

# Strategic Planning Report: Arts and Humanities

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**I ILLINOIS LIBRARY**

## Introduction

The Arts and Humanities Division consists of the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library (HPNL); the Literatures and Languages Library (LLL); the Music and Performing Arts Library (MPAL); and the Ricker Architecture and Art Library.

Along with the Main Stacks, the libraries that comprise the Arts and Humanities division hold the collections most associated with the research and teaching interests of faculty, staff, undergraduate students, and graduate students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Fine and Applied Arts. Consequently, the division develops collections in a wide variety of formats and across a broad historical range. To develop such extensive collections, the division relies on faculty and staff who demonstrate expertise beyond the subjects that they serve, such as knowledge of foreign languages, format specific copyright, and cultural artifacts (e.g. film, monographs, historical newspapers, and music scores) related to Arts and Humanities research.

Members of the Arts and Humanities Division emphasize engagement and public service. For instance, MPAL contributes to the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, creating informational resources that support the center's programming. Members of the division also contribute to the inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of Humanities research more broadly by participating in academic units across campus, including the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities and the Unit for Criticism and Theory. Division faculty lead research opportunities that expand beyond campus, such as HPNL's Fashion, Style, and Aesthetics Reading Group and the newly formed History Research Travel Grant. The division demonstrates how engagement facilitates research in a variety of scholarly and creative contexts, and therefore contributes to the University's land-grant mission to promote engaged members of society.

The Arts and Humanities Division supports the teaching efforts of faculty and staff in the communities that it serves in order to implement the campus' mission to transform students into future leaders. Members of the division develop research resources, including LibGuides and on-line tutorials, for the academic departments that

the division represents. Moreover, members of the division frequently collaborate with faculty and teaching staff to teach undergraduate students the research skills and methods necessary to advance through their course of study. Finally, the division participates in training programs aimed to address the more complex research needs of faculty and graduate students.

Faculty members of the Arts and Humanities Division are also scholars in their own right. In keeping with their status as tenure-track or tenured faculty, faculty members of the Arts and Humanities Division make significant contributions to a variety of academic fields, including, but not limited to, book studies; library studies; library and information science; classics, literary studies; medieval studies; music studies; and performance studies. The faculty's scholarship impacts professional academic librarianship, and also contributes to the academic disciplines related to a faculty member's area of subject expertise.

Given transformations in academic librarianship and the ever-evolving needs of faculty, the Arts and Humanities Division strives to develop inclusive collections in a myriad of formats, while requiring increased assistance to develop the capacity, bandwidth, and resources to steward such collections in a more proactive and visible manner. This commitment informs the division's increased interest to embed its world class collections into the communities that it serves, particularly by designing and implementing rigorous information literacy and research methodology training opportunities, public events, and collaborations with faculty and staff.

Finally, while we aspire to demonstrate how we might contribute to the campus' strategic plan, we struggle to see how our strengths, services, and aspirations fit with many of the goals listed in campus' newly crafted strategic plan. In fact, the plan, at times, contradicts many of the research methods, pedagogies, and values specific to research and teaching in the Arts and Humanities. For instance, many of the examples used to illustrate goals such as "Societal Impact" and "Resources and Strategic Investment" do not correspond with, or represent, the work that we do and aspire to bring to fruition. As a result, it can be difficult to determine, exactly, how we can better serve campus if our own values are not consistently represented in campus' strategic plan.

## Strengths

- Librarians (faculty) and staff possess a wide range of knowledge (e.g.) subject-specific expertise, foreign languages, inter-disciplinary connections, copyright policies) necessary to meet the needs and interests of faculty, staff, and students;
- The division develops and maintains a vast collection that contains a wide variety of formats, special collections, and rare materials;
- The division is international in its approach to collection development and reference services, emboldening the library's broader ability to address research and teaching across a wide variety of academic fields and in numerous languages;
- The division's outreach and engagement initiatives embed the division's resources and collections into academic departments and the external communities that the division serves;
- Some of the division's library spaces enable it to hold events that engage, welcome, and/or include faculty, students, and community members/patrons;
- The division welcomes and supports a wide variety of patrons, both on campus and beyond it, including visiting scholars/fellows, and/or international scholars;
- Members of the division are willing to explore, assess, and implement more innovative, collaborative, or user-experience based approaches to collection development, public service, reference support, and/or engagement.

