

Western
Libraries

Annual Report

May 2020-April 2021

A Message from the Chief Librarian

Over the past year, events have highlighted the extent to which our work as a university and as a research library are inextricably linked to our place and purpose in our community, in society, and in the world. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been paramount, what's also become clear is the importance of work that serves equity-deserving groups, addresses injustice and discrimination, and reflects Western's and Western Libraries' responsibility to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as well as decolonization.

Throughout 2020-2021, we continually adjusted to the changing realities of the pandemic, working to ensure access to library services and collections in support of research and student success in remote, hybrid, and eventually, in-person modalities. Western Libraries staff pulled together and demonstrated their deep commitment to the teaching, research, and learning outcomes of our campus community.

In addition to the necessary and critical adaptation of our operations, Western Libraries has taken time over this period to reflect on and begin to develop an approach to EDI work. We have established a committee to identify ways to foster a library environment characterized by accessibility, equity, and inclusion through our collections, services, and spaces. Plus, ongoing initiatives include supporting and promoting open access to scholarly information, working towards changing outdated language and categorization of materials in the library catalogue, and diversifying teaching and learning practices.

This annual report is a reflection of the ways your research library adapted and innovated to provide service continuity through unprecedented times. It chronicles some of our first steps in EDI work and examines how we might hold ourselves accountable and lead by engaging in necessary and difficult work that challenges longstanding norms. We are acutely aware that we are only at the beginning. We are unlearning and identifying the work needed to change systems that are not representative of our commitment to an inclusive Western. And this report is a promise of what we can achieve when we take action and commit to a Western Libraries that is attentive to, and addresses, barriers to inclusion and access, within our teams and for the individuals who frequent our locations and resources.

To echo Western's new strategic plan, we know the work we do together toward greater equity and diversity will make Western Libraries – and our campus community – better and stronger.



Catherine Steeves
Vice-Provost and
Chief Librarian



A Pandemic Year in Review



Pandemic Timeline

Spring 2020

- All library locations closed in March, effectively pausing access to physical collections.
- Emphasis on e-course readings as campus shifts to online learning.
- Virtual consultations for research, teaching, and learning.
- Launch of [COVID-19 digital archive](#), to record local pandemic experiences.

Summer 2020

- No-contact pickup service introduced.
- Digital delivery expansion – added to Omni for users to easily request a scanned portion of print materials.
- Interlibrary loans service shifts to digital-only.
- Launch of dedicated COVID information hub on website for users to find online library resources available amid the ongoing pandemic, and provide updates on library services and closures.

Fall 2020

- Re-opened locations, until Ontario lockdown in December.
- Launch of online space booking system to ensure physically distanced seating.
- Introduction of controlled digital lending via Scholars Portal to support Course Readings.
- Survey to campus community in October, to gauge user experience amid ongoing pandemic and how to best meet their emergent needs.
- More than 300,000 new e-books added to collection – with 250,000 free from rights restrictions, allowing for a flexible user experience.
- 6,000+ new videos for streaming synchronous and asynchronous screenings to enhance online teaching and learning.

Pandemic Timeline

Winter 2020/21

- Libraries closed December 24 to February, with Taylor Library being first to reopen February 22nd.
- HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS) launches, with nearly 760,000 in-collection print materials digitized for temporary online use.
- Construction starts for Weldon Revitalization, after delays caused by the pandemic.
- Limited print interlibrary loan service resumes in February.

Spring 2021

- April 2 – closure of campus/all libraries until June, in alignment with provincial shutdown.
- Staff remain primarily work-from-home, with some teams onsite for library materials handling, managing interlibrary loan requests, and more.



Photo Credit: [COVID-19 in London, Ontario: Capturing the local experience](#)
(Archives and Special Collections, Western Libraries)

Our Strategic Approach



A digital-first strategic approach

While Western Libraries has long operated in a hybrid model to accommodate online and on-campus teaching, learning, and research, the unique circumstances of the pandemic compelled a digital-first approach to decision-making for our collections and services in 2020/21.

