York University Libraries

Response to APPC Call for 5 Year Plans (2009 - 2014)

submitted by:

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York University Libraries
Academic Plan

Strategic Priorities within YUL

Enhancing the Research Culture

York University Libraries is committed to enhancing the University’s research culture. Libraries have a special place in the research arena. We play a key role in supporting York’s research infrastructure by continuing to build relevant collections, expanding our digital and data cyberinfrastructure initiatives, and, highlighting and disseminating York’s research accomplishments to new audiences. We take a leadership role in educating our community on current issues which directly impact their research, fostering sophisticated information literacy competencies and raising awareness around scholarly communication issues. We also actively contribute to the creation of knowledge. The Libraries will continue to cultivate our research agenda by establishing an environment conducive to diverse explorations in leading-edge library science, interdisciplinary research, and subject-specific research in other disciplines.

Teaching and Learning

York University Libraries places the highest priority on student success and student engagement. The ability to perform research is a core component of a solid general education and is of enormous benefit to students well beyond their time at University. We work to integrate information literacy learning objectives into program curricula thereby reaching students at various points in their development. We also assess the information literacy levels of our students, and provide development opportunities for faculty and librarians on how best to foster our students’ research proficiency. Another emphasis in coming years is the development of a Learning Commons in the Scott Library which will provide a variety of learning environments and an enriched learner-centred model of service. Students will have access not only to librarians but to a variety of academic supports including writing and learning skills instruction all in one location.

Digital Libraries

York University Libraries strives to embrace changes brought about by digital technologies that are advantageous to teaching, learning and research. The Libraries are aggressively expanding library collections through acquisition, digitization and electronic publishing. This requires new skills, new positions, new services and strategic resource allocation. Services are also changing as librarians explore new ways to connect with students and faculty online and develop new expertise in assisting researchers in accessing and using all types of data (numeric, geospatial, health informatics, textual, etc). Library workshops keep faculty and students abreast of developments in library research tools, resources and services in a digital age.
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From whence we came

York University Libraries has achieved significant milestones in the development of new library roles that support the evolution of research, teaching and learning. Below are some of the recent developments that chart the transformation of York University Libraries into a 21st Century organization.

- **Electronic publishing** at York is fully operational, hosting over 17 scholarly journals through the York Digital Journals project, making York an Ontario-wide leader in this area. This program has been expanded and supports 2 conference proceedings on the open conference module.

- **Digital collections** are routinely created and stored in the libraries institutional repository named YorkSpace; CIHR & NIH funded research reports, historical collections of faculty research, photos, dissertations, research articles and monographs along with digital copies of historical materials from the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections. By depositing items in YorkSpace researchers are assured enduring access to their research and enhanced worldwide visibility through internet search engines such as Google and Yahoo.

- York Librarians made important strides in extending our reach beyond our help desks and into the classrooms and lecture halls. The **Information Literacy Program** now includes collaborations with 6 academic programs working to integrate information literacy competencies into their overarching program curriculum.

- Libraries are now more prominent in **E-classrooms** through the library component of York’s course management system, Moodle, as well as the student portal. The Libraries’ presence in these online environments provides an automatic link to library resources and puts students in contact with librarians who incorporate course specific resources and services.

- **Librarian researchers** at York are among the first in Ontario to become actively involved in government funded research projects across the campus. York University Libraries is affiliated with the Global Slavery Research Project (SSHRC), the Gender and Work Database (CFI), and Canadian Refugee Research Network (SSHRC).

- The Libraries’ successful **collaboration** with the Nellie Langford Rowell Library led to affiliations with other resource centres on campus such as the Centre for Refugee Studies and the Education Resource Centre.
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Moving Forward

York University Libraries continues to be responsive to the evolving landscape of libraries, higher education and research. In 2007 York University Libraries developed our strategic plan *Open Doors: Open Minds*, with the aim of raising the Libraries to new levels of excellence. In fall of 2008, we were asked to develop a new academic plan that would specifically advance the priorities of the University. **York University Libraries Academic Plan 2009 - 2014** highlights those strategies from *Open Doors: Open Minds* that will advance the priorities of the University and includes new areas of development that have recently emerged.

