

Partners in Learning

Okanagan College Library Strategic Plan, 2012-2016

Introduction

In fall 2011, Okanagan College Library embarked on a strategic planning process, the first such process undertaken by the Library in recent memory. The launch of the College's Strategic Plan in 2010, and of its Long Term Education Plan in 2011, along with a technological environment that is dramatically changing the way people obtain and interact with information, all contribute to the need for the Library to think strategically about its direction within Okanagan College at this point in its evolution.

Recognizing that the Library's key strength is its dedicated, intelligent, service-oriented, innovative, collaborative group of people, the process was – and still is – intended to encourage as many Library employees as possible to participate in the development of the Library's strategic direction. To this end, a number of different mechanisms were established to foster a collaborative approach: a staff-only wiki was implemented, on which readings were posted for comment and discussion; a survey was developed and distributed, to which staff responded enthusiastically; and an in-person planning session was held in early May, at which staff participated in a variety of group activities intended to stimulate the creation of a vision for the Library.

Library employees participated in the above activities to an extent that surpassed expectations, illustrating their concern for the future of the Library and their commitment to their role in transforming the lives of students and the communities in which they reside. Thirty people responded to the survey, generating 83 pages (nearly 34,000 words) of thought-provoking ideas about their hopes and dreams for the Library. Some of these responses exuded confidence and optimism that the Library's commitment to personalized customer service would ensure its continued success, while others revealed frustration that the pace of change within the Library is too slow to keep up with the changes around us, while still others expressed reservations, and even fear, about their role, and that of the Library, in a world in which change can be seen to be the only constant. The in-person planning session was equally well received, with the facilitator commenting that it was one of the most engaged groups with which he had ever worked. This session resulted in nearly 20 more pages of ideas to add to those that arose from the wiki and the survey.

This strategic plan builds on the ideas expressed by staff during the planning process, as well as on the many positive achievements of the Library and its staff over the history of the institution, and seeks to provide a direction for the Library to follow over the next three and a half years. That direction will, without doubt, entail significant change, but will also continue to recognize and include the contributions of Library staff, as well as attempting to strengthen connections between the Library and the Okanagan College community: its students, its employees, its teaching departments, and its student and employee support services.

Key Directions

1. *Library services are integrated with the learning, teaching and applied research mission of the College*
 - Work more closely with Student Services, Educational Technology, and other departments to provide students with a more integrated system of learning support:
 - Consider a Learning Commons model that incorporates Learning Centre/Success Centre services as well as Library services
 - Work with Educational Technology to collaborate in the provision of resources and support for students to use learning technology in their Okanagan College course work
 - Communicate and collaborate as appropriate with other College units insofar as they have an impact on learning, teaching and applied research
 - Work with instructional areas to ensure the Library's information literacy program meshes with the learning outcomes of the College's courses and programs:
 - Participate in the development of curriculum and assignments that impart research skills to students in a manner appropriate to their level and subject matter
 - Actively participate in the Institute for Learning and Teaching, in order to foster a learning-centred approach to information literacy instruction
 - Develop a formal information literacy program that recognizes information literacy as a learner goal in all instructional areas
2. *Learning resources meet the learning, teaching and applied research needs of students and faculty*
 - Assess collection usage:
 - Ensure we have access to current and accurate usage data for all components of the collection, both physical and digital
 - Develop means of monitoring and analyzing collection usage data on a continuous basis
 - Regularly review usage data and make decisions about acquisitions, cancellations and withdrawals based on this data, along with other relevant criteria
 - Actively seek input from users:
 - Periodically survey faculty on their collection needs for both teaching and research
 - Conduct focus groups and other qualitative research with students to determine how they use, and how they would like to use, library resources, including their preference for particular formats, delivery methods and devices
 - Consider alternative means of acquiring and providing access to learning resources:
 - Revisit demand-driven acquisitions for e-books, and potentially for other resource types
 - Consider subscription-based e-book packages as a substitute for some one-time purchasing of books and e-books
 - Decide upon one or more usable and sustainable streaming video solutions
 - Investigate potential local digitization projects
 - Consider whether free alternatives and/or open access materials can replace paid resources in some cases
 - Investigate print-on-demand as a just-in-time acquisitions method
 - Work with other institutions and organizations to expand resource sharing opportunities