Guided by pillars of organizational excellence, Western Libraries was able to pivot and adjust services in response to COVID-19 .

Three strategic priorities helped define where best to focus resources and staffing to meet the needs of our user community as they shifted between remote and hybrid teaching, learning, and research environments.

1

Strategic Pillar — Service Excellence

Deliver service excellence to library users and Western University.

2

Strategic Pillar — User-Centred Spaces and Technologies

Repurpose spaces to meet user needs and provide access to new and emerging technologies.

3

Strategic Pillar — Access to Collections

Provide access to world-class print and digital collections and resources.

1

Service Excellence

SERVICE	DETAILS	OUTCOME
No-Contact Pickup	Provided access to the Western Libraries' collection in a safe environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,610 no-contact pickups of physical library materials
Ask a Librarian Online Chat	Strengthened outreach and support via online chat – to both Western students and for users from partner institutions as part of the provincial consortium, the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,597 Western users helped • 5,077 chats answered by Western staff for users across the OCUL consortium
Modified Services Survey	In early fall 2020, a survey was developed to gain feedback on the experiences of students, staff, and faculty using the heavily digital service model, and to better understand the effect of remote library services on the user community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased seat booking time slots from 2 to 3 hours • Modified library open hours to add evening and weekend hours • Allowed seat booking extensions based on user demand

1

Service Excellence

SERVICE	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Instruction and Research Support	In response to the pandemic, much of Western Libraries' instruction and research support shifted to an online format to enable remote research and embed instructional programming across disciplines and faculties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 160 instructional sessions and workshops with 7,520 participants• 644 reference and research consultations
Systematic and Scoping Review Consultations	<p>Librarians work collaboratively to provide method-driven search reviews to strengthen research at the university and partner as co-authors in the planning, execution, and writing of knowledge syntheses.</p> <p>The demand for this work increased significantly due to the impact of COVID-19 on research involving human subjects. Western Libraries temporarily allocated additional resources to support this critical research service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 396 Systematic and Scoping Review Consultations• A 142% increase in consultations conducted in 2020/21 compared to the previous academic year

2

User-Centred Spaces and Technologies

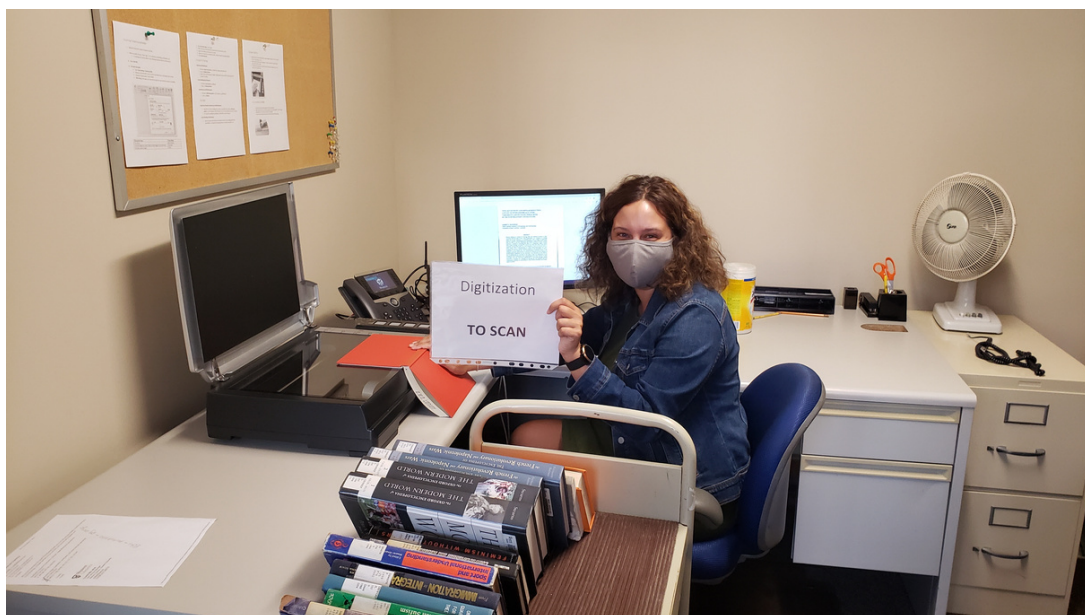
SERVICE	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Onsite Library Use	As provincial guidelines evolved, at times throughout 2020/21, Western Libraries was able to safely open its spaces to Western students, faculty, and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of online booking system to ensure safe onsite visits and adoption of physical distancing across library locations • 18,511 confirmed study space bookings
GIS Days 2020	A signature event for Western Libraries, GIS Days shifted to a fully online model and extended to a week-long initiative to offer 33 lightning talks, two networking sessions, one professional meeting, two tutorials, and eight demonstrations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 509 participants from across the globe • Volunteers from across Ontario and presenters from as far as Glasgow, Scotland and the Netherlands • Strength of online format evidential to continue with virtual setting for 2021