Priorities

1. **Enhancing the Research Culture**
   Strategies
   a. Establish a 21st Century research infrastructure
   b. Increase YUL research: quality and quantity
   c. Advance faculty and graduate student research

2. **Student Experience**
   Strategies
   a. Prepare students for the 21st Century
   b. Develop learning environments for the 21st Century
   c. Student centered libraries
   d. Enhance accessibility

3. **Reputation & Distinctiveness**
   Strategies
   a. Promote archives and special collections
   b. Disseminate and promote York research

4. **Academic Governance & Special Initiatives**
   Strategies
   a. Improve assessment
   b. Develop communications
   c. Build strong relationships
Enhancing the Research Culture

Establish a 21st Century research infrastructure

In the lead article of a recent issue of *Educause Review*, cyberinfrastructure, a term originally coined by the US National Science Foundation, is defined as an

“... infrastructure based upon distributed computer, information and communication technology. If *infrastructure* is required for an *industrial* economy, then we could say that *cyberinfrastructure* is required for a *knowledge* economy.”

These high-performance computing and networked resources of cyberinfrastructure promote a new kind of scholarly inquiry and provide unprecedented opportunities for virtual collaboration among researchers in entirely new contexts.¹

York University Libraries has been building critical components of this infrastructure to provide new library services that:

- support campus electronic publishing
- store and provide access to scholarly information produced by faculty and students
- advance knowledge dissemination
- provide data stewardship

Future development will result in a web-based geospatial and health informatics environment that are essential components supporting new areas of faculty and students research. These new research services require new positions.

Collections remain an integral part of the research infrastructure. Currently over half of the Libraries’ collections budget is directed to the acquisition of digital content including e-books, digital audio, digital video, health informatics and geospatial data. With respect to our collections, we will:

- adopt an aggressive digital content expansion plan, strengthening library resources in support of research and emerging programs.
- focus on expanding the unique research collections in the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections.
- facilitate optimum and enduring access to York’s unique research collections through digitization, preservation and assuming stewardship roles for known collections at risk (eg. CERLAC).
- expand the holdings of our institutional repository (YorkSpace) though the addition of more dissertations, York-authored research papers and conference proceedings.
- recruit more editorial boards to partner with York University Libraries for their publications.

Increase YUL Research: quality and quantity

Librarians at York make direct contributions to the research reputation of the University: we publish, we participate in scholarly and professional councils, and we collaborate with faculty on research projects.

Research by librarians at York can be clustered into six broad areas:
- knowledge organization and dissemination
- education
- social innovation
- communication and IT
- library science
- subject specific research in other disciplines

York University Libraries will increase the quality and quantity of its research over the next 5 years by fostering and promoting librarian research. Specifically, we will:

- create an intellectual infrastructure for librarian research.
- facilitate innovative research and scholarship for librarians and archivists.
- pursue more opportunities for research collaboration with other faculty research projects.
- enhance strategies for sharing, celebrating and promoting librarian research.
- steward the successful establishment of the Scott Family Research Chair in E-librarianship.

Advance Faculty and Graduate Student Research

Librarians play an important role in educating faculty and graduate students about relevant library collections and resources, current awareness strategies and those research and technology issues which impact scholarly communities. In the next five years, we will engage more widely and deeply with York scholars by:

- fostering awareness of those social, political, economic and legal issues surrounding information and information technology which impact scholarly communities, research output and the free dissemination of ideas.
- seeking to augment our librarian complement in response to new areas of research (eg. medicine, engineering).
- developing a series of specialized library research workshops that emphasize current awareness of new ideas, tools and skills which facilitate access to timely, relevant information and that support the unique needs of graduate students in the thesis preparation stage.
- educating researchers and graduate students about author rights and emerging publication models which promote equitable access to information and support the open access movement by subsidizing author fees and by subscribing to open access publishers.
- subscribing to and promoting critical research measurement tools such as Scopus and Web of Science that facilitate a broader assessment of academic output for York.
- encouraging publication of E-dissertations.
Student Experience