# Opportunities (and Challenges)

## **Opportunities/Challenges (1-3 Years)**

- Organize collection development practices and utilize relationships and collective knowledge to emphasize inclusive collection development practices throughout the division;
- Support engagement initiatives and programs and obtain support/resources to implement and assess engagement initiatives and programs;
- Create a more collaborative network among all of the individual libraries that comprise the division;
- Continue to look for opportunities to integrate collections into opportunities for research and teaching support, and develop relationship with colleagues (e.g. those associated with Digital Humanities or the Scholarly Commons) whose skills and expertise can facilitate the creation of new knowledge in the academic fields that we represent;
- Develop deeper and more sustained partnerships with faculty and teaching staff in order to design and implement comprehensive library instruction and research assistance for the academic departments that the division represents.

Our division's more immediate goals represent our interest to create a collaborative environment, both amongst ourselves and colleagues within the library, as well as with the members of the academic departments and communities that we serve. Accomplishing these goals will help to represent the intentionality behind our collective decision making process, which breeds transparency and trust both within the library, and across campus more generally. The turn to a more collaborative collection development conversation could be situated within a broader discourse, particularly given transformations in scholarly communications.

However, the more immediate interests of the Division speak to the fact that the reduced number of staff in division units means that librarians often have to perform more operational duties, and therefore devote less time to special projects and the research that is required of them for promotion and tenure. Hence, it is necessary to focus on processes and approaches that can maximize our efficiency, enhance our ability to support patrons, and facilitate division faculty members' research and scholarship. Within this time frame, larger goals may seem less clear given the forthcoming Building Project. We anticipate that the Building Project will impact many of the more long-term challenges and opportunities.

## **Opportunities/Challenges (3-7 Years)**

- Provide access to electronic resources/digitized collections that represent contemporary and emerging research fields/course offerings;
- Implement support/resources to ensure the ability to sustain engagement and outreach initiatives;
- Maintain reputable print collection with impending spatial alterations, ensuring that deduplication and weeding processes enhance our collections and can become easier to discover with migration to new ILS;
- Assess allocation of funds to ensure that units can afford resources and materials that are not collections specific;
- Improve spaces to make them more accessible and conducive for research, teaching, and public engagement.

Many of the challenges and opportunities related to this particular time frame speak to the Building Project and its potential impact on our division and across campus. While optimism is required, the implementation of the library's existing service model broke faith with many of the faculty members who belong to academic

departments that our division serves. While the Main Building project is an opportunity to build trust and intellectual community, many fear that it may have the opposite effect. Hence, we understand the Building Project as constitutive of more forthcoming challenges and opportunities. While we are committed to developing collections, we also note that this must be done with intention and integrated into the Building Project in a way that speaks to the library's mission to support research and teaching in a more comprehensive and coherent manner. We see the next 3-7 years as integral to how the library implements its dedication to inclusivity and to the university's land-grant mission. We therefore underscore the need to create stable and guaranteed support for engagement initiatives, which connect our resources to our community and facilitate new research and knowledge that is otherwise impossible to achieve.

### **Opportunities/Challenges (7 years and Beyond)**

- Assessment of Building Project and its impact on Arts and Humanities Divisions' collections, services, etc.
- Address staffing shortages to restore faculty to pre-recession population;
- Implement, integrate, and sustain library instruction programs and research resources in the curriculum of academic departments that the division supports;
- Design and implement collection development practices/models that respond to/anticipate innovation in scholarly communications;
- Ensure our collections are maintained, stored, preserved, and easily accessible for all users.

