

2009-2010 Strategic Update

University of Guelph Library Integrated Plan in Year 4



Overview:

This “year 4” update to the integrated plan is intended to identify the Library’s key strategic initiatives for 2009/2010. This year’s planning is put forward within the context of the very difficult financial challenges currently facing the University (and indeed the rest of society as well). In 2009, we will be in the second year of a multi-year plan to reduce the Library’s budget as part of the University’s efforts to eliminate its structural deficit. This retrenchment has recently been significantly deepened by the global economic crisis which has resulted in flat-lined funding from the province, and has created extreme currency volatility. All of these factors have had a profoundly negative impact on the Library’s base funding, and particularly on the buying power of the Library’s Information Resources budget. The Library’s strategic focus over the next year will therefore be one of conservation, as we seek to maximize and carefully allocate our available resources in ways that will have the highest level of impact for our top priorities and core services. Over 2009-2010, the Library’s resources (human and financial) will therefore be primarily focused on three main areas:

- Seeking ways to respond to and ameliorate the serious financial strains on the IR budget
- Adjusting for the loss of twelve voluntary staff departures approved as part of the University’s 2008 Voluntary Resignation/Retirement program
- Continuing to engage in the Organizational Renewal Initiative which the Library began in spring 2008, which is intended to closely examine all of the work done in the Library so that we can realize efficiencies, focus our efforts on our strategic priorities, and ensure that our organizational culture and structure is aligned with the current and future strategic directions of the University.

Beyond these three areas, the Library will also be continuing to carry out and complete a number of strategic initiatives which are already underway, or which clearly align with the Library’s core responsibilities within the University.

The most serious challenge facing the Library is the financial shortfall in our Information Resources budget.... the nature of this challenge and some possible strategies for addressing it are outlined below:

Strategic Priority 3: Building information collections – the digital imperative, the transformation of scholarly communication and responsible stewardship (year 4 update)

Assessments and surveys of the Library’s user community over many years continue to affirm that the Library’s primary objective should be to build and enhance its information collections. In order to do so, the Library continues to invest in consortial purchasing and management of electronic resources to maximize the Library’s buying power and increase the efficiency of information delivery and access e.g. the Ontario Scholars Portal and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN). The Library is also actively developing digital collections by supporting and contributing our unique holdings to global, national, and regional digital conversion initiatives, such as the Open Content Alliance, OurOntario and Alouette Canada. Finally, the Library’s role in support of new

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modes of scholarly communication and rapid advances in e-learning are evolving quickly. E-learning Operations and our Academic Liaison Librarians continue to work with faculty to integrate electronic information resources and services into the online learning environment and other web 2.0 or “NetGen” networks, and these collaborations have continued to grow and expand very quickly. While this integration and alignment of information content with the University’s curricular goals is very welcome, it does present significant challenges for staffing this new area of service and financing the costs of licensing electronic content. The Library has also recently developed a formal scholarly communications program which supports a successful online academic journal publication service and a nascent institutional repository system.

Despite all of these successes, the Library is severely constrained in its efforts to maintain the range of resources and services that the University of Guelph academic community needs. Even more than most years, the Library is facing numerous and complex pressures on the information resources budget, which include:

- The precipitous and unprecedented drop in the value of the exchange rate between the Canadian and US currencies has had a serious impact on the Library’s Information Resources(Acquisitions) budget. The Library acquires approximately \$3.9 million worth of subscription resources (including electronic journals, books and databases) on an annual basis; 80% of these resources are purchased in US funds. This year over last year, the decrease in the Canadian dollar’s purchasing power has been approximately 17%. On an annualized basis, this decline translates into approximately **\$405,000** of lost purchasing power to the Library’s acquisitions budget. Over the long-term, **the projected deficit for the Library’s Collection budget** under varying currency levels would be:

Value of Canadian \$	2010/11 shortfall	2011/12 shortfall	2012/13 shortfall
80 cents U.S.	\$618,000	\$1,548,000	\$2,739,000
70 cents U.S.	\$1,242,000	\$2,484,000	\$3,987,000

- Persistent and sustained inflation on electronic resources (which now represent 73% of the Library’s information resources spending).The average annual increase for these subscription based resources is 6% or approximately **\$234,000 per year**
- restrictive publishing and licensing regimes (limiting the use of electronic information and requiring the payment of premiums for copyright clearance and permissions, particularly for usage within D2L or other online course systems)
- multi-year licensing and funding commitments for electronic resources “packages”, which reduce the Library’s ability to selectively cut specific titles or resources
- the need to provide ongoing funding for the Canadian Research Knowledge Network resources (the initial funding has been provided through CFI, but this subsidization will end in 2010 and the University is contractually committed to continue funding these resources after the CFI funding ends) **\$230,000 per year**

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- The urgent need to increase funding for new and fast-growing services such as e-learning support and open access publishing (which require new investments in both staffing and information content)
- the demands of new academic programs and new research initiatives, which often require significant start-up funding for purchase of core information resources in order to meet assessment and accreditation criteria