Prepare students for the 21st Century
Information Literacy Goals for York University Libraries

The Libraries’ Information Literacy Program plays a pivotal role in furthering the strategic priorities of the University. The term information literacy encompasses a set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information, and has a particular focus on the development of a critical engagement with information and the information-seeking process. This critical emphasis comes out of the recognition that a good researcher needs to know more than the mechanics of database searching in order to be an effective and engaged user and creator of information.

In pursuing a collaborative and curriculum-integrated approach to library instruction and further developing the Information Literacy Program, York University Libraries also contribute to the University’s strategic priorities, strengthening the research culture and furthering our excellence in teaching. In attending to the research skills of our community, whether at the undergraduate, graduate or faculty level, we lay the foundation for the production of high quality research across all levels. In focusing on specific learning objectives and the best pedagogical practices for achieving them, we support York’s record of teaching excellence and contribute to student retention rates. In addition to supporting those priorities, the institution’s emphasis on interdisciplinarity and innovation requires a deeper attention to the incorporation of information literacy learning objectives into program curricula. In an institution which asks students to research every angle, it is crucial that we empower our students with the skills and knowledge required to truly examine issues, materials, finding tools and the information-seeking process itself from multiple perspectives.

Therefore, it seems clear that the Libraries’ role in helping the University to achieve these priorities will lie in building and promoting the Information Literacy Program in collaboration with the academic units. To do so will require:

- working with more academic units to integrate information literacy learning objectives into the curricular structure of programs in an incremental and graduated fashion.
- developing better mechanisms for assessing students' information literacy levels and learning needs and sharing these results with faculty and relevant campus groups.
- helping faculty to better evaluate and improve their students' research proficiencies.
- developing lesson plans to teach those information literacy learning outcomes that do not fall naturally into existing curricula, for delivery in library-hosted extra-curricular workshops, perhaps in partnership with faculty members or learning commons partners.
- providing ongoing professional development opportunities for librarians relating to information literacy, assessment, curriculum development and best practices in teaching and learning.

Our overarching goal in further developing an Information Literacy Program is not only to improve the academic achievement of our students, but also to graduate engaged, information literate citizens.
Develop learning environments for the 21st Century

Learning environments and library spaces are being transformed in response to emerging technologies, new pedagogies and the changing needs of our students. 21st Century learning environments incorporate three components: technology, academic supports and student focused design. These new library spaces are hubs. They acknowledge the distinctive role of the library as the key learning environment beyond the classroom.

Development of new learning spaces in Scott Library and Frost Library will embody principles of learner-centered design. We will:

- integrate academic supports from outside the Libraries (eg. writing skills, learning skills) in the form of a Learning Commons service hub. The collaboration of academic support providers acknowledges the holistic, recursive and non-linear nature of the scholarly process.
- recast the library as an academic “town square” with programming that encompasses cultural, civic and academic functions – the library not just as collections and study space, but also as curator of ideas, debate and cultural legacies.
- accommodate the social nature of learning in addition to traditional quiet study areas. Collaborative areas such as group study spaces help encourage the sharing of knowledge through communities of learners.
- develop differentiated learning environments that provide students with choices based on needs, preferences and learning styles. Create spaces that can be customized based on changing student needs.
- develop technology-rich environments. Multimedia technology in particular should be widely available to cater to the expanding forms of academic production.
- support the use of our libraries (physical and virtual) to celebrate and display graduate research, publication, and creative work.
- increase student library space to accommodate growth in health and engineering.

While our library buildings report over three million visits in a single year, there are millions more visits to our website. It is imperative to develop and maintain an inviting, intuitive robust gateway to our online library resources and services. We will:

- ensure that our virtual learning environments are flexible to accommodate developments in technology and are responsive to the learning styles of students and the teaching methods of faculty.
- create online environments that engage our users in the creation, organization and sharing of information. Transform our online presence into an interactive and collaborative zone.
- enrich the skills of our staff to design and deliver services and resources that meet changing user needs. Facilitate the use of library resources in new formats.
- develop new and innovative web services that enrich the student experience.