3

Access to Collections

SERVICE	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Digital Delivery and Digitization Service	Western users could request portions of physical library materials to be scanned and delivered to their inbox, enabling remote collections access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,172 digitization requests fulfilled by Western Libraries staff
HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS)	Due to physical collections access being restricted, Western Libraries implemented ETAS to offer users digital access to in-copyright print materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,090 unique users of HathiTrust ETAS materials • 759,954 items available through ETAS



3

Access to Collections

SERVICE	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Course Readings	To ensure that Course Readings items continued to be available to students as classes moved online, accessible, digital content was offered wherever possible including stable links to online resources and the purchase of new e-books.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,143 courses featured Course Readings items • 18,985 Course Readings items offered across Western Libraries, affiliate university college libraries, and Scholars Portal digital lending platform • 363,918 total uses of electronic Course Readings items
Collections Digital Strategy	<p>Demand for e-resources climbed significantly in response to pandemic circumstances. A concerted focus was given to building our collections access to e-book and streaming services as a result.</p> <p>This reflects the collections strategy overall, guided by a deep understanding of the information needs of users and how they interact with resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 378,484 uses of e-books, an increase of 123% compared to 2019/20 • 38,760 streams of videos and movies, an increase of 64% compared to 2019/20

By the Numbers



Reference Services

- 1,552 questions answered in person, on the phone, and over video call
- 9,931 online chats answered
- 8,559 questions answered by email
- 85% of email questions answered within 24 hours



Research Guides

- 347,836 overall research guide views
- 348 research guides published



Open Access

- 37 Open Access journals hosted by Western Libraries
- 1,461,816 items downloaded from the institutional repository, Scholarship@Western, from 228 different countries
- The Geospatial Hub, including five main geographic information system (GIS) projects, viewed 98,587 times



Online Presence

- 1,059,679 visits to the Western Libraries website
- 7,811 followers across three social media platforms



Resource Expenditures

- Total Spent on Resources: \$16,249,788.72
 - Total spent on monographs (books, e-books): \$3,390,685.57
 - Total spent on serials (ongoing purchases – journals, databases, etc.): \$12,815,041.31
 - Total spent on other resources (kits, scores): \$44,061.84

The background image shows the exterior of a modern library building. The architecture features large, light-colored concrete panels and horizontal bands of windows. A prominent purple rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title text in white. In the lower right corner, the name 'The D. B. We' is visible in blue lettering on a textured wall.

Equity and Inclusion at Western Libraries

The D. B. We

Decolonizing the Library Catalogue

Subject headings are how libraries categorize and describe materials in their catalogues. Almost like a dictionary or thesaurus, they provide a vocabulary so that library users can more easily and broadly search and find related subject matter. These headings also guide the way we think about topics or disciplines – and therefore representation across communities and cultures.

Around the world, the most common system is the Library of Congress Subject Headings, and they're also what is primarily used at Western Libraries.

