

Alumnae Library

Bridging the Past and the Future

Strategic Plan, 2021-2023

March 2021

The Alumnae Library Strategic Plan, 2013-2018 was developed by library staff in the months of November and December 2012. This is an updated version of that plan. Its two-year window mirrors the college's Strategic Plan.

“Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future.”

--- Ray Bradbury

Introduction

Alumnae Library is positioned to bridge the past and the future. We have in our Special Collections hundreds of rare books that date back to the 1500s, perhaps even earlier, as well as manuscripts, portraits, photos, and other realia; on a local level, our Archives contains documents dating back to the inception of Elms College in the 1920s, some of them originals. In our circulating collection we have books that span a century.

Simultaneously, Alumnae Library looks to the future. Like many contemporary academic libraries, it responds to major technological, socio-political, ethical, and psychological forces, as well as to the currently ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, the library is positioned to face the accelerated rate of change that characterizes contemporary America. In addition, it can help prepare students to meet the challenges of technology in their chosen professions, and in some cases, Alumnae Library can help students holistically as they prepare for jobs—some of which may not even exist yet. Librarians and scholarly resources can prepare students for a diffuse information economy, and they can do this while helping professors master an ever-growing focus on the nexus between scholarship, teaching, and learning; a culture of assessment; and a need for seamlessness between the products and processes associated with scholarship and creative expression.

Acquiring knowledge and making it accessible is the primary mission of any modern academic, as is facilitating or partnering in research, teaching, and learning. More resources are becoming virtual, and as we move into the next decade, more of the tasks that library staff perform will become virtual. However, the importance of delivering content, while responding to the need to have that content personalized for faculty, students, administration, and the larger community, will not have changed. And as our patron base grows to include global researchers, our partnerships will also have to grow. These partnerships include Information technology (IT), institutional administration, library consortia, and peer institutions.

Prior to the mass availability of digitized electronic resources and consortia-based resource sharing, an academic library would be evaluated mainly on the sheer number of volumes and/or items in its collections. For the modern academic library, the number of items which reside physically within its four walls is less relevant; the resources available through Interlibrary Loan, database subscriptions, open access content, and reputable free sites on the Internet make the smallest academic library seem like a giant, compared even to the largest library prior to the 21st Century.

Thus, it is the diversity of resource gathering that supports active learning, which determines the effectiveness of the modern academic library. Such evolution is crucial to a library that supports higher education, as administrators tasked with finding ways of running their institutions during times of austerity are always reevaluating their libraries. This means that the new Library Director must be well-versed in creating formal methods

of communicating with and to administrators, as well as with and to all stakeholders, exactly what his/her library does that is essential to the mission of the institution. This of course involves allowing for those stakeholders to buy into the future plans of the library, to be part of a meaningful dialogue pertaining to the library's priorities.

This Strategic Plan is one articulation of this new vision. In conjunction with all library staff, it was prepared by the Director, not only to serve as an end product in itself, but also to serve as an invitation to the Elms community to help shape the future of Alumnae Library. This plan is both a result of the concerns, issues, and wishes of library staff and a vision statement which informs or outlines the various visions represented in the projects that the library has identified as worthy of pursuing.

In essence, the Strategic Plan sets the standards by which each of the library's action plans will be assessed and evaluated. Individual projects are manifestations of the library's vision as set forth in this plan, and both those projects and the needs they address will change as technological innovations and the needs of the college curriculum evolve.

Section 1: Alumnae Library Mission Statement

Alumnae Library's mission is to provide up-to-date, comprehensive research material to support the college's mission and its academic curriculum. This is accomplished by providing an organized, readily accessible, and diverse collection of print, multimedia, and electronic materials to further the education of students. Like the college, the library is a supportive, engaging, creative, flexible, and collaborative environment that helps students meet the challenges and demands of their chosen disciplines, so they may grow to become individuals who affect positive change in the community and in the world. The library's goal is to offer services and materials for the benefit of students, faculty, administration, and staff, as well as alumni and Pioneer Valley residents.

The library will fulfill this mission in the following ways:

- The library will employ degreed and qualified librarians who accept the challenge of also being active educators and faculty members.
- The library will provide access to information resources and services that support and augment the classroom experience, overall academic excellence, and freedom of inquiry, especially spiritual inquiry, in keeping with the mission of a Catholic college.
- The library will encourage and facilitate scholarship through inquiry, and will promote lifelong learning.
- The library will offer instructional programs and services that emphasize Information Literacy.
- The library will be a flexible environment that will meet the needs of both independent learning and collaborative engagement.
- The library will help make accessible the emerging technologies that support and enhance teaching, learning, and research or scholarship.

The academic library is the entity charged with the challenge of maintaining a comprehensive understanding of scholarly communication for the institution. While faculty members in each discipline meet the challenge of understanding the import of the discipline's scholarship, the academic librarian serves as a gateway to the assimilated knowledge of scholarship in all disciplines. As such, academic librarians collaborate among themselves and with teaching faculty in all disciplines to enhance, stimulate, and support teaching and learning.

