

Strategic Plan, 2019-21

Looking Forward:

Northwestern University Libraries and the University Press play a key role in advancing the university's intellectual eminence, supporting the student experience, enhancing Northwestern's global presence, and providing critical support for our academic ambitions. We deliver a suite of state-of-the-art information and research services across multiple physical and digital locations, presenting innovative digital services concurrently with distinctive primary research materials. The Libraries customize and actualize four major sets of academic resources: collections, technology, professional expertise, and specialized facilities. Each area has seen significant transformation in recent years.

Rethinking and upgrading technologies, organizational structures and physical spaces has allowed the libraries to develop new flexibility and responsiveness to the changing needs of our users. The amplification of a multi-pronged deployment of space will allow for further developments, especially around the revitalization of Deering Library and its role as a laboratory for the humanities. Modifications in the library structure have opened up new ways to leverage the wealth of subject and functional expertise among our staff and librarians and to partner effectively with faculty and other campus units.

Northwestern University Libraries strategy for 2019-2021 will be shaped by two linked approaches, assessment and outreach. The focus on assessment will allow the libraries to evaluate current services, expertise, and collections to ensure we are investing our resources in the most impactful way for our researchers, teachers, and learners. The focus on outreach and engagement will allow the libraries to ensure that our services, expertise, and collections are reaching the entire community of Northwestern and beyond. Collaborating with campus and consortial partners, we will position the libraries to meet the challenges of the [Provost's University Priorities](#) in new and exciting ways.

Enhance the University's Intellectual Eminence and Impact

Library collections and services, realized physically and digitally, are fundamental to the support of teaching and learning and to the reputation of the university. Unique materials attract scholars from around the world and contribute to the intellectual eminence of the institution. The University Press is

an internationally-respected organization through which the university expands scholarly communication and preservation of the scholarly record. Together we seek an increasingly prominent role in the dissemination of scholarship as well as in the collecting of academic information.

The libraries will continue to build collections of distinction, as we have recently around the 1960s, while uncovering new ways to leverage existing collections like the Herskovits Library. Highlights of those efforts are several collaborations with the Block Museum on high profile exhibits, the purchase of important archives, and partnering on international summer institutes related to Africa. The press will continue to publish in philosophy, literary criticism, and theatre and performance studies, while expanding into key interdisciplinary areas such as critical ethnic studies. These efforts will support the core interdisciplinary role of the libraries and press campus. Assessment and engagement will allow us to better understand the impact of our collections, scholarly dissemination, and expertise.

In 2019-2021 we will:

- continue our partnership with the Center for Native American and Indigenous Research, building on new acquisitions, research, and librarian faculty appointments to the Center.
- complete the grant-funded Berkeley Folk Music Festival digitization project and begin making materials in the digital collections available.
- publish eight to ten NU Press books a year in areas of strategic emphasis, such as ethnic studies and theater/performance studies; continuing to offer high-quality monographs in traditional areas of strength, such as philosophy, Slavic literary criticism, and critical theory.

Build Research Eminence

Libraries, publishing and the management of scholarly communication are central to the creation and dissemination of Northwestern University's research output. The services and resources of the libraries are a foundational component of the University's research infrastructure; and the NU Press is part of the worldwide system of research dissemination. We will maximize the impact of the Northwestern research enterprise by developing strategic partnerships with centers and programs to create accessible pathways to our output. The libraries will continue to maintain and expand collections of distinction, in turn fostering advanced humanities research. In current collecting, the libraries will increase focus on area studies collections for Latin America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

The renovation of Deering Library will enhance the visibility and usability of the university's rare and unique resources and create spaces for study, teaching, presentation and celebration that will transform the building into a humanities laboratory befitting the special strengths of the university.

The Libraries' own research agenda, pursued by librarian faculty with a wide array of specializations, brings international recognition in fields related to digital systems for managing audio-visual resources, curation of distinctive collections, and materials conservation.