Today, many of these Library of Congress Subject Headings still carry the biases and discrimination reflective of their early 20th century origins. This is unmistakable when one looks to how Indigenous topics are catalogued, which is typically from a historic perspective, meaning the conflicts and harm Indigenous peoples face are in the past, or that demean Indigenous cultural practices as folklore or mythology.

Throughout 2020, Western Libraries' Discovery Description, and Metadata (DDM) team began the grassroots work to deepen understanding of the issues faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada and the impact of subject heading practices.

They examined the library as a colonial institution and the colonial aspects of cataloguing, with a focus on E classification (History of the Americas) and how this heading becomes a catch-all for anything Indigenous-related – reinforcing the notion that Indigenous topics exist in the historic.

With guidance from the Indigenous Curriculum Pedagogy Advisor at Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives, the DDM team also explored Indigenous land back movements to contextualize treaty rights, the impacts of the Indian Act, and conflicts of band-elected and traditional governance in present-day circumstances.

Learning about how Western Libraries' cataloguing practices negatively impact users is the first step to changing harmful practices and to improving discoverability of library resources by discontinuing the use of offensive subject headings and shelving protocols.

In the long term, this is foundational work to what comes next for Western Libraries: making real, tangible changes to descriptions and classification in the catalogue, changes that will lead to better quality access to materials for all library users. This includes working with our Omni partner institutions across Ontario, as part of a Decolonizing Description Working Group, to explore how we can consult with local Indigenous communities to decolonize library description collaboratively and examine potential reclassification projects and processes to remove offensive subject headings from our library records.

Accessibility at Western Libraries

As part of a strategy to improve accessibility at Western Libraries, in 2020 the User Experience (UX) team partnered with Western's Accessible Education group to gain a better understanding of how the libraries' online content meets student accessibility needs.

Grounded in principles of openness and exploration, two Western Libraries co-op students stewarded the work to test digital exhibits, instructional videos, and modules in the online learning management system for the university, in order to identify areas where library content was inaccessible.

For Sara and Alexandra, this was a chance to not only learn first-hand from student users where improvement was necessary, but during COVID-19, offered a unique opportunity to engage in participatory user testing in remote environments. "So often 'accessibility' in a library context refers to in-person services and how to move around a physical building," explains Sara. "Because of the campus closure and the shift to online classes and library resources, we really got to see how accessibility is fundamental to digital spaces, too."

Student participants shared their feedback across multiple user testing sessions, and in the end, an overarching need identified was to have customizable content that a user could change or select depending on their needs at that time.

"Accessibility needs can shift regularly," adds Alexandra. "We learned that what might work for a student with disabilities one day could be different the next, so flexibility to, for example, read a transcript or watch a captioned video with various playback speeds is essential."

In December 2020, with user findings in-hand, the UX team produced reports that detailed specific accessibility recommendations for each of the content types tested and identified best practices for improving web accessibility. The best practices report was also shared with Accessible Education, the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and the Instructional Technology Resource Centre, who plan on conveying the recommendations with instructors to facilitate more accessible online teaching materials across campus.

While users who experience web accessibility challenges will benefit the most from this work, the goal is to have all Western Libraries users find web content easier to read and navigate. As Alexandra says, "Offering options to customize what you're working with can make a huge difference – it means everyone can access materials in the way they need or want to."

Diversifying Pedagogies

When you consider who developed the first information literacy standards, where they were from, and the voices that were excluded, one can see how library curriculum is not reflective of our diverse campus community. This colonial foundation to academic learning continues to influence the ways teaching happens today.

At Western Libraries, the Teaching and Learning team has purposefully taken steps to examine these historical implications and how they impact student learning and well-being.

In 2020/21, the team participated in several curriculum retreats to start learning how to decolonize and diversify information literacy traditions and practices, including sessions led by campus leaders from the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.

For Heather, Curriculum Librarian, these sessions meant exploring how their team can, as a community, commit to questioning the knowledge systems that ground their work.

Shaking up longstanding pedagogies involves unlearning and relearning, and with that comes the acknowledgement that colonial practices are still in place in contemporary education and in institutions like libraries. “It’s uncomfortable – and overdue – work to confront the harm that’s perpetuated when we privilege Eurocentric processes,” adds Heather.