A serious constraint for the University is the shortage of library seating, as the majority of students regard the Libraries as the best place for learning outside the classroom. York’s libraries have the highest gate count reported among Canadian research libraries and one of the lowest seat per student ratios in Ontario - 1 library study seat per 15 students in contrast to 1 seat per 9 students at the University of Western Ontario. It is impossible to close this gap without commitment from the University.

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Student centered libraries

For many of York’s students, our libraries are the preferred place for learning outside the classroom. To ensure our libraries meet the changing learning needs of our students and support evolving teaching practices, it will be necessary to collaborate with students in the creation and ongoing development of innovative library learning spaces. The goal is to create student-centered library spaces and services that enrich the academic experience at York.

To achieve student centred libraries, we will:

- establish a Student Advisory Council to encourage student ownership of library space and solicit meaningful input on ways to enrich the learning experience within our libraries and discuss academic, cultural, and civic programming.
- consider services, collections, spaces, and policies within the larger context of the experience of our learners, how and why they use the library, and what the meaning of that experience is for them.
- reflect the pedagogical shift at the University from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach.
- broaden assessment from an evaluation of library functions to an ongoing investigation of the library from the perspective of the student.
- ensure that decisions about library planning are evidence-based and grounded in research derived from user-centred discovery techniques.

Enhance accessibility

Throughout York’s history, the University has taken pride in providing a hospitable environment for people with special needs. As per the Ontario Disabilities Act, the ultimate goal is that students, staff and faculty with disabilities will be able to participate fully in the life of the province. Thus, the overarching goal of Library Accessibility Services is for students to participate fully in the use of library resources and services.

The convergence of developments in technology and online information is making it easier for many students with a variety of different disabilities to access information for course work and research, enabling them to participate more fully in higher education. For these students technology can facilitate reading, comprehension and writing. Consequently students are able to absorb knowledge quickly and more easily. However, it is important to note that the spectrum of users with disabilities is far ranging and therefore technological advances do not benefit all equally. Over the next five years, we will:

- provide accessible software and hardware throughout the libraries so that students with special needs may complete their assignments anywhere in the libraries from the inception of their theses through the writing of their essay to the delivery of the final product to their instructors.
- extend accessibility on a wider scale, physically and virtually.
- ensure students, faculty and staff are successful in their academic endeavours by taking full advantage of developments in information technology and scholarly communications to provide access to collections and information needed in the desirable format and in a timely manner.
- ensure that staff across the Libraries are knowledgeable in providing access to the full range of library services to students with disabilities.
- the Libraries help students be equipped to reach their full potential by focusing on specific needs and provide individualized services to users with disabilities.
- continue to explore various avenues to ensure timely acquisition and delivery of necessary materials to the user.
Reputation & Distinctiveness

Promote Archives & Special Collections

Learning and research ‘come alive’ in a special way when students and faculty encounter the Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections’ rare and unique materials which range from medieval texts to 21st century film. The Archives’ reading room is a learning lab where students can do hands-on research using millions of pages of original manuscripts, pamphlets, rare books, maps, photographs and other items. Our newly hired Digital Projects and Outreach Archivist will help increase the visibility and better promote the use of archival material by digitizing and making particularly significant materials accessible over the web. Archives is also engaging in special collaborative research projects with York faculty and beyond including the Changing Urban Waterfronts project and the Lou Wise GTA watershed slide collection. We will:

- enrich the undergraduate and graduate research experience by continuing to explore multiple avenues to promote the use and exposure of the unique Clara Thomas Archives collections.
- build an engaging online environment for students and faculty using digital objects.
- strive to have half the programs at York include at least one class assignment requiring students to do original research using materials (digital or analog) from the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections.
- implement a search and discovery layer to improve access to and visibility of archival materials.
- continue to engage as a faculty partner in research projects.
- promote primary research using materials in the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections.