In 2019-2021 we will:

- begin a systematic review of faculty outreach strategies to understand how best to align librarians' engagement with academic departments and meet the needs of research, while identifying areas where new expertise needs to be developed.
 - deploy a new collections analysis tool that will allow the libraries to better understand its various collections and look for engagement opportunities. This will allow us to make better decisions about collection resource allocations to ensure we are best meeting the research needs of our faculty. We also expect to identify opportunities to shape complementary collections within the BTAA or with other resource-sharing groups.
 - design a facility within the Library to quarantine and prepare materials requiring fumigation or other special procedures before they are integrated into our collections.
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Support the Student Experience

Northwestern University Libraries continue to have a central role in student life and learning. We offer an open and welcoming experience for all students, whether they are seeking access to reliable information, academic support services, treasures of cultural heritage, technology with which to do class assignments and research projects, group study space, or an inspiring place to read and think. We support study at all levels, encompassing all fields of knowledge and responding to the vibrant diversity of our campus community. The Press – operating as a small model scholarly enterprise -- contributes to the education of students with internships, graduate assistantships and workshops. In recent years the Libraries have significantly expanded their outreach to students through customized support and events addressing both curricular and co-curricular needs.

We seek to innovate in services and spaces to function as an active crossroads for learning, research, discovery, and growth. In 2018, we partnered with Weinberg College, the Searle Center, and the Office of the Provost to create an academic resource center in the main library. As it develops, the ARC will provide one-stop shopping for important student academic support services like the writing center, tutoring, and individualized research consultations. The libraries aspire to establish Northwestern as a leader in the development of digital citizenship education.

In 2019-2021 we will:

- field a comprehensive undergraduate and graduate survey seeking to understand student life and priorities. Results from this survey (developed by Ithaka) will allow the libraries to better develop campus partnerships and shape services to meet student needs.
 - expand opportunities to integrate unique and distinctive research collections into the undergraduate curriculum by collaborating with teaching faculty for improved instruction, using innovative technologies, and adapting iconic spaces.
 - continue the articulation of a “digital citizenship” emphasis enabling students to be more knowledgeable users of digital information, understanding critical literacies, privacy, copyright, data security and long-term preservation of their own records. We will build on our new partnerships on this topic with local Evanston schools and libraries.
 - offer more credit-bearing or fully-funded opportunities for students to learn the work of, and issues surrounding, academic publishing and scholarly communication.
 - advocate for better library spaces to integrate study and teaching; use the flexibility offered by Oak Grove Library Center to redeploy other library facilities to meet changing needs.
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Enhance Global Academic Reputation and Presence

The libraries and press make major contributions to Northwestern University’s global reputation and presence, especially in three major domains. The Herskovits Library of African Studies, also the locus for Middle East and Islamic studies; The Transportation Library, a widely-consulted interdisciplinary hub linking science, engineering, history, business, and economics; and our 20th Century Music collection, supporting contemporary music theory, performance studies, jazz composition, and the musical stage. The libraries are also a global leader in the development of open source software that promotes the dissemination and preservation of the scholarly record in visual images, music, film and media.

The NU Press has garnered global recognition for its translations of literature and scholarship published in other countries. Recent prizes for NUP authors and books enhance the university’s reputation across the academy and public humanities worldwide. The press is expanding its presence in critical ethnic studies and critical theory with a distinctly multinational focus, particularly on the global south.

In 2019-2021 we will:

- continue the grant funded, open source Avalon Repository and Digital Preservation projects to promote sustainable development and management of digital repositories.

- Apply to be a host institution for a two-year Postdoctoral Fellowship in Data Curation for African Studies sponsored by the Mellon Foundation. Based in the Herskovits Library of African Studies, the fellowship project will engage with, and help spread the word about, our collection of 19th- and 20th-century West African manuscripts written in Arabic.
 - expand the NU Press e-books program to China, and sustain a robust program of translation publishing.
 - build new collaborations among the press, libraries, and the Buffett Institute.
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Strengthen the Enabling Support for Our Ambitions

The libraries and press seek to sustain and grow our contributions in a way that ensures continuing relevance to the university's mission and ambitions. In the past few years we have worked to transform the culture and structure of our organizations, aspiring to be employers of choice and developers of a new generation of information services leaders. Aiding in the attraction and retention of a diverse range of new professionals is our record of staff redesign resulting in the creation of positions supporting emerging specialties such as digital publishing, research data management, digital archiving and preservation services. Building on the results of the campus staff engagement survey and other assessment efforts, we have made changes to the way public services units are organized and work together. The new arrangement provides an energetic mixture of experienced and new leadership focused on user engagement, research support, access services, and curriculum support services. In strengthening our internal support, our highest priority is the continued improvement of library spaces on campus, and the redeployment of collections and services across multiple locations.