From resource creation to information literacy instruction, decolonization spans all activities of the Teaching and Learning team, individually and collectively. This is a long-term commitment for Western Libraries and the Teaching and Learning group, and is not a one-time event or action. “Decolonization is an enduring and active process for all of us,” Heather explains, “and it’s critical we keep asking ourselves how we can better support students and our communities by evolving our teaching and learning.”

Looking ahead, the team plans to rewrite their information literacy curriculum and continue with their community of practice approach to decentering internalized Euro-American ways of knowing. “This will enable Western Libraries to diversify our teaching and highlight biases and inequities in academic research,” Heather says. “We’ll use this curriculum to demonstrate our priority of building meaningful relationships with students and our faculty and campus partners.” The team hopes to establish a process of continuous curriculum inquiry with students as partners, to ensure library teaching truly supports the needs of learners.



“As Indigenous educators explain, this isn’t about rejecting Euro-American teaching. This is about learning how both perspectives bring value; not replacing, but integrating and welcoming multiple ways of knowing so there’s no longer one exclusive approach.”

A User-Friendly Weldon Library

At the heart of Western campus is The D.B. Weldon Library, the largest of the university library locations. Weldon, as it's affectionately known, started Phase One renovations in 2020 as part of the ongoing revitalization project to modernize its key spaces and provide better usability for the campus community.

After a brief hiatus due to COVID-19, the revitalization project resumed in the early part of 2020, with Facilities Management working with consultants to finalize specifications for infrastructure retrofitting at Weldon.

Working from the original project vision to create a bright, timeless space that respects and celebrates Weldon's brutalist architecture, Western Libraries led Program Advisory Groups to meet with students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders to identify features and amenities important to new learning spaces in Weldon. From these consultations, we learned about the need for flexible furniture and room functionality to accommodate various bodies, uses, and physical abilities.

To further inform furniture decisions, we compiled a variety of options and shared them as part of an online survey with Western students, to see if we were on the right track. Nearly 100 students responded and we held six additional online student focus groups for more in-depth discussions about the furniture. Alongside the survey findings, we heard a clear preference for standalone seating, like desk chairs and swivel tub chairs, a desire for large, shared tables over individual ones, and a strong plea for accessible power sources.

