Charting the Future
University of Toronto Libraries’ Strategic Plan 2013–2018
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About the University of Toronto Libraries’ central library system

The University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) are rightly referred to as a national treasure. We are the largest academic library system in the country and the third largest in North America.

The library system is administratively complex. The central library system includes 13 libraries and various central services administered by the University Chief Librarian Larry Alford. This strategic plan defines the priorities for the central library system over the next five years.

Central UTL libraries:
- Cheng Yu Tung East Asian Library
- Engineering and Computer Science Library
- Gerstein Science Information Centre
- Harry R. Abbott Dentistry Library
- John P. Robarts Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Map & Data Library
- Mathematical Sciences Library
- Media Commons
- Noranda Earth Sciences Library
- Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Library
- Petro Jacyk Resource Centre
- Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library
- Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, including the University of Toronto Archives

Central UTL services:
- Access and information services
- Acquisitions
- Cataloguing
- Collection development
- Human resources administration
- Information technology services
- Reference and research services

The central library system works in partnership with 31 other libraries that operate independently in service to their constituents across all three University of Toronto campuses. Together, all University of Toronto libraries provide collections and services that inspire discovery and engage inquiring minds within the University of Toronto community and beyond.
The University of Toronto Libraries, Canada’s largest research library system and one of the most significant research libraries globally, is an essential partner in advancing knowledge creation at the University of Toronto. Our international reputation as a centre for research attracts leading scholars to the University. Differentiated from our peers by the breadth and scope of our collections, we are uniquely positioned to preserve the scholarship of the past, and open opportunities for transformative discovery into the future.

Our plan builds on our reputation for excellence. As we look to the next five years, we aim to become the partner of choice for the University’s world class researchers who impact the world through the furthering of knowledge discovery and the development of new ideas.

In implementing our plan, the central library system will be building on a solid foundation of achievements, realized through the UTL Stepping Up plan of 2004 – 2010. We have increased our research collections in both traditional and new areas of scholarship, and have acquired a number of historically significant pieces with tremendous research value for both local and international scholars. Our physical spaces have been greatly enhanced through forward-thinking renovations to the Gerstein Reading Room, the OISE Library, and Robarts Library. Our information services have steadily advanced to meet the needs of our faculty and students, and we have collaborated with colleagues both within the institution and more broadly in the library and archives communities to enhance our ability to deliver services of the highest quality.

This is an exciting time for libraries as it is clear that the information and higher education environments will continue to evolve rapidly over the next five years. We will respond to the changing needs of our scholars by becoming a laboratory for innovation, a driver of collaboration, and a gateway to the cultural, scientific and historical record. We will continue to be recognized as a preeminent research centre for scholars around the world.

To achieve our ambitions, we have developed a plan that outlines four key priorities in the coming years. Our choices are focused on serving the needs of researchers.

- We will grow our world class collections, expanding our strengths in both traditional and emerging directions in scholarship.
- We will provide innovative services and spaces that inspire the generation of ideas and build a sense of community.
- We will strengthen our relationships with our many stakeholders, and engage dynamically with the community of researchers both locally and abroad.
- We will achieve these tasks through careful stewardship of our resources, and the expert knowledge of our excellent staff.

The central libraries of the University of Toronto have a history of adaptability and innovation, and our future will remain grounded in these timeless principles. As we move forward, we will ensure that UTL continues to lead strategically to further the mission of the University of Toronto today and for future generations of scholars.
1. We will continue to build collections that are recognized around the world for their excellence.
2. We will enhance scholars’ access to and discoverability of our collections.
3. We will preserve our collections for future generations of scholars.

1. Our physical and digital spaces will inspire learning and knowledge creation and build a sense of community.
2. We will continue to nurture the lifelong information literacy skills of our scholars.
3. We will be the partner of choice that researchers turn to for help finding the quality information they need for scholarship.

1. We will be proactive and clear in our communications to engage most effectively with our scholars.
2. We will engage with the broader higher education community on issues that impact their scholarship.
3. We will partner with library colleagues locally, nationally and internationally to build capacity to deliver outstanding research services.

1. We will measure our contribution to the successful fulfillment of the mission of the University.
2. We will develop new revenue channels and pursue opportunities to become self-sustaining in some service areas.
3. We will become a nimble organization that is able to continually adapt to the rapidly changing information and higher education environments.
Our outstanding collections are at the heart of the University’s mission to pursue research and teaching at the highest international levels of excellence. The library system is a key resource for leading scholars worldwide, and our collections are integral to all points of the research cycle.

1. We will continue to build collections that are recognized around the world for their excellence.
   a. We will review and modify collection development policies and practices to ensure the best possible match with present and future research needs.
   b. Our subject and language specialists will continue to seek unique and significant scholarly materials to expand core and special collections in traditional and emerging directions in scholarship.
   c. We will expand our digital collections through the creation of digital content based on our own and faculty collections.

2. We will enhance scholars’ access to and discoverability of our collections.
   a. We will improve the catalogue interface, search functionality and results, and the quality of catalogue records to ensure better access to the full breadth of our collections.
   b. We will build web services that deliver our collections to devices with varying capabilities, including mobile devices and for those in our community with accessibility needs.
   c. We will ensure that print materials are readily retrievable.
   d. We will enhance the presence of our collections in other searchable databases to better enable their discovery through external sources and searches.

3. We will preserve our collections for future generations of scholars.
   a. We will ensure the continued preservation of our unique physical research collections through expanding the storage capacity at UTL at Downsview.
   b. We will develop a library digital preservation infrastructure.
   c. We will review and revitalize library preservation efforts for print collections.
We are a leader in providing innovative services to support our many users in an evolving information environment. Through our services and spaces, we enable creativity and discovery, and provide a sense of community in a large and diverse university.