In 2019-2021 we will:

- continue to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the information services professions by hosting the Association of Research Libraries' Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce for a second year, joining of the Association of College & Research Libraries Diversity Alliance, and seeking to participate in the Mellon University Press Diversity Fellowship program.
- improve the infrastructure of the libraries to ensure the best possible use of library space for a dynamic student experience and for a secure home of the many distinctive and high-value collections and technologies the libraries have available to researchers. We seek to address serious immediate facilities maintenance issues as well as longer-term renovations.
- learn from peer university presses to analyze and streamline workflow, expand dissemination to new audiences, and ensure financial sustainability.

- delegate responsibility for strategic project implementation to early-career librarians and staff. Senior leaders will use the strategic plan as a real-world framework for mentoring and helping selected junior leaders develop collaboration and project management skills.
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Collaboration

All areas of our work are inherently collaborative; no aspect of information services today can be treated as a stand-alone organization. This includes collections, research support, facilities, acquisitions, and of course technology. We have decades of demonstrated commitment to collaborative projects on campus, regionally, nationally and internationally. We will sustain and deepen this approach. Ongoing projects cut across multiple schools and units at Northwestern, and extend to libraries regionally and globally. Notable current collaborative initiatives include:

- Academic Resource Center: With Weinberg College, the Searle Center, and others.
- Affordable Instructional Resources: Shaping campus strategies to reduce textbook costs and increase open access course resources.
- Chabraja Center for Historical Studies: Joint lecture in the history of the book.
- Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities: In-depth engagement via librarian fellows.
- Chicago Field Studies Program: Student interns at NUPress receive course credit through CFS.
- Mary & Leigh Block Museum: partner in exhibitions, publications, programs and research.
- Center for Native American and Indigenous Research: Librarian affiliates, research support, and notable new funding to digitize archival resources related to Native American education.
- Buffett Institute: Partners with the NU Press to fund a global translation prize; now exploring options for additional print and digital publishing services via NUL and NUP. Strong interest in other emerging programmatic collaborations related to languages and area studies.
- Northwestern Alumni Association: The Libraries and Press deliver, and seek to expand, local and national programming for NU alumni. An ongoing initiative is the NUBAA Archives which was launched amidst high-profile commemorations of protest events on campus in 1968.

Regionally:

- Big Ten Academic Alliance – foundational collaboration for collections, training, and scholarly communications; pursue new strategies and national advocacy related to all of these areas.

- Evanston: To develop a wider community of practice around digital citizenship, NUL has new partnerships with District 65, Evanston Township High School, and Evanston Public Library.
 - Chicago Collections Consortium and Black Metropolis Research Consortium: NUL is a founding member of both projects and NUL librarians are currently in leadership roles at both.
 - Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI): enables discounts on databases, resource sharing, and projects for digitizing and preservation; we will participate in a new grant-funded initiative to assess library impact on student success.
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Northwestern University Libraries Vision and Values

We are a learning organization committed to creative solutions which meet rapidly changing user needs. Our spaces, services, and operations encourage learning and growth. We build assessment into our plans and embrace failure to advance innovation. We learn from and engage the Northwestern community extending beyond our library walls.

We Value:

Collaboration & Teamwork: We engage with colleagues across boundaries, helping and supporting each other not just within teams or projects, but throughout the organization. Central to this value is generating and sharing creative ideas that lead to innovation.

Trust & Honesty: We act with integrity and respect. Central to this value is a transparent work environment where we hold each other accountable, share feedback without fear, and are empowered to make decisions.

Communication: We develop clarity about what we can expect or is needed from one another through openly sharing knowledge and active listening. Central to this value is assuming good will to develop an understanding of each other's perspectives in order to carry our work forward.

Adaptability: We seek improvement by encouraging growth and learning from failure. Central to this value is cultivating a solution-driven environment that is flexible to meet immediate needs and evolve over time.

User Focused: We connect with users in a friendly and empathetic manner in an environment that fosters teaching and learning. Central to this value is our desire to make resources accessible, build relationships across the university, and serve others.