Disseminate and promote York research

Studies by the Association of Research Libraries have affirmed a new role for academic libraries in the dissemination and promotion of research through electronic publishing initiatives. Researchers in the UK have also noted that

“Digital technologies and online information resources have brought fundamental changes in how research is done, and also in what researchers expect from library and information services.”

York University Libraries is one of the leaders in fulfilling this new role in the scholarly community. As a participant in the Synergies project (www.synergiescanada.org) we are bringing York’s research to the internet and into the mainstream of worldwide research discourse. York Digital Journals is an outcome of the Synergies project. YorkSpace, a library initiative, is York’s online institutional research repository and a part of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries’ Institutional Repository Program.

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3 Jubb, Michael, Director of Research Information Network, Partnership organisations collaborate to help shape the next-generation library Joint Information Systems Committee of the UK (JISC) Home Page

Information environment December 4, 2008
Developments in information technology give libraries new opportunities to promote research. To improve the dissemination and preservation of research at York, YUL provides services and expertise to the campus community that will:

- make research available and accessible over the web through programs and services that promote the creation and conversion of scholarly communications in digital formats.
- provide electronic publishing services for journals, conference papers, dissertations, and other scholarly communications.
- ensure research materials have enduring access by sharing expertise, applying best practices in preservation and adhering to international metadata standards.
- promote Knowledge Mobilization by enabling barrier-free access to faculty and graduate student research thorough open access initiatives such as York Digital Journals and YorkSpace.
- directly support the open access movement by funding select open access initiatives such as subsidizing author fees in open access journals.
- track the impact of research through the use of online metrics.
- incorporate the ability to provide web-based access to a variety of research outputs including data sets, geospatial content, audio and moving images.
Academic Governance & Special Initiatives

Improve Assessment

The University’s Academic Plan 2005-2010 includes the goal of “Knowing Ourselves and Seeing How we are Seen” and argues that at this crucial juncture of growth, it is imperative that we examine our accomplishments and our goals in order to move forward. Areas such as assessment of the student experience, the intensity and impact of research, the value and impact of pedagogies, and the success of our graduates are highlighted as strategic priorities.

Similarly a thorough understanding of the Libraries’ strengths and weaknesses will help guide our growth and help us remain responsive to the communities we serve. While the Libraries have a long history of assessment projects, it is crucial that we create a more systematic and coordinated approach to assessment by:

- clearly demonstrating the impact, quality and relevance of our services and collections to all key stakeholders.
- working toward a culture of assessment; the broad engagement of library staff in assessment and evaluation can help effect a shift in organizational culture towards a more evidence-based and user-centred approach.
- proving value in a competitive information service environment and on a university campus where there are heavy, competing demands on a limited pool of resources.
- ensuring data collection directly informs the decision-making of the Library administration through the practice of evidence-based library management.
- providing opportunities for broadening librarians’ research roles (assessment often requires quantitative and qualitative research that can be shared through publication). This facilitates the enhancement of the research culture at York University (a core UAP goal).

A strong assessment program will be essential for determining library priorities, planning new services, and allocating resources wisely.

Develop Communications

Given the sheer size and scope of York University and the geographic dispersion of our faculty, staff and students, it is incumbent upon the Libraries to develop a clear communication strategy in order to keep the members of our community apprised of library services and resources. Every day we are made aware of the gap between the rich complexity of the libraries we know, and the awareness of our various stakeholders. We must learn to better promote the use of our services, to demonstrate the value of our activities to our community, and to cultivate new sources of support.

A coordinated approach to institutionalize library communications will:

- identify key messages. Instead of a scattershot approach, a communications strategy will help us identify priorities.
- develop consistency of message. We remember messages we hear repeatedly (esp. within a relatively short period of time).
- ensure clarity of message. Some things we need to communicate about the Libraries are complex. A communications plan will help us clarify what is most important.
- learn from best practices. We need to learn what works from people with expertise.
• establish relationships. We benefit from developing and maintaining relationships with key partners across campus and beyond.

