

York University Libraries Report to APPRC

April 11, 2019

Detailed below are York University Libraries responses to APPRC's questions. Our responses are framed both from the perspective of an academic unit in our own right and also as a system wide common goods faculty that contributes to broad University challenges from our unique cross-disciplinary role and our professional expertise. In this respect York University Libraries is often the bridging unit or a faculty partner that contributes to student success/experience, teaching and learning, and research excellence. We have direct responsibilities for the advancement of our own research and scholarship; we provide support for campus scholarly communications and digital scholarship initiatives and we are responsible for the dissemination, preservation and stewardship of the University's intellectual assets and investments (content, archives, University records).

The uniqueness of our academic role has posed some structural barriers that sometimes limit us from more fully contributing to the academic mission of the University. We believe that some attention to integrating the Libraries more firmly into the academic structure (campus programming, research development, capital fund raising workflows) and ensuring sustainable funding for its operations, will benefit the University greatly.

The Libraries recent restructure will also help achieve this goal and, along with other initiatives outlined below, leave us well positioned to maintain our commitment to the University's mission while also recognizing that we are also challenged by the budget situation that all Ontario universities face at this time.

1. What are the local challenges you and your colleagues face, and what strategies are being taken in response?

Structural Challenges & Strategies to Mitigate

YUL is organized as an academic unit but structural barriers are hampering our success in a number of areas. Most importantly, the Libraries' resources and expertise could be utilized to even greater effect if the unit was more fully integrated into the University's academic structure. For example, an evaluation of potential avenues for Experiential Education (EE) in the libraries has surfaced a number of structural rigidities inherent in how EE opportunities are classified and recognized. Specifically the libraries are not able to structure their curricular offerings as a faculty, instead, EE opportunities are limited to lengthy full-time internships for undergraduates which are beyond the Libraries' means from a budgetary standpoint.

To explain further, the Libraries employ over 150 undergraduate students which represents untapped potential for re-framing their work as experiential education opportunities. In response to a broader campus-wide competition, the Libraries submitted a comprehensive proposal for an Experiential Learning Coordinator in 2017. While there was stated interest in the proposal, it was communicated that a bridging structure would need to be developed that would allow for the anchoring of campus work opportunities into a course-based framework.

In the meantime, YUL has continued to advance a number of EE initiatives ranging from internships that offer hands-on experience with digital scholarship tools, to direct immersion with the scholarly publishing lifecycle through our Undergraduate Research Fair. Of note is our annual Hackfest where students learn to develop and market apps and our regular Wikipedia Edit-a-thons which afford students an opportunity to think critically about online representations of diverse individuals and groups. The Libraries were also proud to co-sponsor, along with Office of the AVP Teaching & Learning, the inaugural Experiential Education Symposium in January 2019.

In turn, the Libraries has significantly improved our own internal structure to the benefit of the institution. For example, with the establishment of two new departments, Digital Scholarship Infrastructure and Open Scholarship, we can now provide fulsome support for researchers and scholars who wish to heighten visibility of their scholarship through open access mechanisms, prepare research data management plans, and receive consult on author rights, publication agreements and digital scholarship needs.

The restructuring of our Teaching & Learning Division will result in greater coherency and visibility of our teaching programs and range of offerings that include teaching undergraduate students about digital literacy, to partnering with faculty on the design of assignments and classes, and playing a role in pan-university projects. Last year, Librarians and Archivists taught some 17,000 students representing some 500 classes in all faculties. Some representative examples include the work of our Archives and Special Collections where some 25 classes were brought into the archives last year to receive instruction from our Archivists. Our partnership with FES contributed to pan-university internationalization and global engagement, with the Las Nubes Project in Costa Rica, where we maintain an education and learning resource centre known as La Casita Azul. Located in Santa Elena, the facility plays an important role in research intensification, knowledge mobilization, community engagement and outreach, as well as offering access to online and print resources in both English and Spanish. The facility also serves as an academic hub for York's Environmental Studies students while they are doing their Semester Abroad each summer and is particularly recognized for its significant community engagement efforts with local community. Librarians Dana Craig and Tom Scott were recognized by the Ontario College and University Library Association with the Award for Special Achievement in 2017 as a result of their efforts here.

We believe our restructure will greatly enhance the quality of our programs and contribute to new innovations for all academic programs and their research intensification efforts. For example, YUL has leveraged the expertise of professional librarians to improve research metrics and the scholarly impact of York researchers. These efforts have led to increased visibility for York journal publications online, as well as better tracking of when York research is mentioned on social media or in traditional media coverage. Library expertise is also being channeled by the institution to advance institutional global positioning efforts (ie. Times Higher Education, Shanghai, QS) by correcting metadata inaccuracies in key databases used by ranking agencies. The Libraries are applying their expert knowledge of database structure to identify inaccuracies and report them for correction. This ensures that all York-authored scholarship is properly attributed back to the institution and that authorship is correctly attributed and disambiguated for York authors.

