

# Trinity College Library Strategic Directions 2010/11 - 2012/13

## Introduction

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As all academic libraries, Trinity College Library is facing the challenges of a radically changing information environment. How we position ourselves towards these challenges in the near future will significantly impact the Library's gradual re-conception over the course of this decade. This document articulates the major strategic directions for our planning that will need to be nimble, dynamic, and synchronized with external and internal changes. The purpose of this document is to serve as a compass and reminder of our mission and priorities, so that the processes of goal-setting and decision-making across all library departments may be complementary and cohesive toward desired outcomes.

The strategic directions below reflect a year-long process involving literature reviews, feedback from students, and probing discussions among all library staff. This process helped us to acknowledge what major external factors we need to consider, and to identify priorities for the resulting strategic directions.

External factors that influence our planning and decision making:

- a. College's financial situation
- b. Demographics of our student body
- c. Changes in publishing and the distribution of content
- d. Technological developments
- e. Legal issues such as Copyright and Fair Use
- f. Administrative and curricular trends
- g. Shifts in the library profession

The strategic directions are organized under the following themes of discussion, with the external factors above considered within each context.

- I. Services
- II. Programs
- III. Outreach
- IV. Collaboration
- V. Staffing
- VI. Content
- VII. Space

Ultimately, the paths we take need to be determined by ongoing assessment. We will have to be intentional in collecting and interpreting both quantitative and qualitative evidence to demonstrate how the new directions benefit our primary constituents, the students and faculty of Trinity College.

## Services

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**Outlook:** Access and navigation of the rapidly growing array of information resources present libraries with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. While a “one-search-fits-all” approach to information retrieval may be neither achievable nor desirable, offering improved access to content and more efficient search results is a high priority.

Technologies for content delivery and communication continue to develop rapidly. Mobile devices, for example, are growing in popularity particularly among students, accompanied by expectations that services, resources, and staff will be accessible from those devices. At the same time, library staff recognizes the need for more in-person service to provide in-depth, individualized research assistance to our patrons.

While for the foreseeable future the library must maintain a traditional suite of services, including circulation of hard copy materials, interlibrary loan, course reserves, and on-demand research help, we need to explore and improve their efficiency to allow for the development of new service directions.

### **Strategic Directions**

- a. Pursue new discovery tools that can identify relevant content and deliver it to the user faster and more efficiently
- b. Package information better to suit mobile-friendly resources, alternative communication methods, and more multimedia
- c. Expand and advertise availability of library staff for in-person interaction with students and faculty
- d. Explore opportunities to re-define, merge, or automate traditional functions so more staff time can be allocated to public service interactions
- e. Commit ourselves to clearly articulated and uniformly high service standards for each of the service points in the building

**Outcomes:** A balanced, effective approach to services that is beneficial for students and faculty, and can be confirmed by usage statistics and constituent feedback; discovery tools that are intuitive, transparent, and help users be more efficient in their searches.

## Programs

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**Outlook:** As the library profession faces a potentially dramatic re-working in the coming years, it is crucial for librarians to be proactive. New programmatic directions for our role in the research process will redefine our interactions with students and faculty. The focus will be on the development and articulation of a multi-faceted and flexible research education program that builds on student learning needs, faculty expectations and new technologies in information delivery.

Other areas of program development will include our approach to collection building and management, our exhibition spaces and public lectures, and the use of our spaces. To articulate programmatically how the Library contributes to the educational mission of Trinity College will need to become a deliberate culture of communication about all our activities and resources.

***Strategic Directions:***

- a. Strengthen the connection of librarians with students in their First Year Seminars
- b. Work with academic departments on research education for senior thesis writers
- c. Continue to develop venues for individual and group research consultations
- d. Explore and implement additional ways for students to communicate with librarians
- e. Use new technologies to expand and diversify our instructional presence
- f. Develop venues to highlight and inform about our resources and services

***Outcomes:*** Greater understanding and visibility of the Library's role on campus; more partnerships of librarians with faculty and students in the learning and research process; increased demand for instruction and research consultations; additional venues of communication; quantitative and qualitative documentation of participation and benefits.

## **Outreach**

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***Outlook:*** Keeping the Library centered in Trinity's academic community means listening closely to the ever-changing needs of students and faculty. We have to pay attention to new academic and cultural developments on campus, and participate whenever possible in the conversations about them. At the same time, we need to advocate our services and programs and be flexible in adjusting them, both on the macro and micro level, to new scenarios.

We also have to ensure that expectations and perceptions of the Library are congruous with the new information environment, and that we effectively promote our resources. To do this requires maintaining a rich dialog with all of our constituents through a variety of communication media.

***Strategic Directions:***

- a. Actively and regularly solicit feedback about our library services.
- b. Encourage library staff to be active and visible on campus
- c. Build up existing communication channels (publications, social media, print material, classroom contact, etc.) and forge new ones to reach intended audiences.

***Outcomes:*** A greater level of integration into campus activities; increased knowledge and understanding of what we are offering; and more intentional dialog between the Library and its primary constituents, the students and faculty.

## Collaboration

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**Outlook:** Collaboration allows for the provision of content and the development of projects or services that cannot otherwise be achieved. It fosters experimentation and provides opportunities for staff to learn from others within and outside the Library. Relationships formed through collaboration help create networks of people with a variety of expertise, which can be harnessed to benefit our users.