To accomplish this, Alumnae Library will

- develop library collections that support the curriculum and faculty research;
- develop and integrate library systems to eliminate unnecessary complexity in resource use;
- integrate library resources to facilitate seamlessness between library resources, to promote student and faculty achievement;
- teach members of the Elms community the skills needed to effectively find and manage information; and
- take the lead in managing and preserving important digital and physical scholarly resources and historical assets.

To meet the challenges of most of these tasks, the Library Director will cooperate with Information Technology (IT), Marketing, and other partners to enable success. The library's overarching goal is to support the college's mission and its vision.

Section 2: Environmental Scan

In 2013 when the first iteration this plan was created under a new Director, Alumnae Library was in a state of transition. During 2013, the Director first determined and then strengthened the foundations that had already been established and had proven successful. At the first meeting, library staff reviewed the current status of the library and created a “wish list” for the library’s future. The most commonly identified wish was better communication, as well as inclusion in the process of planning for the future, especially via regularly held meetings. Both library staff and the Director agreed to create a mechanism for communication, both within the library and between the library and Elms community. All were in agreement that reliable, consistent, and effective communication with faculty, administration, staff, students, and the surrounding community was essential, particularly when it came to library resources and services.

Back in 2013, Elms College was experiencing a space shortage for classrooms and offices, and all campus facilities were being examined for alternate uses. The library was no exception. Then, and since then, library staff has been involved in planning to explore renovation towards the development of better learning environments. It became home to a Learning Commons and a Center for Student Success, entities whose functions reinforced the library’s role in teaching and learning.

One of the projects the library is currently investigating is the creation of a centralized Information Desk, which will combine the public services functions of Circulation and Reference. Located on the library’s main level, it will provide a central service point for library and related technology services, thereby simplifying the use of library resources. The preferred physical redesign of Circulation and Reference into one Information Desk is one that would restructure the area to provide an open structure, with no physical barriers between the two functions. This will allow for more continuous communication between the service points at the desk.

Organizational Statement

In 2020, library staff examined staff functions and found that little to no reorganization will be necessary in the near future. However, we understood that continual training and assessment of services will be essential to the library’s effectiveness. As the college curriculum and its technological infrastructure evolve, Alumnae Library will regularly and systematically reevaluate its organizational structure and the functions of each staffed position. Alumnae Library, due to its small staff, is not burdened by the traditional departmental structure that may hinder adaptation in a constantly changing information and technology environment. While there exists a couple of supervisory lines of control, many of the departmental activities have been, and will increasingly be, completed by teams made up of staff throughout the library; these teams will be formed and disbanded as project needs dictate.

Section 3: Goals and Objectives

Organizational Goals and Objectives

Library staff have established the following list of goals and objectives:

- 1. Library staff will improve communications internally and externally**
 - 1.1. The Director will hold regular library staff meetings and send all minutes to the VPAA.
 - 1.2. Library liaisons will communicate with faculty, staff, students, and the larger community about new resources and developments.
 - 1.2.1. The Director will update the liaison program when necessary.
 - 1.2.2. The Director will send an annual list to faculty of all physical purchases (books and DVDs).
 - 1.2.3. The Director will work with the newly created Faculty Mentoring Program to follow faculty research and connect them with a librarian.

- 2. Library staff will more efficiently use physical, financial, and human resources to enhance and aid teaching and learning.**
 - 2.1. Library staff will continue to redesign the library's physical space to better meet the needs of the college.
 - 2.1.1. The Director will continue to evaluate both individualized study spaces and collaborative learning environments.
 - 2.1.2. The Associate Director, as Head of Library Technology will work with IT to increase the number of computer terminals in the library proper.
 - 2.1.3. Library staff will create useful functional spaces, such as a laptop charging area and a reading area.
 - 2.2. The Reference Team will evaluate all purchases for efficiency.
 - 2.2.1. The Liaisons will continue to involve faculty in the demonstrations and trials of new products.
 - 2.2.2. The Reference Team will look for more cost-effective products.
 - 2.2.3. The Director will invest in back-end technology that makes collection analysis feasible and/or more efficient.
 - 2.2.4. The Director will remove impediments to better resource usage.
 - 2.3. Library staff will take advantage of professional development opportunities through webinars, workshops, and conferences.
 - 2.3.1. Library Staff will maintain and improve needed technical skills.
 - 2.3.2. Library Staff will maintain and improve resource and information knowledge.
 - 2.3.3. Library Staff will maintain and improve professional skills, such as time management.
 - 2.3.4. Library Staff will maintain and improve interpersonal skills.

- 3. Library staff will become outcomes (assessment) oriented.**
 - 3.1. The Associate Director and Head of Library Technology will streamline the

- collection of statistics.
- 3.2. The Director will produce reports when requested.
- 3.3. Library staff will make recommendations when necessary.