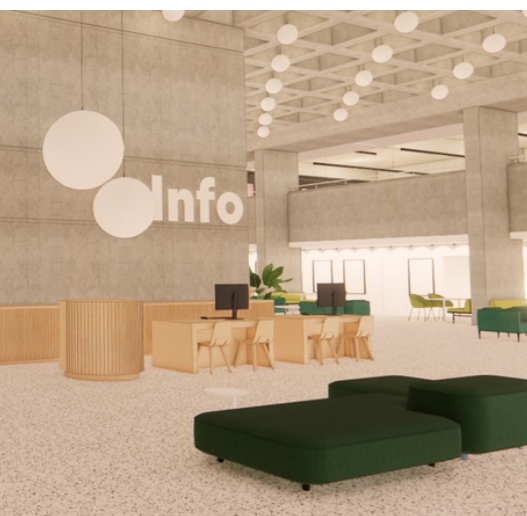
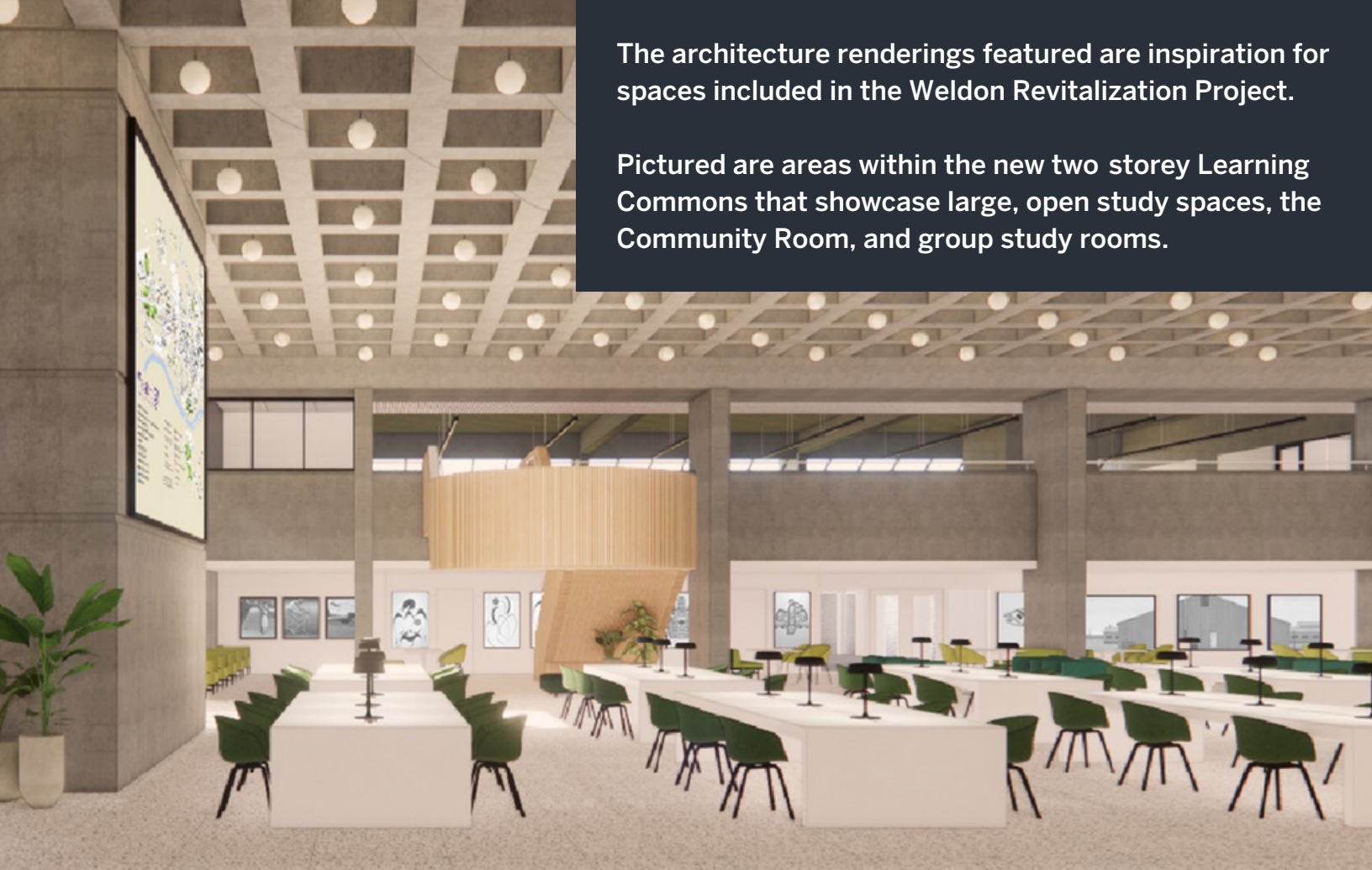
Thanks to these insights, which follow on several years of engagement about the revitalization of Weldon, when it opens, the new two-storey Learning Commons will feature spaces and fixtures that are in high demand by our users. There will be more study seats, including group study rooms; a community room for presentations and gatherings; a reading lounge; expanded display spaces; a student support hub; and a family room for students who wish to study alongside their young children. When complete, we're confident the space will provide variety and choice for those visiting Weldon, supporting learning, inspiring reflection, and encouraging community in an accessible and inclusive environment.



A dedicated [microsite for the Weldon Revitalization](#) launched in 2020, including a [video walk through](#) of the brighter, refreshed learning and research environments.

The architecture renderings featured are inspiration for spaces included in the Weldon Revitalization Project.

Pictured are areas within the new two storey Learning Commons that showcase large, open study spaces, the Community Room, and group study rooms.



