

# Davidson College Library Strategic Plan 2016-2020

## Introduction

The Davidson College Library's *Statement of Purpose* (Appendix A) identifies three broad categories by which the library - the staff, the building, and the collections - contributes to the college's mission of "assist[ing] students in developing humane instincts and disciplined and creative minds for lives of leadership and service": ensuring that students are information literate, providing spaces and resources for creative minds to maximize their potential, and encouraging leadership through critical engagement with society.

Because Davidson expects its graduates to make a disproportionate impact for good in society, it is critical that all contributors to students' educations, including the library staff, maximize educational impact. The rapidly changing education and information landscapes, coupled with the economic realities of limited resources, require that we effectively align our actions and our resources with the college's vision and institutional goals. As Davidson reimagines the liberal arts, we must continue to evolve our priorities, programs, and implementation efforts to meet our students' developing needs.

This strategic plan is our attempt to elucidate a flexible framework to guide us over the next five years as we fulfill our mission. It is divided into eight strategic initiatives:

- A. [Maximize Pedagogical Impact](#)
- B. [Enhance Research Services](#)
- C. [Optimize Access to and Use of Information Resources](#)
- D. [Challenge Information Privilege](#)
- E. [Increase Outreach and Fundraising](#)
- F. [Repurpose Library Space](#)
- G. [Recruit, Retain, and Develop Staff](#)
- H. [Function Effectively and Strategically](#)

The intent of this document is to enable, not restrict. The rapid pace of change in libraries and in higher education makes projecting institutional goals five years in the future difficult; committing to specific implementation actions so far out would be folly. In this document, we state the "whats" while remaining flexible on the "hows." We fully expect that we will need to adjust, add, and even discontinue initiatives and methods as we evolve and as the landscape shifts. These circumstances are not daunting, but, rather, are invigorating. The changing

environment gives us opportunities to improve ourselves individually and as members of the library team and the Davidson College community. The primary audience for this long version of the strategic plan is the library staff; the document serves as map and rationale for our work during this five-year period. Library users are, of course, also a welcome audience. Readers who would prefer a shorter version are directed to the Executive Summary document.

## **Framing Our Choices**

In the process of developing this plan, the library staff framed our discussions around a number of “dilemmas.” These dilemmas, defined as continuums of choices, allowed us to clarify where we stood, from cultural and operational standpoints, on aspects of librarianship, pedagogy, and professional values. We also identified and forecast current or anticipated external changes in the information and higher education landscapes and articulated desirable future directions. These dilemmas are described fully in Appendix B.

The dilemma discussions reaffirmed some enduring values and surfaced some new imperatives.

### ***Enduring Values***

In developing the library of the future, we will keep and build upon some touchstones:

- We will continue to provide high quality services and activities. Library staff have long been known for their service orientation; we will retain our dedication to helping and teaching our clients. We will continue to maintain the library’s collection, preserve the history of the college, and make improvements to the facility as we are able.
- We affirm that student learning is our primary mission, realize that increasingly significant learning opportunities for librarians are occurring in curricular and co-curricular settings, and assert that there are important opportunities to increase our impact within these areas. We understand “co-curricular” to encompass staff-led initiatives related to for-credit courses (for example, service learning) as well as student-driven, student-led initiatives.
- We acknowledge that our collections must remain focused on the students’ needs. We also understand that faculty are evaluated on their research productivity and aim to support them in their research. Though we cannot be a research library equivalent to those found at R1 institutions, our small size offers advantages, such as an excellent interlibrary loan program and personalized attention.

- The library will remain an academic crossroads of the campus, space that is for everyone at Davidson; it is a place where students control their own educational agendas and become independent, self-directed learners. As the physical collection's footprint shrinks, the library will devote space to programs, services, collaboration, and other scholarly and creative activities.
- It is increasingly critical that students have the ability to reflectively discover information, understand how it is valued, and use it to create new knowledge and participate in scholarly and creative conversations; we will, therefore, continue to teach and to advocate for information literacy throughout the campus community.

### ***New Imperatives***

As the library faces the realities of a rapidly changing information ecosystem and unprecedented challenges to higher education, some new mindsets, services, and programs will be necessary:

- We will place a greater emphasis on innovation in order to have greater impact on campus and within our profession. We define innovation as a program, service, or activity that is new to the world in some way. In doing so, we acknowledge that, when trying novel approaches, not all outcomes will be successful immediately or at all, but we believe that a culture of innovation is necessary to achieve and maintain excellence.
- To meet shifting needs and innovate as necessary, we will trust our collective knowledge and expertise and proactively act on our best judgment.
- We recognize that Davidson's investments in experiential learning, students as knowledge creators and participants in the scholarly conversation, and interdisciplinary scholarship will continue, as will the emphasis on faculty scholarly activities. These trends increase the importance of librarians as collaborators in these processes; our abilities complement those of faculty and students. Such a shift may require a shift from collection spending to spending on programs, services, and knowledge development.
- There are now viable alternatives to traditional publishing models for the creation, dissemination, and consumption of information. Our dedication to educational access, our commitment to social responsibility, and our need to be fiscally responsible make it imperative that we educate the campus community about all of the resources available to them and that we advocate for open access, institutional and disciplinary repositories, and other non-traditional publishing models.
- To be responsive to changes in higher education, including globalization, digital learning, and economic imperative, we must work with colleagues, both librarians and others, outside the college. We will seek out and even

initiate such collaborations. Library staff will increase their professional service and engage in activities which promote personal and professional growth to extend our individual and aggregate value to Davidson College.

