INTRODUCTION

One University needs at its center One Library as a potent force in the growth of teaching and research excellence across the institution; as a central hub for exhibits, programs, and expertise; as a repository for knowledge and cultural heritage; and as a showcase for our University’s academic and creative endeavors.

Syracuse University Libraries foster an inclusive community of discovery and personal growth at the heart of the institution. Incorporating the Libraries, University Archives, Records Management, and the Syracuse University Press, we are entrepreneurial, welcoming, collaborative, and of service to all members of the SU family.

The Libraries’ collections, spaces, services, and staff enable learning, scholarship, and the creation of new knowledge. We curate a rich cultural and scholarly record, from ancient clay tablets to 21st-century digital data sets; our buildings provide contemplative, communal, and collaborative spaces; and our staff combine a wide range of expertise with a strong service ethic that leads to great user experiences. SU Libraries improve student outcomes, support world-class faculty, enrich the lives of our students, provide vibrant campus spaces, and preserve our scholarly and cultural heritage.
THE PLANNING PROCESS

Strategic Conversations

In alignment with the University’s academic strategic planning, Dean of Libraries and University Librarian David Seaman created The Strategic Conversations Working Group in fall 2015 to discover, identify, and develop strategic themes, goals, and objectives for the Syracuse University Libraries.

The Working Group engaged in a number of activities in the completion of its charge, the first being the creation of an online feedback form that was sent to all Libraries staff. This online site remained open for the duration of the group’s tenure, and elicited a total of 40 responses. Members of the group also facilitated meetings with individual Libraries departments. Two members worked with each department, one as facilitator and one as recorder. Meeting summaries were made available to the entire group as a second form of feedback.

These two activities were followed by an all-staff meeting to discuss ways in which the Libraries might contribute to the goals set out in the University’s Academic Strategic Plan. The session was organized into breakout groups according to the plan’s six focus areas and discussion groups identified specific areas of possible synergy. Meeting notes were transcribed as another form of feedback for the group’s work.

The Working Group then reviewed the various forms of feedback and collated the comments by frequency of mention to identify the most prevalent issues or topics. They shared this information with the Libraries Management Team at a half-day retreat, the product of which was the four areas of strategic focus outlined in this document.

The Working Group also used the information gathered as the basis for the mission, vision, and values statements.

VISION, MISSION, & VALUES

Vision Statement

Syracuse University Libraries aspires to be at the center of intellectual life on campus, advancing learning, creativity, research, and knowledge creation for One University.

Mission Statement

As a strategic asset at the heart of the University, the Libraries provide information services, responsive collections, knowledgeable staff, and safe and accessible spaces that encourage intellectual exploration. We enable the creation of new knowledge, catalyze scholarly collaboration and cultural exchange, and advance the University’s teaching, learning, and research mission.

Values

- Collaboration
- Community
- Empowerment
- Inclusion
- Innovation
- Openness
- Respectfulness
- Service
- Stewardship
THEMES & GOALS

Student Experience & Success

*The SU Libraries: Your Competitive Edge Since 1870*

**Student Engagement**

The Libraries’ physical spaces are heavily used by students, and we are fortunate to be able to engage with them every day. The SU Libraries are deeply committed in our spaces and programs to student success, and we will continue to identify student needs through surveys, focus groups, and other feedback mechanisms, and build services to meet those needs; showcase excellence in student creative work through exhibits in library spaces such as the Biblio Gallery (4th floor, Bird Library) and the Learning Commons; provide them with safe, welcoming spaces and the collections and equipment they require; and look for new opportunities to partner with and contribute to campus student initiatives. A good recent example would be the Libraries’ promotion of Orange SUccess, which “provides an efficient way to quickly offer coordinated support to all students ensuring they receive the right type of assistance/intervention to keep them on track.”

While students spend plenty of time in the Libraries’ physical and virtual library spaces, we will also use technology to extend library content and expertise to other spaces our users occupy. We will seek better integration with SU’s learning management system (Blackboard), online learning platforms such as 2U, and we will implement apps that guide one through the process of locating relevant information.

Library spaces have a positive impact on teaching and learning, but so, too, do our extensive hours of operation. We will continue to provide 24-hour access all semester, five days a week, to three floors of Bird Library, and extend hours across the library system during the 1

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1 See https://answers.syr.edu/display/success/OrangeSUccessHome
two weeks of exams. We are unusual amongst our peers in providing 24-hour access all semester to so much of our library space. These services have real costs in staffing, security, and custodial impact, but they provide a safe academic setting that we believe contributes to student well-being and success.

