Washington and Lee University Library
Strategic Directions: 2017-2022
**Our Mission**
The University Library is a teaching organization that collaborates with faculty to prepare students for life-long learning as informed global citizens.

**Strategic Goals**

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As it works to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and engaged university community, the library prioritizes curriculum development and the creation of community learning spaces that establish a welcoming environment for creativity, learning, and research. To foster this intellectual and creative community, the library plans to reduce the collection footprint and instead develop a unified digital and print collection that makes room for modernized study spaces, classrooms, computer labs, multimedia editing facilities and offices.

The library has already begun to restructure its organization in response to the changing needs of the university community, thanks to initial funding from a 2015 Mellon Foundation grant to support the campus Digital Humanities initiative. Fully transforming the library into a collaborative space for the twenty-first century requires physical changes as well as organizational changes, so that the library’s physical spaces better accommodate student and faculty needs. This physical transformation will bring the library into line with the facilities at W&L’s peer institutions and support the university as it recruits a more diverse student body.
Expand library participation in the curriculum and in developing student learning outcomes across the disciplines.

Library faculty teach students what information is, how to access and evaluate different kinds of information, and how to best make use of the information available to them. These skills are fundamental to the university’s mission to develop students’ capacity for critical thinking, life-long learning, and engaged citizenship, and they are essential to research and scholarship across the curriculum. By defining information and research skills outside the context of any particular discipline or department, the library’s instruction program helps students transfer essential skills across courses and throughout their academic career, while also providing opportunities to tailor them to specific fields of study.

In recent years, the library has placed significant emphasis on Digital Humanities in its instructional programming. Through this programming, students are already learning Web communication and design, data structures, basic coding skills, and best practices for digital engagement, and then applying these skills to questions from their discipline and to their professional goals. The library proposes expanding the curriculum developed within the Digital Humanities initiative into an interdisciplinary minor that reaches beyond the humanities and extends to the sciences and social sciences. This Digital Culture and Information minor will provide students with the practically and widely applicable information, communication, and research skills that benefit both students’ academic and career pursuits. In addition, the library is establishing a faculty position specializing in quantitative information and research methods in order to further expand the program as social science and science faculty increasingly explore the data sciences in their teaching and research.

Likewise, Special Collections instruction provides interdisciplinary and transferrable skills to students across the university. Outreach by library faculty and staff has significantly increased faculty demand for Special Collections instruction over the last five years, and the library has considerably expanded the instruction program to support assignments that make meaningful connections between the subject matter of individual courses and W&L’s institutional history and historical resources.
The library will continue to develop its instructional programs to meet growing faculty demand and changing curricular needs. The library’s primary instructional goals in this phase of development include:

- Collaborating with departments and faculty in assignment design and assessment
- Developing models for interdisciplinary student learning outcomes that faculty can use to link information literacy to critical thinking and globally engaged citizenship
- Expanding embedded classroom instruction and library workshops to help students understand how to evaluate and use the different kinds of information in their day-to-day lives
- Developing a Digital Culture and Information minor that builds interdisciplinary skills and facilitates expanded student access to technical courses despite their major field of study

The library also supports the creation of a Center for Teaching and Learning to be housed in the library. A Center for Teaching and Learning demonstrates the depth of W&L's commitment to pedagogical innovation, and makes much more visible the support structures that exist for student learning. If W&L is to be a welcoming environment for first-generation students, students from marginalized backgrounds and students from under-resourced high schools, then we must work to increase the visibility and hospitality of academic support services so that students see those services as an integral and welcoming part of campus life. The library, which connects a wide range of campus units including Academic Technologies, academic support centers like the Writing Center, and research support and instruction, is a natural site for such a center.

A Space Designed for Learning

Revitalize Leyburn’s lower levels, Telford and Special Collections to offer modern learning spaces that facilitate creativity and collaboration.

Leyburn Library was designed in the late 1960s and early 1970s to offer the “best post-World War II college and library experience” (Leyburn Library building program, February 12, 1971). We now need learning spaces that support our post-20th century educational goals in library instruction, digital and print resources, and services. Our goal in revitalizing Leyburn’s lower levels is to develop spaces that will facilitate engagement in the new forms of digital scholarship and scholarly communications required by a twenty-first-century education. Because this work is not tied spatially to an academic department, the central space of the library should serve as a hub for scholarship and creative work across the disciplines.
Despite the necessity of a modern facility comparable to those of peer institutions, funding and planning restrictions have limited the library’s much-needed renovation to piecemeal projects, such as the Northen lobby renovation and the establishment of a Digital Humanities collaboration space on level two. A formal master plan is needed to guide the phased development of library facilities and ensure renovation projects remain targeted toward meeting faculty and student needs and advancing the University’s mission and priorities. **Over 80,000 square feet of prime academic space in the center of campus remains untouched since 1979.** Much of this space can be used to create the collaborative learning environments and classrooms with robust resources and high-end technology that will amplify the library’s contribution to the University.