In light of all of these pressures, the Library has moved aggressively to address this budgetary shortfall through a number of actions taken in the last half of the 2008/09 fiscal year. First, strategic spending initiatives last year will save money on a one-time basis in the current year. Second, a large amount of the new funding (45%) allocated to the library for Collections spending in the current year will not be spent on new resources but will instead be used to offset the budget shortfall. Third, the Library has reduced spending for the current year on books and databases. These reductions have been modest: less than 5% to selected departmental book budgets, and the cancellation of one database (ProQuest National Newspapers) which has significant content overlap with other resources which we will continue to subscribe to. Our best estimates are that these measures should enable the library to offset a potentially serious deficit in the IR Budget for the current fiscal year.

However, looking forward to 2009/10 and beyond, the challenges for the Library's information resources spending become much steeper and the options far narrower, especially if (as is entirely likely) the value of the Canadian dollar to the US dollar remain consistently in the low 0.80 cent range. With most short-term, one-time savings already realized, the library may have to undertake additional austerity measures in order to address the ongoing shortfall caused by currency devaluation. In the short-term, for fiscal year 2009/10, the Library has made the decision to cover off the expected deficit in the Information Resources budget by transferring OTO savings (largely accrued from unfilled position vacancies) over from our General Operating budget. This is a stop-gap measure which is **not sustainable** over the long-term – going forward into 2010/11 the current OTO surplus in the Library's Operating budget has been allocated to meet the budget cut targets recently implemented by the University. It is therefore crucial that the Library, and the University, look for more solid, stable and sustainable strategies to address the significant shortfall (\$500,000 per year) in funding that is projected for 2010 and beyond.

Clearly, over the long term, the problems posed by the currency devaluation, compounded by inflationary pressures, will severely challenge the library's ability to adequately resource new programs and even to sustain existing ones. Without more funding, and in the absence of sustainable strategies for dealing with the full range of scholarly information sources which our learner-centred and research-intensive university needs to accomplish its mission, further cuts to monograph budgets and to key electronic budgets will be necessary, and in some cases the Library will not be able to allocate funding for new graduate programs (either on a start-up or an ongoing basis) without seriously impacting existing programs. Our ability to participate in or to sustain consortial purchasing partnerships will also be diminished – the consortial approach has provided a rich array of resources and many financial efficiencies for Guelph in the past, but consortial licensing arrangements and institutional partnerships need to be financially sustainable if they are to survive.

Looking beyond the immediate financial complexities, the Library has identified a number of strategic initiatives and strategies which we wish to focus our information resources spending on over the 2009/10 period:

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- Continue to invest in consortia purchasing and digital management of electronic resources in order to maximize the Library's buying power and increase efficiency of information delivery and access in support of research, teaching and learning e.g. the Ontario Scholars Portal and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN).
- Work to re-align information resources spending with the University's curriculum revision process as it proceeds, to eliminate spending on programs/courses which are no longer being taught
- Enhance management of several key Information Resources services, including vendor services, management of digital and print collections, and document delivery and interlibrary loan.
- Engage (very selectively) in several new initiatives which will allow information resources to be acquired or provided more efficiently, and minimize staff workload. These initiatives will include:
 - Consortial (TUG) implementation of the ARES software tool for e-learning services (this will provide much greater staffing efficiencies)
 - Participating in local and Ontario Council of University Libraries government publications collections projects (print management and digitization of unique or core print resources)
 - U of G theses digitization project
- Maximize OTO spending on information products of high value to the University (e.g. backfiles of core journal titles), rather than committing to multi-year licensing which may not be sustainable in future years
- Invest in strategic pre-payment for some of our multi-year electronic licenses, in order to receive discounts, ensure the long-term availability of key scholarly information products, and take best advantage of small year-end surpluses in the Information Resources budget (due to slippage in year-end vendor billing cycles)
- Re-negotiating vendor contracts in order to achieve maximum flexibility regarding cost or payment strategies – this will help us to respond more effectively to our local needs and financial practices, and to ensure best value for money spent
- Provide adequate operational support for creating and maintaining digital collections metadata and electronic resources management (potentially by re-focusing existing staffing resources)
- Continue to support scholarly communication through open access to digital collections by:
 - Launching an institutional repository which will highlight and preserve campus publications
 - Leveraging our relationship with vendors and publishers to advocate for publisher agreements that allow authors to retain as many rights as possible over their intellectual product

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- In alignment with our new formal digital collection strategy, policy and infrastructure to increase visibility and access to unique holdings, we will continue to digitize a number of special collections (Scottish books, L.M. Montgomery collection, International Harvester, landscape architecture collections, local history photographs, theatre set models, oral history tapes, Massey-Harris Ferguson films, Sleeman papers) and to participate in global, national and regional digital conversion initiatives, including the Open Content Alliance, Alouette Canada and Our Ontario.