## **Strategic Initiatives**

### ***A. Maximize Pedagogical Impact***

In an evolving and complex information landscape, Davidson College students and graduates must be information literate. To lead lives of leadership and service and to make a disproportionate impact on the world, they must be able to thoughtfully and ethically use and create information. One of our primary missions is to educate students who understand the political, social, and economic influences on and impacts of information. To fulfill this mission and to maximize our pedagogical impact, we collaborate with campus and community partners while leading with our own expertise.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Develop library-wide learning outcomes. Create internal processes and structures to coordinate instructional activities across library teams to eliminate potential redundancies and to maximize learning for students.
2. Identify faculty interested in promoting information literacy in their classes and/or fields of study. Working with faculty, determine the optimal forms of information literacy instruction for their students, potentially maximizing the use of technology for flipped classroom purposes.
3. Partner with campus educators working with students in co-curricular capacities to increase students' information literacy and to bridge their academic uses of information with non-academic ones. Also work more closely with community-based and entrepreneurial learning classes.
4. Strengthen the relationship with the Center for Teaching and Learning to increase faculty development opportunities and to improve information literacy instruction by and for faculty.
5. Plan a holistic assessment program for library instruction to gain a broader view of the library's impact on student learning. Partner with members of the Center for Teaching and Learning to gather and share appropriate data.

### ***B. Enhance Research Services***

Student research, which occurs both as part of the classroom curriculum and in independent and summer research programs, is an important and enriching

component of a student's education at Davidson. Faculty research informs teaching, contributes to society, and is a criterion by which they are judged; when involving students, it also provides pedagogical and practical experience of great value. Library expertise can and should contribute to this research and the learning associated with it.

**Action Items:**

1. Encourage student researchers to utilize the library to enhance their research experiences and to promote the development of information literacy. Potential paths include:
  - a. Formalize partnerships with administrators and faculty who work with students doing research to encourage student use of library resources (staff, facilities, and collections).
  - b. Develop a program that allows librarians doing research to work with student research assistants.
  - c. Provide incentives for students to do original research using significant library resources.
2. Create new programs that take advantage of librarian expertise, including data curation and data visualization, designed to provide library expertise to faculty research funding and implementation efforts.

***C. Optimize Access to and Use of Information Resources***

The proliferation of free information resources, the ever-increasing cost of premium services, and good stewardship demand that the library think holistically about information and provide access to information required for teaching and learning, research, personal exploration, and business purposes as cost-effectively as possible.

**Action Items:**

1. Eliminate duplicative purchases of information resources by the college and make more efficient use of existing resources:
  - a. Increase access to non-library collections on campus, such as Career Services and the Chidsey Center, by integrating them into the library catalog.
  - b. Leverage freely available resources by substituting them for paid resources as appropriate.
  - c. Institutionalize the review of databases and serials on a regular basis.
2. Increase the use of free and library-purchased course materials to save students money:

- a. Engage with faculty to educate them about textbook alternatives, including Open Educational Resources and library-provided resources.
  - b. Streamline the discovery and adoption of free and library-purchased course materials through earlier conversations with faculty and collaboration with the college store.
3. Create a collection development policy that encompasses the entire range of resources: free, short-term temporarily acquired, medium-term (licensed), long-term (including special collections), and permanent (including archives and special collections).
  4. Increase the input of library professional staff in collection development.
  5. Create and implement preservation plans for both physical and digital materials.
  6. Evaluate the value, efficacy, and legality (under copyright law) of digitizing unique Davidson resources, such as those found in Archives and Special Collections.

#### ***D. Challenge Information Privilege***

Access to information is not equitable throughout the world; members of the Davidson College community inhabit a privileged position within it. The college's creation and consumption of information, particularly our scholarly communication, should reflect our value of educational access and our desire to make a disproportionate impact for good in society. Therefore, it is imperative that we raise awareness of issues related to information privilege, teach students to think critically about information use, and create policies and mechanisms for engaging in ethical and cost-effective information practices.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Lead the campus discussion on issues associated with information privilege, including open access. Identify curricular and co-curricular opportunities to frame these discussions.
2. Work with interested parties to encourage the creation of a faculty-approved open access policy for faculty, staff, and student work.
3. Enable open access publishing for Davidson intellectual property. Explore the potential for development of a self-publishing platform for scholarly materials with the appropriate academic partners.