Donor Improves Textbook Access

Finances are often an obstacle for university students, especially when you consider the substantial cost of textbooks. Halina Czajkowska Robinson and her late husband, Dr. James Russell Robinson, understood this barrier to higher learning and established a fund with Western Libraries to help lessen the burden for students.

No stranger to remarkable hardship, Halina grew up the daughter of a Polish military officer when World War II struck. After fleeing for Warsaw in late 1940, she attended an underground school and later witnessed the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. Halina was an avid learner, right from childhood, and this nature would serve her well in the coming years and decades.

It was in 1944 that Halina and her mother were arrested during the Warsaw Uprising and transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and from there deported to Bergen-Belsen – a Nazi concentration camp where approximately 50,000 imprisoned people died.

After the liberation of Bergen-Belsen in 1945, Halina and her mother were sent as displaced persons to Sweden, where Halina studied – in Swedish no less – to become a chemical engineer. Studying tirelessly, Halina graduated in 1950 and would join a cancer research lab at the Karolinska Institute where she learned histochemical and biochemical techniques that would be influential in her career.

Halina immigrated to Canada in April 1951, where she struggled to find employment in her field due to discrimination against women in industry.

Eventually, she was hired at the Collip Cancer Research Laboratory at Western University (then, the University of Western Ontario), where Halina could use her learnings from the Karolinska Institute. It was at the Collip Lab that Halina discovered plant extracts effective in treating cancer and childhood leukemia. It was also at the lab that Halina met her husband, who was the university's first doctoral candidate in chemistry.

Throughout the remainder of her scientific work, Halina made important contributions to micro-chemical analytics, though her observation on plant extracts as a potential cancer treatment would go uncredited until recently, more than 50 years after her initial discovery.

Halina's desire to help others did not wane throughout her decades of life. Since its launch in 2011, the Dr. and Mrs. James Russell and Halina Robinson Western Libraries Textbook and Materials Acquisition Fund has enabled the purchase of more than 400 textbooks. And in 2020/21, this special fund meant Western Libraries could buy all required and recommended course readings not already in the library collection.



Halina Czajkowska Robinson passed away in fall 2021. We are grateful to share her story and so thankful for her deep generosity and commitment to supporting Western students.

Supporting Research Excellence

One of the strategic pillars for Western Libraries is to expand and support research excellence across disciplines. As part of a research-intensive university, Western Libraries actively collaborates with scholars and research teams to advance their projects – both within Western and beyond campus – in service of advancing knowledge and sharing it locally, nationally, and globally.

The following highlights offer a look at how Western Libraries supported research centred on Indigenous-led studies, sustainable development, health equity, and gender-based violence in 2020/21.



Logo Artist: Tsista Kennedy

Tsista Kennedy is a woodland-style artist from Beausoleil First Nation, and Oneida Nation of the Thames. Tsista creates his artwork on canvas with acrylic paint, on paper with ink, and digitally as well. He has been creating this style of artwork since the age of 13, winning a Governor General's Award for his "Seventh Fire Leadership" in 2018.

Head and Heart Research Fellowship Collection

Scholarship@Western, the Western Libraries-managed institutional research repository, provides a digital space for the student research outcomes of the Head and Heart Indigenous Research Fellowship program.

In alignment with Western's commitment to increase Indigenous voices across all levels of community, the repository is a platform to promote the diversity of Indigenous scholarship at the university and share and preserve research outputs so that students see their work reflected as part of the larger research enterprise. Plus, by having a stable portal to showcase their work, Indigenous students can demonstrate the impact and scope of their individual research as part of future scholarship and employment opportunities.

Seventeen projects make up the Head and Heart collection currently, with over half being the 2020 cohort of fellows. In 2020/21, these studies were accessed from 14 countries around the world by a variety of institutions, including government and Indigenous-led organizations.

Supporting Research Excellence

Western Heads East Collection

In the open-access institutional repository, the Western Heads East collection offers research related to probiotic foods, community health and sustainable development in Africa.