The opportunities and challenges represented in this time frame address the impact that the Building Project may have on our division's core services and collections. In the more distant future, we do not simply aspire to become more integrated into the communities that we serve, but we hope to be able illustrate how such participation creates new knowledge and more clearly represents how the division's collections, resources, and personnel are intimately connected with the campus' broader mission to prepare students for life-long learning, and to support faculty/staff as their research, teaching, and service enables the campus "to embrace, encourage, and adapt to the accelerating diversity of cultures, ideas, and identities fuels our creative spirit and leads us to consider new perspectives, possibilities, and knowledge." Hence, the challenges and opportunities that we face in the future correspond with our interest to elevate the status of our collections and personnel, and to manifest a more robust and active public and university focused outreach agenda, such that the division becomes understood as vital and integral to the campus' broader missions and infrastructure.

## **Aspirations**

- Collaborate with colleagues across library and campus departments to design and implement instruction, engagement, and research services/opportunities that enable the division to achieve a more robust and active profile;
- Continue to develop collections across a wide variety of formats, optimize access to these collections in an inclusive and accessible manner, and ensure that collections represent and anticipate emerging areas of research and teaching interests among Arts and Humanities' students, staff, and faculty;
- Elevate status of the division on campus and beyond as an integral research and teaching resource for the Arts and Humanities.

These aspirations represent our desire to continue to build upon our strengths, doing so in a way that is mindful of the possibilities afforded by the Building Project. However, we would underscore that these aspirations require ongoing support of library administration. While collection development and faculty research seem to occupy a privileged place in the library, we are increasingly interested to pursue opportunities where we can represent our

collections and collective knowledge in a manner that produces new knowledge and contributes to the campus' broader pedagogical vision. This requires that units within the division, and divisions across the campus, consider a more a collaborative and holistic approach to librarianship.

## Results

*How can your division contribute to advancing the university's new strategic plan?* Construct a list up to 5 items in each of the four areas. [2 pages max]

### **Scholarship, Discovery, and Innovation**

- Faculty and staff knowledge of non-English languages and wide variety of cultural artifacts align current and potential resources with academic and research units to capitalize on scholarly synergies across campus;
- Increased attention and involvement with campus to design and sustain opportunities for engagement to build infrastructure, policies, and practices that support scholarship, innovation, public engagement, and entrepreneurship across disciplinary lines, particularly with respect to the ever increasing inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of Arts and Humanities' research and teaching;
- Develop robust collections in a wide variety of formats, and emphasize and support outreach initiatives, in order to affirm campus' commitment to the foundational role of the Arts and Humanities as they contribute to campus' contribution to pursuits for the common good;
- Collaborate with digital humanities librarians and colleagues in order to facilitate the development of new knowledge and analytical methods that optimize campus' ability to serve society.

### **Transformative Learning Experiences**

- Continue to employ undergraduate and graduate students in order to provide financial assistance to students, thereby increasing accessibility, attracting an outstanding and diverse student body, and providing students with the opportunities to acquire new skills that expand beyond their degree program or course of study;
- Require expanded investments in our buildings and facilities in order to create more effective learning and research environments and spaces that integrate library resources and personnel in order to provide undergraduate and graduate students with more immediate access to support;
- Design information literacy/library instruction and engagement opportunities that supports the curriculum of the individual departments that we serve, and implement such programs into such academic departments/our community to provide broader educational pathways, enhance current programs to increase flexibility and to foster education across disciplines, and encourage integrative learning experiences as designed by Arts and Humanities' departments;

### **Societal Impact**

- Continue to support Krannert Center and other such institutions, while becoming more integrated into such centers on campus, in order to position library resources and personnel in positions to draw local and regional community members onto campus through the development of a broad spectrum of enriching cultural experiences that leverage the university's common good facilities and community programming;

- Leverage special and rare collections, as well as expertise of staff and faculty, in order to create a culture that values long-term partnerships and public engagement as a means to develop relationship with external stakeholders, collaborators, and researchers.

### **Resources and Strategic Investment**

- Develop collections and collaborations across campus to cultivate a culture that values inclusivity and promotes diversity.

## Appendix: Division Work Overview