Our goal is to craft a master plan for phased and focused capital improvements over the next five years, which would accommodate a Center for Teaching and Learning should it become part of the University’s Strategic Plan. Such a center, housed in the library, would streamline and centralize student academic support services and create a culture of collaborative, peer-centered academic support. It would similarly facilitate pedagogical collaboration among faculty from across the university and formalize the rich and generative ad-hoc collaborations that currently exist. Perhaps most important, the library is the primary study and work space for students, and centralizing academic support services within the library signals to students that such services are convenient, prominent, welcoming, and clearly connected to the other activities of studying, researching, and writing.

In addition to transforming outdated facilities into the diverse and desirable places to study, collaborate and teach that the library desperately needs, the plan will also address the necessary upgrades to the facilities associated with Special Collections, housed in Lower Level 1. Use of Special Collections by faculty, students, and visiting researchers continues to skyrocket, and the physical space can no longer accommodate the needs of the collections and their users. The library transformation must include dedicated spaces for teaching, research, and secure processing of materials in Special Collections.
Develop digital and print collections to support the curriculum, independent learning and faculty research.

Providing access to academic resources without formally owning them has become the standard method for increasing access in a time of high inflation and low budget increases. Financial constraints shift our print collection building to digital and on-demand purchasing. This shift opens up new opportunities to engage in research methods involving data mining and textual analysis, and our goal is to add new collections of primary and secondary sources to support emerging digital research methods.

The primary obstacle in collection development is the lack of dedicated endowment income to support the science and business disciplines. Building dedicated endowments, as found in the humanities disciplines, is essential if the library is to adequately support these fields of study, which represent some of the fastest-growing departments on campus.

The library's need for diverse learning spaces requires that we reduce the physical footprint of some collections. The library plans to create space by paring down government documents (when available digitally), and by installing compact shelving for bound print journals and other lesser-used material. In addition, the library will enter into formal agreements with other libraries to identify little-used books that are widely held across Virginia, allowing us to withdraw items when we are confident that copies will continue to be available to meet demand. The library also plans to join HathiTrust, which will not only improve access to digitized books in the public domain, but will also provide faculty with new opportunities for textual analysis of HathiTrust's broad collection.

As we expand our digital collections and optimize our local resources, managing collections will be more efficient once the migration to the integrated library system Alma-Primo is complete. The new system will unify access across all resource types, making materials more readily available to faculty and students and freeing staff time for instruction and other services.

Finally, the library will continue to add items to Special Collections that support W&L's curriculum, creating unique research opportunities available only at W&L. The library will also expand the use of ArchivesSpace, which improves discovery of items within these collections and will help set priorities for digitizing the rare and important material housed in Special Collections.
Professional Development and Staffing

Expand opportunities for professional development, increase support for research and scholarship, and create much-needed staffing positions.

In coming years, the library will emphasize the development of staff skills to keep up with evolving information needs, digital research methods, and scholarly publishing venues. As positions in the library open, they will be reevaluated and reconfigured to meet the university's changing research and instructional needs.

Library faculty members maintain a formal professional development and research agenda requiring research, publication, and participation in professional associations. In 2017 alone, library faculty published 4 articles (2 additional articles were accepted for publication), presented 14 papers at conferences, and attended 21 workshops and conferences. Many of these professional development opportunities were funded by the Mellon DH Grant. Following the completion of the grant, the library will seek to increase financial support for these essential professional development activities to ensure that library faculty maintain research agendas consistent with the status of the university.

The material in Special Collections makes invaluable contributions to our understanding of institutional and national history, but the library currently lacks the staffing to promote and maintain the Collections in a manner commensurate with its status. The increased demand on Special Collections' staff, particularly in relation to the history of the institution, has left a backlog of processing and cataloging that is growing rapidly. If we are to adequately preserve and catalog important and valuable archival material, the library needs additional staff for processing and digitizing materials, as well as preservation endowments to restore deteriorating items in the physical collection. In addition, the increased national attention on institutional history necessitates an expanded discovery effort to fully assess the material available in Special Collections. The library seeks to add an additional professional position to serve as University Archivist, a position that would respond to the acute need to ensure access to and security of materials housed in Special Collections.