The open-access nature of Scholarship@Western facilitates timely access to health information so that others can build upon existing studies, narrowing the gap in global health equity by accelerating research in this area.

In 2020/21, users from 89 institutions across 78 countries accessed Western Heads East works in the institutional repository.

Gender-Based Violence Research

Western Libraries is often sought out as a resource for research materials – by Western scholars and investigators from other academic institutions. In November 2020, our Archives and Special Collections team was approached by a PhD student from the University of Waterloo about their thesis. Seeking documents related to gender-based violence and records within the London Women's History Group Collection, the student needed access to digital versions of these materials to continue their thesis research while campuses across Ontario were navigating stay-at-home orders.

Archives and Special Collections staff digitized hundreds of pages from a variety of archival documents, including London Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic Records, London Coordinating Committee to End Women Abuse Records, Mary McKim Papers, and Multicultural Committee to End Woman Abuse Records.



Yustina Milk

Photo Credit: Western Heads East Collection (Scholarship@Western)

Centring the Campus Community

Western Libraries has always sought to put users at the centre of our services, resources, and spaces, and it's essential that we understand our campus community and address critical issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

An EDI Roadmap

In 2018/19, Western Libraries formed a dedicated equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) committee comprising staff members from across departments and teams. Together, this group is tasked with evaluating Western Libraries' strengths and challenges in EDI-related areas, with the intention to further enhance a learning and work environment characterized by equal access and respected participation of all groups and individuals.

As the Black Lives Matter movement continued to grow in summer 2020, in response to the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, discussions about white privilege surfaced among Western Libraries staff. This was a catalyst for a Diverse Conversations event called "Unpacking White Privilege," meant to create space for open dialogue about how white supremacy is embedded throughout daily life, exploring how to disrupt micro-aggressions and harmful norms. Nearly 60 Western Libraries staff members took part in this online event and the feedback gathered from participants revealed a keen interest in learning more about EDI issues and how to discuss these together as colleagues.

The EDI committee also embarked on strategic planning in fall 2020, to identify milestones and initiatives to pursue in support of a more inclusive Western Libraries. The plan provides a roadmap of short- and long-term actions for the committee to achieve, knowing that this essential work is never finished and must be embedded across all levels of Western Libraries.

Next, the committee will continue with staff learning events, scaffolding them around the university's commitment to EDI and decolonization. In addition, the group is creating an inclusive language guide, to foster internal communication that is respectful and brings everyone into the conversation, as well as a hiring toolkit to support the ongoing recruitment and retention of a diverse library workforce.

Centring the Campus Community

Biindigen: ***Western's Indigenous Learning Circle***

In 2020, Western Libraries joined a cross-campus partnership with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, Western Research, the university's former Equity and Human Rights Services (now represented by the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion), and Student Experience. Together, this collaboration formed Biindigen, Western's Indigenous Learning Circle, to give graduate students, staff, and faculty opportunities to learn with and from Indigenous Peoples, and explore the landscape of Indigenization and reconciliation through events, discussion, and other mediums such as documentaries and books.

In 2020/21, Biindigen hosted its first events:

- A conversation with Mohawk author, Alicia Elliott – A discussion of and reading from the Western Writer-in-Residence's book of essays: *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*. More than 60 participants joined the event and took part in a question-and-answer session with Alicia.
- A discussion of *Braiding Sweetgrass* – In recognition of World Water Day and the lack of clean water access in Indigenous communities in Canada, this event opened conversations about the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, through the lens of readings from *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Fifty-one participants took part in this springtime event.



In addition to these inaugural events, Biindigen created an online portal to carry forward discussions started and provide a space for ongoing dialogue about Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Currently, there are almost 140 members in the online portal who regularly interact and share articles and information.

As the academic commons of Western University,
Western Libraries provides the library and archival
expertise and infrastructure – information
resources, technology, people, and spaces –
required to cultivate and mobilize knowledge,
and accelerate excellence in teaching, research,
and scholarship.



Western
Libraries

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