The SU Libraries engage with students in another manner too: we employ more than 150 students each semester from across the graduate and undergraduate populations as part-time library staff. Our student workers are critical to the daily operation of the SU Libraries, and we have untapped opportunities to engage with our student staff in new ways. We will seek to understand their perceptions of the library more fully, and to employ them as library ambassadors to their own academic departments, clubs, and organizations, as a way to make our range of services more visible to their peers.

We believe that we can influence the academic success of our students, aid student retention, and provide an environment in which they feel at home. Our goal is to have every student who graduates from SU to remember their time in the library fondly, to understand their engagement with library staff as a competitive edge in their research and learning, and to be skillful users of the vast intellectual resources we put at their disposal.

**Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning is the process of learning by doing, by developing “an environment where students can actively construct their own understanding of a concept” (Salyer & Thyfault, 2003, p. 107). Experiential learning and undergraduate student research are hallmarks of a Syracuse University education, being found prominently across the schools and departments.\(^2\) The SU Libraries support practical hands-on

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learning experiences in a number of ways. We work closely with the School of Information Studies to engage their students in the daily work of the Libraries through graduate assistantships, internships, and student employment. We engage with the Newhouse School of Public Communications and the College of Arts and Sciences to explore the history of recorded sound through the collections of the Belfer Audio Archive. The Special Collections Research Center has a growing commitment to the use of primary materials in the undergraduate curriculum, exposing students to the “raw stuff” of history—manuscripts, rare books, photographic collections, films, and other cultural artifacts. A grant from the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation is currently allowing us to pilot a program that engages “faculty who would like to provide students with [the] opportunity to handle, analyze, and interpret . . . primary source materials in their classes.”

Most recently, the 2016 opening of the Blackstone LaunchPad in Bird Library extends our experiential learning commitment to the activities of student entrepreneurship.

We consider student employment to be an important form of experiential learning, too. We are committed to ensuring that, in addition to earning a paycheck, student employees in the SU Libraries learn academic and life skills that enrich their student experience and prepare them for life post-graduation, whether they join the workforce or pursue further education.

**Information Fluency**

Sophisticated and knowledgeable use of information is a key skill in academia, the workforce, and in contemporary society. Techniques for discovering information and evaluating what one finds are increasingly life skills, not simply necessities of scholarly endeavors, and a 21st-century library staff must be well-equipped to teach such information fluency. Such activity is part of a national trend in the academy: in the recent and well-regarded Ithaka S+R US Library Survey, “almost all respondents rated the library’s role in helping students develop ‘research, critical analysis, and information literacy skills’ as very important” (Long & Schonfeld, 2014, p. 32).

Building on our existing strengths in teaching information literacy skills, the SU Libraries will develop a comprehensive information fluency program as a part of the University’s pledge to “identify and develop a set of core competencies that give all students the critical skills that inform academic, personal, and professional success.” This program could blend in-person and online teaching, and allow us to connect with students early in their time at SU so they can develop the skills that will help them succeed while they are here and after they graduate. It will also allow us to understand more deeply the faculty expectations for student research and discovery skills, and to address specific areas of concern. Furthermore, this activity could strengthen our partnership with other areas that support student services on campus such as Academic Integrity, the Writing Center, and Information Technology Services.

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4 The Academic Strategic Plan’s Promise #2.
Ongoing space renovations in Bird and Carnegie Libraries have revitalized the role of the library as a campus space for students. These changes are a direct result of an additional and very successful capital investment—the building of The Facility. This high-density shelving and digitization building allows us to store books, journals, maps, manuscripts, microfilms, tapes, and film from across our collections in a nearby, secure, climate-controlled setting, reducing overcrowding in our on-campus spaces and allowing for new and innovative repurposing of space. We are committed to providing the variety of spaces that faculty and students need to thrive. These capital investments in the SU Libraries have had an immediate return on investment. Bird Library’s first floor Learning Commons, café, and lower level spaces are well-suited for communal and collaborative endeavors, and are among the most heavily-used student areas on campus. The grand reading room in Carnegie Library, one of the most beautiful rooms on campus, is a much used quiet, contemplative space. We also are committed to expanding quiet study opportunities throughout the seven floors of Bird Library. Users who venture up through the building already discover plentiful quiet zones, including 6th floor spaces such as the classically wood-paneled William Safire Room and the modern Plastics Pioneers Reading Room.

Inclusion & Diversity

We demonstrate a commitment to inclusion and diversity in our staffing, collections, spaces, programming, and services. Undergraduate and graduate students use the SU Libraries heavily, and in order to build relationships with them we must understand the needs of our multiple populations, including veterans, first-generation students, students with disabilities, international students, students from traditionally underrepresented groups, and those from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Faculty and staff are heavy users too, and we are ambitious to meet their diverse physical, learning, and research needs, and to provide them a welcoming, convenient, information-seeking experience online and on site.