1. **Our physical and digital spaces will inspire learning and knowledge creation, and build a sense of community.**
   a. We will provide inspiring spaces for quiet study, as well as flexible and configurable spaces that enable effective collaboration and the incubation of ideas.
   b. We will further build our virtual presence to enhance library services for our users.
   c. We will become the hub of intellectual leadership in the University and broader community by actively showcasing the research of faculty, researchers, graduate and undergraduate students.
   d. We will enhance our offerings of non-collection research tools.

2. **We will continue to nurture the lifelong information literacy* skills of our scholars.**
   a. We will actively support faculty in their teaching responsibilities through the design and implementation of library skills development into their courses.
   b. We will develop educational initiatives that can be delivered at scale to a large and diverse student body.

3. **We will be the partner of choice that researchers turn to for help finding the quality information they need for scholarship.**
   a. We will review and update our service models to ensure we are providing identifiable, approachable and effective methods for real-time research and learning support.
   b. We will continue to offer customized information services support through public service points and personal consultations.
   c. We will support scholars as they navigate increasing volumes of digital information and data.

* ‘Information literacy’ is defined as locating, evaluating, assimilating and creating relevant information; making use of appropriate tools and technology in these tasks; effectively combining different tools and variable sorts of information.
Creating strong and enduring relationships with our stakeholders is essential to our mission. To provide outstanding services, we must build effective lines of communication and continuously seek feedback from our many users.

1. **We will be proactive and clear in our communications to engage most effectively with our scholars.**
   a. We will communicate information about the collections and services available in the libraries in creative and innovative ways.
   b. We will commit to consulting with our users on an ongoing basis to improve our collections, spaces and services, and will seek user input when revising our policies and procedures.

2. **We will engage with the broader higher education community on issues that impact their scholarship.**
   a. We will provide leadership and actively support scholarly communication including advocacy for open access initiatives.
   b. We will provide guidance and leadership to the University of Toronto community related to the evolving copyright environment.
   c. We will improve support of knowledge transfer activities by building stronger partnerships with University researchers and with the Office of Research and Innovation.
   d. We will support emerging methods of teaching.
   e. We will engage with publishers to discuss emerging forms of publication and viable models for the future.

3. **We will partner with colleagues locally, nationally and internationally to build capacity to deliver outstanding research services.**
   a. We will increase our collaborations with other libraries at the University to further our shared missions of service to the institution.
   b. We will expand collaborations with scholars, faculties, departments and staff at the University to further our shared missions of service to the institution.
   c. We will expand cooperative partnerships to strengthen our connections with consortia, and collaborate in building distributed and large-scale research services.
   d. We will further explore and expand formal partnerships with international peers, and will continue to host international delegations.
Our staff accelerate excellence in research and learning by delivering world class collections and services. We will continue to responsibly steward our financial resources in a way that maximizes our ability to deliver excellent services to our users. We will cultivate a positive, transparent and responsive organization able to deliver excellent services that communicate the value of the library and its many outstanding employees.

1. **We will measure our contribution to the successful fulfillment of the mission of the University.**
   a. We will build our capacity to collect data to support informed, quality planning decisions for our collections, spaces and services.
   b. We will build expertise in evaluating the impact of our investments in collections, space and services.
   c. We will ensure that assessment is embedded as a key component of our projects and services.

2. **We will develop new revenue channels and pursue opportunities to become self-sustaining in some service areas.**
   a. We will build on our expertise to attract grants that fund research and quality improvement initiatives.
   b. We will experiment with new funding strategies to fund library projects.
   c. We will commit to supporting a culture of philanthropy throughout the central libraries.
   d. We will expand collaborations with partners or develop in-house capacity to participate in grant-funded research projects.

3. **We will become a nimble organization that is able to continually adapt to the rapidly changing information and higher education environments.**
   a. We will further develop our leadership, management, strategic thinking and communication capabilities.
   b. We will foster a culture of innovation and experimentation, and encourage our staff to adopt an evidence-based practice.
   c. We will consult with staff as an integral part of our decision-making practices.
   d. We will continue to embrace a diversity of ideas, languages and skills that will enhance our ability to deliver excellent services.
   e. We will promote continuous professional growth and learning at all staff levels.
This plan is the result of substantive consultations that took place through the 2012 – 2013 academic year. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee consulted broadly with the University of Toronto community of faculty, students and staff; library staff in both the central system and in our partner libraries on all three campuses; and with our peers both locally and abroad in the larger library and archives communities. We are grateful to the hundreds of faculty, students, staff and colleagues who took the time to send emails, talk with us, respond to surveys, participate in focus groups, submit reports, and who agreed to be interviewed for their expertise. This plan is enriched by the many voices that care passionately about the University of Toronto Libraries.

We are also grateful to the many people who provided sage advice and shared their skills through the planning process. In particular, Ms. Helen Lathiotakis offered guidance about planning within the University of Toronto context. Ms. Sheree Drummond, Professor Glen Jones, Professor Rhonda McEwen and Mr. Michael Ridley loaned their considerable expertise to the Strategic Planning Speaker Series for UTL staff. Ms. Vicki Whitmell ably steered us through the selection of the themes which framed our consultation process. Olesya Falenchuk, Ph.D. and Monique Herbert, Ph.D. and their team expertly managed data collection and analysis for the project. Ms. Josie Fung, Ms. Jennifer Riel and Ms. Stefanie Schram skillfully guided the Committee to develop strategic choice cascades based on the framework developed by Professor Roger Martin at the Rotman School of Management. Ms. Laura Anderson provided effective project support to the PlanUTL committee. All of these individuals, and many others, helped guide our decision making to focus the central library system on a successful path forward.
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