Other Structural Barriers

Structural issues have also surfaced with the representation of YUL's own research outputs. We will continue to investigate and mitigate challenges related to ensuring the libraries' awarded research funding and publication record is incorporated into the university's total reported figures. We believe this is related to the lack of workflows and understanding that we are a faculty. Similarly, there were significant barriers related to advancing our capital program plan due to organizational elements that did not create workflows for shared services for such planning. Likewise, we have struggled with establishing our own logo due to University rules related to logos for faculty only. We find ourselves to be the only academic library in the GTA that does not have an institutional library logo for our donor events. The Libraries has also lobbied for representation in the Impact Campaign (faculty only) with little success resulting in lost opportunities for needed donation and funding. Recent University leadership discussions have been very fruitful and have led us to believe that there is resolution in store for each of these issues.

Markham Campus & Next Steps

The disappointing Markham situation may be a lost opportunity to more immediately accelerate our demonstration of our full value and benefit to the University. Our visionary plan led the University, to not only approve of a library space at Markham, but to also inspire the architects and University planners to take notice of what we can do for the University. The Markham Libraries space was slated to be the signature interdisciplinary Research Commons space that fully encapsulated the realization of the

Markham Campus vision and mission for all (faculty, researchers, students, community). While this was a significant achievement our hopes, are not dashed. It is our expectation this work will be repurposed to a lesser degree at Markham and repurposed within the Keele campus and at the Frost Library at Glendon.

Budgetary Challenges & Mitigation Efforts

As a shared service, YUL is dependent on a fixed base budget, which makes it difficult to present a balanced budget while also subsidizing some other units. It should be noted we are also operating in an environment where its expenditures (operation and collections) per student is one of the lowest among Canadian members of the Association of Research Libraries.^[1]

Moving forward, YUL anticipates increased ability to meet emerging challenges on campus - collections, publishing, student support, digital infrastructure to name a few - with the completion of our restructuring that will reorganize the Libraries into functional areas. The principle outcome of this reorganization will be enhanced leveraging of expertise across YUL and more focused alignment with the University's strategic directions and priorities, with attention to organizational efficiencies while maintaining a comparatively small librarian/staff complement. In addition, YUL continues to leverage significant national and provincial collaborations to extend our capacity (including budget) in critical areas spanning e-resource acquisition and technical infrastructure.

YUL is also working with University leadership to advance our capital program plan to enrich our spaces for students and scholars. To date YUL is the only library system in the GTA that has not undergone a major revitalization plan. At this point we are not a competitive advantage for the University in the same way as other GTA institutions.

In the wake of budgetary constraint, the Libraries have leveraged the Academic Innovation Fund program as an excellent means by which to nimbly respond to emerging campus needs. AIF funding resulted in the development and ongoing success of several elearning tools, expanding our ability to meet accessibility needs and the offering of experiential technology-enhanced education opportunities to students.

2. Are there one or two measures, process or policy changes at the university-level that would fundamentally improve local planning efforts and/or the ability to be nimble and act swiftly to respond to current challenges?

Having gone through a major restructure, we have become aware of the significant time it takes to effect change, hindering innovation and efficiencies. We recommend the University prioritizes attention to administrative structures that can more nimbly support rapid, iterative, organizational change implementations. This would include enhanced supports for staff planning, staff mobilization, space planning, and change management. Greater coherence between HR practices and contractual obligations would also be helpful. The development of a cohesive support structure to support organizational development efforts and increased attention to the difficulties in attracting competitive candidates who possess the skills needed for our evolving workplace while developing pathways to mitigate hindrances to the lack of mobility from one employment group to another.

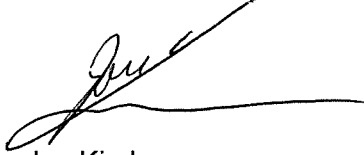
3. Noting we are in the penultimate year of the 2016-2020 UAP, what observations do you have about the existing UAP priorities. Do any of them need refreshing? Are they still apt? Do you have any reflections that may help with the implementation of the priorities in the next iteration of the Plan?

Overall, we believe that the existing UAP priorities are still apt and should remain as key drivers for the University.

Under priority seven, Enabling the Plan, we recommend consideration be given to developing a coordinated plan that bridges such activity across campus. To date interdisciplinary efforts are largely

focused on faculties. The University stands to better advantage these efforts by recognizing there is professional expertise across the university that can be brought in to assist with innovation efforts. Further, planning work that helps develop coordinating structures and communication structures may be needed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joy Kirchner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joy Kirchner
Dean of Libraries
York University

[1] York has consistently bottomed out on major Canadian and North American library statistical reports as one of the lowest ranked librarian to student ratio counts and lowest ranked collections budgets per student ratio out of 124 research libraries.