We need continually to re-assess the physical and online spaces and services to anticipate the needs of all the University’s communities. To the greatest extent possible, we will provide a diversity of spaces for our users and will seek better ways to provide online students with the virtual spaces and services they need.

Convenient access to our library resources—online or print—is a priority. We will tailor services to provide ADA accessibility, as well as accessibility to the diverse groups we serve.

Collaborations & Interdisciplinary Partnerships

We aspire to have every faculty member and student know who their liaison librarian is, no matter what department, school, or center they identify with. Subject librarians and functional specialists are a vital connection to our communities of practice, and we want to strengthen these partnerships whenever possible.

The library staff is inherently collaborative and interdisciplinary, and we want to expand our connections across campus around significant issues to which we can bring expertise and resources, such as information literacy, media asset management, open access issues, data curation, entrepreneurship, and reputation...
management. In addition to the schools and colleges, the SU Libraries have evolving partnerships with Information Technology Services, the Office of Research, the Graduate School, the Art Galleries, the Writing Center, tutoring services, and others; and with new cross-disciplinary groups such as the digital humanities.

**Showcasing Excellence**

The Libraries’ online and on-campus spaces are varied, central, and frequently visited by faculty, students, staff, parents, alumni, and the general public. With a gate count of 1.1 million visitors (FY15) in our physical spaces, and still more to library websites and online resources, we are well-positioned to showcase the scholarly and creative output of the institution. We will invest in a range of display spaces—cabinets, flat screens, and exhibit and gallery areas—and encourage their use.

We will develop online repositories such as SURFACE (the Syracuse University Research Facility and Collaborative Environment), which provides open access to a diverse array of scholarly, professional, scientific, and creative output produced at Syracuse University, and we will work with the Office of Research, the University Press, and Public Affairs to promote the work we do to the world.

**Discovery & Research**

“There are so many books that we do not even have time to read the titles.”

**Enabling Research & Scholarship**

The Libraries manage collections and develop expert systems to allow the creation of new knowledge and creative expression. The support of research
and scholarship is a core value of the Libraries and manifests itself through our collections and services. We seek to bolster student and faculty achievement through technology, resources, and the knowledgeable staff who make the discovery of library content as convenient, rapid, and accurate as possible.

Syracuse University’s scholars and students engage broadly with our analog and digital collections. Depending on discipline, they may work predominantly with online journals, books, reference works, and datasets from our vast online holdings, dipping into print, archival, or microform collections only occasionally. Or their work may be in media, languages, or disciplines that rely on a rich hybrid of print and electronic holdings, using vinyl recordings and wax cylinders from the 500,000 items in the Belfer Audio Archive that are not yet available in digital formats; working with scholarship from earlier decades and centuries that exists in print only; or dealing with materials—maps, artwork, three-dimensional items, architectural plans—that may well be easier to use in their physical format. While we have generally made the transition from print journals to online articles, the same is not yet true for the book-length studies that are central to humanistic study. Well-designed physical books, such as those produced by Syracuse University Press, are still often preferred as a reading experience over their e-book counterparts, in part due to current limitations in the e-book reading technologies and digital rights management processes.

To enable research and scholarship we will continue to invest in the development and maintenance of the millions of items in our general, circulating, collections. These are well used by Syracuse University faculty and students, with 100,000 items being checked out every year. In addition, 35,000 items per year are delivered to scholars all over the country (and sometimes internationally) as part of our highly-efficient interlibrary loan operation. Recent additions of radio-frequency identification (RFID) chips to a million books in Carnegie and Bird will allow us to exert much better inventory control over these items, improving catalog records and shelf locations, and this investment already allows 24-hour self-checkout of materials. Preservation Services staff treat a steady stream of books in need of repair, and the high-density, climate-controlled shelves of The Facility keeps those collections not on campus in excellent condition, returning them to users on request (often the same day).
The Special Collections Research Center and the University Archives are full of items of local, national, and global significance, many of which are unique or very rare. They are increasingly well-used as we invest in the processing, description, and digitization of these items, and work with faculty to make them part of the undergraduate experience, driving new forms of student research and discovery.

As the University seeks “to elevate signature areas of inquiry where our strengths coincide with areas of external opportunity”⁶ we will build general and special collections that specifically support these areas of developing strength, and be alert for new research directions that need library materials to be successful.

As we invest in collections that support research and discovery, so will we invest in the talent and expertise of our Libraries staff. We will renew and expand our commitment to professional development and training, thereby deepening the knowledge we apply to building collections and facilitating scholarship. Further, we will broaden the scope of our expertise by recruiting talented individuals with expertise in new and developing areas of teaching and research.