Part 2: Goals for the Director

Based on information gathered during meetings with library staff, as well as interviews with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and reading the literature of best practices, the Director has set the following goals for himself:

1. The Director will work with the VPAA to integrate library planning into the College's strategic planning process.
2. The Director will work with the VPAA to ensure the continuation of faculty status for librarians in accordance with ACRL Faculty Status Standards and the Elms Faculty Handbook.
3. The Director will work with the Tenure and Promotion Committee to ensure that tenure track librarians are evaluated fairly under the process established in the Faculty Handbook.
4. The Director will work with library staff and library stakeholders to oversee a Strategic Plan on a regular basis.
5. The Director will continue to present an Annual Report to the VPAA.
6. The Director, working with the Head of Circulation, will continue to revisit the library's hours as the number of nontraditional students rises.

Part 3: Goals for Instruction and Outreach

For the past few years, emphasis has been placed on the educational mission of the library. With the advent of the liaison program, the library has been able to run a liaison-based model of providing discipline specific instruction. In addition, it will continue to be part of the First Year Experience and will continue to help administer the mandatory Information Literacy Rubric, since Information Literacy is one of the college's core objectives.

Since Information Literacy and the library's role in instruction (teaching and learning) are receiving more attention from accrediting agencies and the Department of Education, the Reference Team will reexamine instructional efforts. The following is a list of the instructional and outreach goals and objectives:

1. The Reference Team will maintain its subscription to the LibGuides content management system so that librarians can continue to create templates for course and subject research guides.
 - 1.1. Throughout 2021 and 2022, the Reference Team will assess the usability of the guides through surveys, student focus groups, or usability tests.
2. The library Director, with the help of the Associate Director, will become expert

- on copyright, author rights (when contracting with publishers), and open access.
3. In cooperation with IT, the Associate Director as Head of Library Technology will identify and acquire useful support technologies.
 4. The Director will investigate the possibility of library sponsored speakers and programs.
 5. The Reference Team will continue supporting on- and off-campus academic programs by conducting library orientations and bibliographic & research instruction at the requests of course instructors and/or off-campus site coordinators.
 6. The Reference Team intends to partner with Tutoring Services to offer supportive student-centered programs on research strategies and the ethical use of information.

Part 3: Goals for the Library's Collections

In conjunction with the Director, the Associate Director, and the Liaisons, Technical Services is responsible for the acquisition and preparation of library resources. Emphasis has been placed on purchasing and maintaining an efficient electronic resource management system. Better management of electronic resources should allow the library to provide appropriate content, improved access, and effective support. The Associate Director as Head of Library Technology is devoted to managing, promoting, and enhancing the usability of these resources.

The College Archives houses some of the most valuable (in monetary and historical terms) items in the library's collections. Preservation of this material is essential. However, as academic libraries strive to become more teaching and learning center, so do their Archives, which must become more than just collections of well-preserved materials. They must become accessible artifacts that encourage researchers to engage with their institution's history, as well as its historical place in various socio-political, spiritual, and artistic milieu.

The following are a list of goals and objectives for the library's physical and digital collections:

1. The library staff will seek to evolve its collection from physical resources to digital ones.
 - 1.1. The Interim Archivist will conduct the day-to-day management of digital College Archive collections. He will store important physical resources, even if digitized, as archival copies.
2. The library staff will review and refine its physical collections, eliminating items that are no longer relevant to the curriculum and which have no historical importance.
3. The Associate Director as Head of Library Technology will continue to improve access to resources through enhanced bibliographic data and increased use of metadata in all library systems.
4. The Associate Director as Head of Library Technology, in conjunction with the Head of Circulation, will accurately measure usage of library resources and work with library staff to eliminate underutilized resources.

5. The Library Director will build relationships with library consortia to maximize the library's purchasing power.
6. The Library Director as Archivist will continue the process of creating an inventory of items.
7. The Director as Archivist will continue to partner with a digital preservation consortia and will continue the process of the complete digitization of Archives.

Section 4: Epilogue

Acquiring knowledge and making it available is the primary mission of any library. Moreover, either facilitating or partnering in teaching and learning is the *raison d'être* of the modern academic library. As we move into the next decade, the library will become more virtual, delivering content as it has historically, while responding to the need to have that content personalized for faculty, students, administration, and the larger Elms community. As our patron base grows to include global researchers, our partnerships will also have to grow: with Information technology (IT), with institutional administration, with consortial entities, and with peer institutions.

Only in this way can Alumnae Library realize its mission to provide current research material to support the college's mission and its academic curriculum. This is accomplished by providing an organized and readily accessible and diverse collection of print, multimedia, and digital materials, with the goal of benefiting students, faculty, administration, and staff, as well as alumni and Pioneer Valley residents. This mission fits within the larger mission of its parent institution, which is still growing and thrives on bright, passionate students, committed faculty and staff, as well as a network of alumni and friends. As the institution grows, so must the library. While Alumnae Library is by definition a small library, it has as its staff people who show great dedication towards realizing the goals identified in this strategic plan.