3. *Students and other Library users have access to services and resources when and where they need them*
- Ensure physical library facilities on all four campuses meet the diverse needs of students, staff and other library users
 - Provide appropriately sized, modern, flexible, welcoming facilities for students that accommodate individual study, group study, collaborative work, interaction with Library employees and other College staff, and use of computers and other technology
 - Provide work spaces for employees that are conducive to individual productivity as well as to collaboration with other employees and to interaction with students and other library users, in both individual and group settings
 - Ensure the integrated library system (ILS) and other systems and technologies used to access library resources are current, functional, cost-effective, sustainable, and appropriate to the needs of our users
 - Work with other B.C. postsecondary institutions, and other partners, to develop a needs assessment for a new ILS, including the potential of a shared ILS
 - Monitor the technologies in use within and outside the College to identify opportunities for innovation and improved service in the Library
 - Investigate the role of the Library in providing access to devices, such as e-readers and tablet computers, that facilitate access to digital information
 - Work with IT Services to better integrate the Library's systems and resources with College-wide systems and resources, e.g. Moodle and myOkanagan
 - Investigate the implementation of an institutional repository to support applied research
 - Review Reference, Circulation and other user services to ensure they are provided in a manner that best meets the needs of students
 - Consider alternatives to the current reference desk model, including elimination of reference desks, combined service desks, or other options
 - Increase online learning opportunities for students to complement the information literacy program
 - Continue to explore various means by which reference services can be offered to off-campus library users, e.g. "virtual reference"
 - Ensure that Library opening hours, and the services provided during those hours, reflect student demand for access to services and resources
 - Review all user services to ensure the Library is focused on providing core services
4. *Employees have the skills they need to perform the jobs the Library requires them to do*
- Ensure Library positions serve the mission and purpose of the Library and the College
 - Review all positions to identify duties and tasks that could be performed more efficiently, performed by a different person, or eliminated
 - Explore opportunities for current employees to perform duties, within their respective classifications, that best meet the needs of Library users
 - As positions become vacant, review and revise job descriptions as appropriate

- Develop a training program to ensure all employees' skills remain current and relevant
 - Identify the competencies required for all Library positions
 - Assess employee skill sets and identify training needs for all Library staff
 - Assign a librarian to coordinate the development of a training strategy, including a range of training opportunities for Library employees

Implementation

The overarching goal of this strategic plan is to ensure Okanagan College Library's continuing relevance and value to the institution, and especially to its students. To achieve this goal, the Library will need to devote financial and human resources, on an ongoing basis, to implement practical, targeted actions that address the key directions identified here, and to assess the results of those actions to ensure the key directions are being attained. In the past, the Library has been challenged in following through on some of its longer-term plans, largely due to the scarcity of Library employees available to focus on strategic initiatives while still accomplishing the day-to-day activities required of their jobs. The Library is also challenged by a workforce that is divided, geographically, among four campuses, and chronologically, because of the diversity of staff schedules required to operate four libraries for a total of more than 300 hours per week during the Fall and Winter semesters.

To address the above objectives and challenges, the Library will establish eight working groups. Each group will assume responsibility for the accomplishment of a specific objective by developing detailed strategies, action plans and timelines. The mandate of each group will be established upon further consultation, but the specific areas they will address will include **Learning Support, Information Literacy, Learning Resources, Facilities, Library Systems & Technology, User Services, Human Resources, and Training & Development**. Each group will be headed by either a faculty librarian or by the Library Director and each group will include both faculty librarians and support staff, with membership to be based on interest, expertise and geography, as well as on current areas of responsibility. As much as possible, meetings will be held virtually – e.g. via Blackboard Collaborate – in order to maximize participation of staff from all campuses. Working groups will have regular meetings, pre-determined outcomes, and regular reporting schedules.

Along with the inclusion of all Library staff, one of the goals of the implementation process is to involve all relevant areas of the College in appropriate decisions and actions. Several of the plan's key directions speak to the need for the Library to be more integrated than it is currently with the learning and teaching activities and priorities of the College. To accomplish this goal, the Library must develop relationships with each of the areas involved in learning and teaching at the College. Therefore, it is expected that the implementation process will be highly consultative and, in some cases, collaborative.

Implementation of the plan will begin in Fall 2012, with further input from both Library staff and the broader College community. It is hoped that working groups will be created before the end of the Fall semester and that at least some of the key directions can be incorporated into the Library's 2013-14 Unit Plan. However, given the ambitious scope of some of the key directions, the bulk of the impact of this plan will be seen in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 Unit Plans. Additionally, this plan will not end in 2016, but rather will form part of a dynamic process that contributes to the next Library Strategic Plan.