Research Information Management

The University’s Academic Strategic Plan seeks to “celebrate and reward those who excel in research and creative endeavors” (Discovery section). In addition to building relevant research collections, the SU Libraries will engage in the research life of the university in other innovative ways. We will support faculty in their data curation needs, including the creation of the data management plans that are now mandatory in many federal grants applications; we will help the institution understand what scholarship is published each year from Syracuse University, and help publicize it as a way to enhance our growing research reputation; we will engage with the digital humanities in projects that seek new ways of accessing, analyzing, and interpreting content; and we will provide long-term digital preservation and access to Syracuse University scholarly output in an institutional repository. Our focus on issues surrounding information resources will allow us to exert thought leadership around such topics as open access publishing, scholarly reputation management, data visualization, and other emerging issues.

Library as Place

The physical presence of the campus library is as important as ever. We will continue to spend considerable energy to ensure that library spaces meet patrons’ needs and provide good workspaces for staff, and safe, attractive locations for users. We will continue to reimagine library spaces to better meet the needs of students and faculty; work collaboratively to address maintenance and infrastructure deficits; and develop programming from lectures and exhibitions, to parent tours, and student wellness breaks, all of which underscore the role of the library as an engaging and inclusive community space. Technology investments in the student areas and instructional spaces of our library buildings have been successful; now is the time to think more carefully about technology-enabled faculty spaces, too.

Library space is not just physical, but virtual, as well, and we commit to providing mobile-friendly, accessible online sites that make navigating our collections

⁶ Academic Strategic Plan, Discovery section.
and service offerings as convenient and straightforward as possible. Analysis of online use will drive our virtual space designs, and provide data for ongoing improvements that are responsive to need.

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LEADERSHIP, & INNOVATION**

*Your Library: The Original Idea Incubator*

**Student Entrepreneurship**

From nationally recognized academic programs to undergraduate clubs, student entrepreneurship is a hallmark feature of Syracuse University. The SU Libraries are engaging with this work through collections and research expertise being developed by our librarians, and through the provision of innovative spaces and programming. The Blackstone LaunchPad in Bird Library is a prime example, through which we will provide experiential, hands-on, specialized labs and services for all students, irrespective of which program or school they attend. The LaunchPad is an accelerator for the Libraries too, encouraging us to further develop our business and entrepreneurial acumen.

**Digital Library Program**

The SU Libraries support a range of digitization and digital publishing endeavors. We will pull these together in a more programmatic manner, and use this new focus to drive investment in the staffing and technology infrastructure we need to increase the rate of digital production and delivery, and engage in long-term digital curation of our scholarly and cultural assets. Existing expertise already allows us to play a leading role on campus in the preservation and digitization of 19th and 20th century media-based material.

A Digital Library Program will allow us to provide leadership in digital scholarship, including preservation, data management services, and publication, and become the place where digital publishing issues such as rights, access, and media preservation are addressed.

**Business Analytics & Assessment**

The SU Libraries have a tradition of data-driven decision-making, from the rich array of metrics and evaluations run by our Program Management Center to the close analysis of patterns of use for subscription databases, which ensures that collections budgets are being spent wisely and for maximum impact. As we build an assessment culture across the Libraries, we aim to use the measures to “develop or sharpen [our] abilities to interpret complex data and guide [the library] in making more informed and actionable decisions.” SU Libraries is committed to extending our assessment activities to be an ongoing and integrated assessment program at all levels, and to seek out better ways to know what our patrons want. This will include ongoing assessment of the collections that we have, how they are used, and why we collect what we do, as well as ongoing evaluation of our multiple services and spaces.

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7 Whitman School of Management Master of Science in Business Analytics: https://onlinebusiness.syr.edu/business-analytics/
Collaboration & Outreach

The SU Libraries is benefiting from connections and partnerships with other libraries to improve efficiencies in such services as interlibrary loan and collaborative collection development. We will continue to broaden our collaboration with universities and consortia that allow us to offer new services and content. For example, as a contributor to the HathiTrust Digital Library we benefit in a number of ways: we can discover HathiTrust’s 13 million volumes in our Summon Discovery Service, and we can gain access to plain-text versions of the books for users with print disabilities. Where appropriate and useful, our collections will also be discoverable through online aggregations such as the Digital Public Library of America, or the National Jukebox at the Library of Congress, and we will engage with emerging shared print networks and national digital preservation services.

We will continue to seek out collaborations across the University, from student groups to faculty interdisciplinary centers to Student Affairs and be an effective business partner with campus services such as ITS, HR, Facilities Management, Purchasing, and Advancement.

The Libraries are ambitious to communicate the range of services and collections we offer to the diverse communities we serve, and we will continue to use print and electronic publications, news releases, posters and digital signage, social media and websites, and the interpersonal relationships we develop with our users, to tell the story of the library, celebrate our successes, honor our supporters, and promote the scholarly work and well-being of the Syracuse University community.
REFERENCES


