Concordia University Libraries
Libraries Administration Team

Strategic Directions: Themes

23 June 2015

Organize for empowerment

This strategic direction calls for us to build an organization that fosters staff empowerment. Those who work in the Libraries are an important team. Each team member needs to be empowered with knowledge, ability, commitment and confidence in their role as they collaborate with the other members to achieve our common goals.

Team members will gain critical knowledge and ability especially through the broadening of their experience, whether through cross-training, exchange programs or other experiential learning. This will provide staff with more confidence in their own role, more understanding of the roles of their co-workers, more mobility for work assignments, and more flexibility for collaboration.

The Libraries organization is already being developed to foster empowerment through the engagement of team members in a new structure of committees and working groups. Can this strategy be extended to have wider inclusion of staff at all levels? What kind of processes will we need to manage this highly distributed committee activity? Certainly, new models for project management and service development will help to guide us.

Create spaces for living

The Libraries transformation projects are opening up a range of space never before available to our students. In developing those spaces, we must not only be sensitive to the needs expressed by the students for study facilities and services, but we should also embrace the call for building life skills toward social engagement and life-long learning.

To do this we must listen to our students' needs and interests. We should move outwards away from service desks (e.g. roaming staff, staff ambassadors) and find new ways to interact with students. Can we bring Student Services into the Libraries? Can we create opportunities for students to serve themselves, and to help each other in the Libraries? Can we say confidently that we feel ownership of, and pride in, our library space? If so, how can we extend these feelings to the students?

Our spaces must serve the "whole person" by providing a healthy study environment that includes not only an academically inspiring environment, but also the assurance of cleanliness and security. The library is a cultural centre -- how can we best reflect that? What cultural events could we curate or facilitate? Will recreational opportunities (like yoga or video-gaming) help our students to study?

Library Services & Interaction with Users

Services offered by the Library are essential to students, faculty members and the community at large in their quest for knowledge. Concordia Libraries must continue to develop its digital service offer to respond to current needs and the ever-changing environment. Our role is to bring together all the conditions for our students to develop critical thinking and foster collaboration in connecting them with what mankind has produced. Together, we are given the mandate to redefine our Libraries. The future includes new ways to organize, curate, preserve, and provide access to data and publications.

Efficient services and the drive to innovate are in direct relation to the quality of our interactions with library users. Not only do we value the quality of the relationships with our patrons, but we wish to put the very notion of service at the core of our interactions with them. What are the different ways we should use to interact with students and faculty? Should we put "student success" at the center of everything we do? How can the library and its team make a difference and contribute to students' success? The Libraries recognize the rapid expansion and diversity of the means by which users access and use data and publications. How can we best respond to users' needs and their search and use of data and publications? Technology is facilitating the management of information but it is also raising new challenges. Which of these challenges should we prioritize? How can we better serve interdisciplinary research and teaching?

The Libraries have already paved the way to partnerships with stakeholders within and outside the university. Should we extend our collaboration with partners such as the Student Success Centre, eConcordia and GradPro Skills to further the breadth of the services we offer? What forms these partnerships should take?

Collections at heart of teaching, learning and research

University libraries are facing major challenges meeting their communities' collections needs. Since the end of the Second World War in particular, big multinational publishers have imposed oligopolistic practices on libraries. With an average annual increase rate of 6% on journal "big deal" packages, combined with constant buying power reductions by budget cuts or bad exchange rates, libraries are coming to a point where either budgets have to be increased, or difficult decisions have to be made.

Universities with high research impact are all giving access to good or excellent collections. Researchers' publications on their research outputs are the basis of the scientific method. Excellence in teaching is built and maintained with access to literally any document ever published. In universities, libraries have been given the role of making available all materials required to conduct learning, teaching and research activities. Collections are at the heart of teaching, learning and research. A university without library collections does not exist.

With "Double our research" given as one of the nine University's strategic directions, what strategy can Concordia University Libraries take in the next five years to make sure access to collections is met at the level our community needs? How can we evaluate the needs and associated budget for collections at Concordia University? Shared Library Integrated System (LIS), joint cataloguing teams across universities, new partnerships are but a few examples of changes implemented in other universities. How can we

develop our workflows and processes in providing access to collections in order to increase our production and hasten the delivery of and access to resources? What is the library's role in data collection and management? The library's recent acquisition of research archives is a call to develop new services for the preservation, promotion and access to special collections. What is the vision we want to develop for our special and distinctive collections at Concordia?

Create knowledge and innovation

University libraries are re-inventing themselves as the world is transformed by the widespread accessibility of networked information, and by the rapid development of technologies. This changing environment provides numerous opportunities for Concordia Library to redefine its role, for librarians and library staff to explore new ways to support multidisciplinary research. How can we in the digital environment, participate with and support Concordia's researchers? Do we need to change our work and our workflows, what new services do we create?

These changes profoundly transform libraries and how we think about libraries. How can we contribute to the advancement of the next-generation library? How can we encourage scholarship in this area? Could we have in the Library a research unit to foster innovation and scholarship?

The physical and digital spaces must support the creation of new knowledge, supporting research, teaching, creativity and innovation. Concordia Library is committed to this goal by transforming its physical spaces to become a central place on campus for students, faculty and library staff from all horizons to interact and experiment. How can we transform the library to become a place where innovation takes place? What facilities can we build to interact with digital data and artworks? What can we do to foster the exploration of emerging technologies?

Extreme Collaboration

Concordia Libraries provides the university community with information resources as well as services fundamental to learning and the pursuit of knowledge. In order to continue to achieve this mission, collaboration at all levels must happen in the coming years. Scarce financial resources and the evolution of library users' needs command changes in how we innovate for the advancement of our library. Cloud technology, research infrastructures used by researchers, the possibility of high level of interoperability we are getting to and the adoption of the digital culture tools and mindset in all aspects of learning, teaching and research activities indicate the way: Collaboration and partnership for the advancement of libraries.

"Extreme collaboration" can take place within the library, among services. Can we revisit the subject librarian model and work more collaboratively for the development of our collections and liaison services to our departments? How can we better serve research and teaching programs that are inter- or transdisciplinary in nature? How can interlibrary loans (ILL) better serve and inform the selection and

acquisition processes? Can we establish a project management approach in which librarians and support staff could be invited to contribute to projects, regardless to work sectors, based on staff knowledge and expertise?

Establishing partnerships with researchers and research units for the entire research cycle, from developing grant proposals to publication of research output, is a possible avenue to explore. A pressing need expressed by the community is the development of preservation and dissemination infrastructures for research data. This corresponds exactly to the mission of libraries. What is Concordia's role in the national network (Portage) that is being created? Excellent collaboration with other university services is certainly what is expected from the Libraries. As often as possible, we must establish or strengthen partnerships with other services and faculties.

Another area of collaboration and partnership is within collection development. In a city where we find four universities, is there still a need to keep in silos four copies of the same printed books? How can we go beyond the current collaborative model? Are there ways we could benefit from pulling together our resources for any of the services we are offering? Which ones? Reference services, collection development and management, off-site storage, cataloguing? Like more and more university library networks, would a shared LIS be an answer for Concordia Libraries and for establishing the basis of more collaboration amongst Quebec and Canadian university libraries?

Libraries have an impressive record of successful collaborations. They are now at the beginning of a new cycle for the advancement of their services that will bring them beyond ILL and licensing of digital resources. How can Concordia be part of defining the new collaboration model?