A successful communication strategy will require dedicated staff and resources.

**Build Strong Relationships**

York University Libraries are proactive in forming partnerships in order to strengthen our resources and to expand the impact of our services within the York community and beyond. We continue to build our collections in collaboration with other libraries, deepen our relationships with faculty, and expand our role in relation to our surrounding communities. More than ever, collaborating with others has become crucial for success in providing excellent library support to the campus community and advancing the University’s Academic Plan. We will:

• extend partnerships and pursue further collaborations with other libraries for the development of cost effective library services such as centralized digital library collections, web-based portals to facilitate sharing research data and preserving research collections. Canadian initiatives are a special priority.
• increase partnerships in the campus community with particular focus on enriching teaching and learning, and providing expertise and support for research projects, teams and communities.
• contribute to initiatives that benefit neighbouring communities by teaching people how to be critically informed citizens and by providing a portal to the world of knowledge.
• increase public engagement and explore new partnerships with public libraries, archives, schools and community programs.
• incorporate consumer health information services for the community into plans for a medical library.

The title of York University Libraries’ strategic plan, *Open Doors: Open Minds*, expresses the high value the Libraries place on intellectual and cultural exchange and our relationship to our communities. Our libraries, at the heart of our campus, are open to the wider community seven days a week and throughout the year. Consequently, libraries are well suited for an expanded role in providing cultural, academic, civic and artistic programming for the broader community. Through our libraries, the University can build stronger relationships with communities on campus and in the Greater Toronto Area.
Rebuilding and Moving Forward Addendum

The main elements of the York University Libraries Academic Plan proactively addresses several post-strike pressure points identified for comment by APPC; reputation, enrolments, curriculum and academic resources.

- **Reputation**: The general public, colleagues and public offices often look first to the internet to discover information. Consequently the Libraries is developing modules in the university cyberinfrastructure that will promote York’s accomplishments. Electronic publishing, scholarly communications and research dissemination activities serve to make York research easily accessible over the internet.

- **Reputation**: Libraries are the one place on a university campus that is open and welcoming to the whole community seven days a week. Efforts to create inviting places in our libraries for intellectual and cultural exchange will serve the university as a public symbol of scholarship and attract new students.

- **Reputation**: The Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections serves as a draw for researchers and visitors from around the world. Enhancing the virtual and physical spaces along with the collections is a priority.

- **Enrolment**: The Libraries are involved in initiatives to support retention and enrolment. The new student-centered learning environments being developed in the Libraries will provide services that support academic activities (reference and research assistance, writing services, learning skills counselling and peer IT support) that positively impact retention rates. The Libraries are also actively involved with the Retention Council.

- **Enrolment**: The Libraries are currently planning several major redesign and renovation projects. Recent research has shown that quality of Library facilities ranks very highly in students’ choices of higher education institutions. Prospective students routinely visit the libraries when shopping for universities.

- **Curriculum**: Many E-library initiatives and new librarian positions (E-Learning Librarian, Digital Initiatives Librarian, Web Librarian, Digital Projects & Outreach Archivist and Information Literacy Coordinator) are in place ready to support not only the various modes of curriculum that are evolving but also the new research practices in the social sciences, arts and humanities that depend on computer and information technology.

- **Academic resources**: Because resources will be limited due to cuts, the declining Canadian dollar and the need to support new services it will be critical to allocate funds wisely. Resources will need to be realigned to support areas of growth. The Libraries will continue to aggressively focus on those developments in IT that can enhance the student experience, advance the university research agenda and improve effectiveness and efficiencies. Growth in this area requires skilled people and the creation of new positions. With the loss in buying power, it will be necessary to take full advantage of consortia collection projects.

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4 Reynolds, Gary L. The Impact of Facilities on Recruitment and Retention of Students. *New Directions for Institutional Research* no. 135, Fall 2007.