Collaboration with other campus departments in similar academic support roles can provide a richer, more effective service environment and also result in clearer, more streamlined operations. Likewise, partnerships with other libraries and cultural institutions broaden the range of resources available to our students and faculty, and offer opportunities for shared programming and staff development.

**Strategic directions:**

- a. Continue to build and nurture collaborative relationships, especially with:
  - Information Technology and other academic support services
  - Academic departments and programs
  - The libraries within the CTW consortium
  - Other libraries and library consortia
  - Local and regional cultural institutions
- b. Explore the feasibility of developing a learning commons that brings together several academic support services in a shared location
- c. Maintain and encourage the sharing of collections and staff expertise within the CTW consortium and potentially also with other libraries or consortia

**Outcomes:** A more teamed approach to projects and services resulting in an enriched learning experience for the students; possible efficiencies in coverage of service points; intentional sharing of resources and expertise; cross-fertilization of ideas and initiatives.

## Staffing

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**Outlook:** A snapshot of the library staff reveals a wide range of generations, skills, interests, and experiences. Such diversity is favorable – and should be further cultivated - for taking on the array of challenges faced by academic libraries in the near future. The Library's staff will be expected to be open to developing new skills, and to be engaged, flexible, informed and forward-looking in shaping and delivering the Library's services and programs. To foster and retain a diverse, flexible and skilled staff, there needs to be support for staff development on all levels as well as a culture of dialogue, information sharing, and exchange of ideas.

Most significantly, shifts in Library priorities, technological innovation and the information environment will require new approaches to library-wide collaboration. There are expected to be new developments that result in the need for staff reassignments, and enhanced training for additional functions. These changes will require careful planning and transition periods, and the development of a shared service orientation.

***Strategic directions:***

- a. Encourage professional and skill development on all levels
- b. Expand library-wide and cross-departmental collaboration
- c. Explore new staff reassignments and training and ensure they fall within the Library's administrative requirements and the College's employee guidelines
- d. Enhance the Library's shared service orientation
- e. Continue to support information sharing and exchange of ideas

***Outcomes:*** A staff that is engaged, service oriented and flexible; open to new ideas and approaches, and actively involved in continuous learning and skill development; an organization that supports diversity, staff development and the exchange of ideas.

## **Content**

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***Outlook:*** Of all the external factors affecting academic libraries in the next decade, the changes in accessibility and availability of information is arguably the most significant. Virtually every traditional format now has an electronic counterpart, and new mix-and-match e-formats are being introduced that defy categorization. Material of scholarly value is no longer confined to traditional publishing venues. The parameters of scholarly inquiry itself are shifting to being increasingly interdisciplinary and based on a wide range of primary sources.

Further, the static nature normally associated with a published work is in question, since social media have provided the technological means to build works that evolve over time with the input of multiple authors. The environment in which content is created and consumed has therefore become much more dynamic and multi-dimensional, and requires adaptability and new ways of conceiving the libraries' roles in regard to content.

The economics of publishing are also changing, with print monographs and journals continuing to go up in cost, pricing for most electronic content bundled into ongoing subscription costs, and access models on a use-driven basis evolving as a promising new direction. Consortial and other inter-library collaboration will remain essential in supporting academic research on reduced budgets.

***Strategic Directions:***

- a. Continue to develop a core collection of content in all appropriate formats that is relevant to current curricular and research needs

- b. Maintain existing collections of advanced study and research level material, but develop new models for providing future access to more specialized content
- c. Explore and implement ways to make primary source material in all formats more visible and accessible for student and faculty research
- d. Identify unique and valuable materials in the Library as well as contributions to scholarship at Trinity, and present them online as digital collections
- e. Budget and staff time permitting, start building small extra-curricular leisure collections, that are intellectually challenging, fun, and not otherwise available

**Outcomes:** A multifaceted, effective approach to providing needed content for study and research; a focus on locally owned material in support of undergraduate teaching, and on collaborative approaches and patron initiated access for advanced level publications; increased promotion of primary source content and unique collections in all formats; creation of an online depository for select content owned by or created at Trinity; statistics documenting the usage and cost-efficiency of our resources.

## Space

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**Outlook:** The library building serves as an umbrella for multiple functions and services with diverse needs and uses of space. To balance the sometimes competing demands requires ongoing attention, planning, and flexibility. As new services, programs and collaborations evolve, the management and definition of our spaces will be a high priority.

Among students, the function of the library building as a primary study area is of central importance because it offers a range of options for quiet individual and collaborative study, and there has been a voiced need for more of both. The gradual shift of space used for housing collections to offering additional study areas has already begun and will continue as more material will be available electronically.

Our meeting rooms are in steady demand by students, faculty and other campus groups. In many ways, the library building has taken on a role of social center on campus: a place to connect, have group discussions, or simply chat over coffee. This popularity deserves to be cultivated by keeping our spaces attractive, secure, and functionally equipped.

### **Strategic Directions:**

- a. Expand study space, for both individuals and groups
- b. Maintain the building as an inviting, welcoming, and safe facility
- c. Work to ensure that technological functions are compatible with students' current needs, especially regarding wireless access, public computers, printing, and media equipment
- d. Continue to develop guidelines for building and room use to establish fair access and a safe environment

- e. Create changing exhibits in the various display cases and possibly add art work to some walls to make our spaces visually attractive and current with campus events

***Outcomes:*** Continued high building use; positive user feedback; increase in individual and group study spaces; clear policies on building use; a well-maintained, secure environment for study, learning and social exchange.