D model, and try to turn arts and crafts supplies into a

The undergraduate students in the room are quick to snatch up sharpies and scrawl in power outlets

across the wide expanse of open space, while graduate students turn their attention to shaping pipe cleaners into representations of comfortable, flexible furniture. Someone looks for a pair of scissors to cut out more windows, trying to coax natural light into the space. Before the hour is through, there will be five different interpretations of the future Weldon Library for Perkins+Will, project architects, to consider.

This interactive brainstorm was one of four engagement sessions held by Western Libraries in early 2019 with stakeholders helping to reimagine the largest library on campus. At a university where students strive for straight As, Weldon





⌘ A student building a 3D model of a learning commons in the future Weldon Library.

just isn't making the grade. In a recent survey on campus library space, Weldon earned a D rating, as in dark, depressing, and dated. Thanks to a \$15 million investment from Western, a boost in Weldon's GPA might be in sight. Building on the work completed in 2017, the stakeholder engagement sessions focused on a proposed Learning Commons, Digital Scholarship Centre and Graduate Student Commons, in addition to a session on library staff space.

Armed with reams of chart paper and 3D models, Perkins+Will have been translating the feedback into building updates that will respect the existing architecture of Weldon Library, and recognize its place as a central hub for campus engagement. From the sessions, we learned library users want an environment with a variety of attractive,

inspiring, and bright spaces that are accessible and inclusive. Spaces for quiet contemplation and lively debate. Spaces for collaborating with familiar partners, and for meeting new colleagues. Spaces for connecting with collections and technology to promote new discoveries, and spaces for sharing these ideas with our community. Above all, there is a desire for access to natural light and views, flexible and comfortable furniture, support from knowledgeable staff, and, of course, lots of power outlets.

The ultimate goal: library space that reflects the ambitions of over one million users that stream through Weldon's doors each year. Thanks to the enthusiastic engagement we have had from library users, partners, and staff, we are well on our way to achieving this goal.



Western Libraries

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