### ***E. Increase Outreach and Fundraising***

Good stewardship demands that the Davidson community be aware of and utilize existing library resources (people, collections, and facilities). The library must also explore alternative ways of acquiring resources to enhance existing programs and to create new ones.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Create greater awareness by developing and implementing a formal outreach plan, which includes branding, social media, and campus and community activities. Document these activities and determine metrics to measure success.
2. Celebrate faculty, student, and staff scholarly and non-scholarly accomplishments. Explore the possibility of offering college research awards to students.
3. Consistently and systematically utilize existing campus mechanisms to inform the college of the activities and accomplishments of the library staff.
4. Identify and leverage opportunities to raise funds not directly tied to the annual budget in support of library strategic initiatives. Explore the possibility of adding a library line to The Fund for Davidson contribution form. Identify external agencies that provide grants for library initiatives and pursue grants as appropriate.

### ***F. Repurpose Library Space***

The advent of the digital world provides new ways to preserve and present materials and new opportunities for reaching users virtually and in person. We believe that physical and virtual spaces can work together to expand access and enhance programs for all members of the Davidson College community. Digitization can shrink the footprint of the physical collection which, in turn, frees building space for different purposes. The library prioritizes space for teaching, learning, knowledge creation, and collaboration.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Continue efforts to create a programming vision that will attract funding, currently being undertaken with physical plant, the CTL, ITS, and the VPAA's office. Share drafts with the campus community and get wide feedback in an

iterative process.

2. Explore and pursue collaborative collection efforts like the proposed project with the Associated Colleges of the South and cooperative digitization programs such as HathiTrust.
3. Work toward shrinking the footprint of the tangible collection through judicious pruning, collaboration with other libraries, and space-saving shelving options. Educate the campus community about the multifaceted advantages of such developments.
4. Accelerate deselection of print resources and conversion to electronic formats.
5. Create flexible collaborative spaces devoted to student, faculty and staff learning and knowledge creation.
6. Coordinate, evaluate, and, if necessary, redesign all of our virtual environments, including the main website, the archives site, and the research guides, to enable students to have agency in their own learning and to provide services for all of the college's constituencies (students, faculty, staff, alumni, community).

### ***G. Recruit, Retain, and Develop Staff***

The library's staff members are its most important resource (and a significant financial investment). Leveraging this resource requires the recruitment and retention of the best people, as well as the expectation of and support for continual professional development. We compete nationally for accomplished professionals; it is important to note that librarians in many institutions throughout the country have faculty status. Our inability to participate in college governance and educational planning, our lack of job security, and the absence of defined career paths outside of management, combined with low salaries and limited diversity, cause challenges for library recruitment and retention. We must raise the awareness of college administrators about these issues and, in concert with them, develop and implement a plan to overcome our challenges.

### **Action Items:**

1. Carry out an environmental scan to discern challenges and discover solutions. Look beyond the college's official peer institutions and the Oberlin Group; include all libraries to which we have lost candidates and employees in recent years, as well as others. Share this information with the VPAA, HR, and others as appropriate.

2. Partner with the VPAA and HR to draft a plan, which will include cost analysis, to address the problems, and submit it to appropriate authorities on campus for approval.
3. Create infrastructure to incentivize staff for increasing experience and skills, taking on additional responsibilities, and engaging in scholarly activities, continuing education and professional service.
4. Investigate the possibility and desirability of limited-term employment statuses in the library (residents, postdocs).
5. Develop a diversity plan for the library because diversity in all its forms is critical to the education of our students and is advantageous to the college community as a whole.

### ***H. Function Effectively and Strategically***

Behind-the-scenes library operations have significant impacts on current programs and the programs we wish to implement in the future. We need to ensure that these operations, and our internal structures that support them, maximize efficiency as we implement other aspects of our strategic plan. For both outward and inward facing endeavors, we must establish programs for obtaining feedback and incorporating that feedback into future planning and implementation activities.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Establish and implement a formal assessment plan for the library.
  - a. Prioritize use of data: collect and analyze it more broadly and deeply, and close the loop by considering it in decision-making.
  - b. Evaluate library programs on a macro level and on a micro level (specific services to specific groups)
  - c. Coordinate assessment of similar activities across library teams.
  - d. Benchmark against peer institutions on a regular basis.
2. Establish a schedule for evaluating library systems to ensure that we are using the best and most cost-effective options possible. In collaboration with ITS, explore ways to make open source software a viable solution.
3. Evaluate the library's organizational structure.
  - a. Continue to reevaluate every position from a holistic library perspective to improve programs and implement strategic objectives.
  - b. Reevaluate the structure of the management team and reporting lines; change as needed to improve operational effectiveness and achieve strategic objectives.

4. Increase formal and informal student feedback by creating a student advisory committee and using easy, quick feedback mechanisms like “flip-chart surveys” more frequently.

## **Prioritization**

A strategic plan must be a living document. Changes are coming rapidly to libraries and technology; while the library’s strategic direction may remain stable, the particulars of implementation are likely to change significantly in the next five years. The people who possess deep knowledge of these changes are the library staff; a basic tenet of the library’s strategic vision is trusting in and acting on the staff’s expertise. The plan must also align with institutional goals and acknowledge the role of the faculty in setting the college’s academic program. Additionally, we cannot ignore the likely need to obtain college resources to enable our progress in many cases. Using this document, we will seek input from the VPAA, the faculty through appropriate channels, potential staff partners, and students to prioritize these initiatives. The plan and its annual implementation goals will be available on the library’s website.