

**Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel
On the Status and Future of Canada's Libraries and Archives**

Response to Framing Questions

By

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARIES
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SERVICES

1. How would you describe the services Canadians, including Aboriginal Canadians and new Canadians, are currently receiving from libraries and archives in Canada?

The University of Alberta Libraries (UAL) endeavours to build meaningful relationships with the Indigenous community on its own campuses and beyond. The Indigenous students served are mostly from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada. These students' needs are similar to those of the rest of the student body in terms of friendly and committed service and relevant collections. However, they also would like to see physical space and services that are friendly to Indigenous students. The physical space could reflect local Indigenous colours or design, or could display art by Indigenous artists. The presence of staff who are welcoming and have some understanding of Indigenous culture is of benefit, and having more FNMI staff members in public service would also be an advantage. Indigenous discourse often speaks of decolonized space, which many understand to mean space where the presence of the Indigenous culture is recognized and the colonizing culture is not dominant. While this may not be entirely possible in a mainstream academic library, any progress in this direction is welcome. UAL has assigned a liaison librarian specific to these students and to the Faculty of Native Studies, who provides tailored and personalized services and programming.

UAL, like other peer institutions on the prairies and beyond, has strong collections of materials of aboriginal significance, both published and archival. The University of Alberta Archives frequently provides service to aboriginal clients, particularly on such topics as land and treaty rights, environmental issues and oil sands development.

UAL has also spearheaded a collaborative initiative with seven First Nations Colleges in Alberta, the First Nations Information Connection (FNIC). FNIC was established to ensure that First Nations colleges in Alberta had the technology and skills to benefit from the Lois Hole Campus Alberta Digital Library (LHCADL), a province-wide licensing of electronic resources for all post-secondary institutions. FNIC provides a shared Integrated Library System with access to print and electronic resources, including those licensed through LHCADL, and access to a wealth of web resources on Indigenous topics maintained by UAL staff with contributions from staff at the college libraries.

FNIC is a significant program and yet insufficient in alleviating the lack of library services for First Nations people in their own institutions and within their own communities. The federal government funds education to grade twelve on reserves, while provincial governments fund post-secondary education except on reserve lands. Therefore First Nations post-secondary institutions are entirely subject to the fluctuations of local funding and priorities, with the result that libraries in this sector often have little or irregular staffing and limited collections budgets if any. Beyond post-secondary libraries on reserve lands, there is a dearth of public libraries with, again, neither federal nor provincial governments mandated to provide the service. The Kainai Public Library on the Blood Reserve is the first public library in Alberta on reserve land and was only established last year. It will greatly benefit from membership in the Chinook Arch Regional Library System.

2. Libraries are currently hybrid operations, constantly pulled toward traditional services by many core users and pulled, equally, by a concern for relevancy from other users and potential users. What issues are libraries facing as they try to make the transition to new service models?

“Core users” may be viewed in some contexts as pulling libraries toward traditional services and collections, but one should acknowledge that they can also push libraries to explore many new things. In today’s world, change happens quickly and often at a scale that is larger than what we have observed in the past. Notions of “traditional” vs “non-traditional” are very subjective labels to apply, and it may be more helpful to focus on the matter of how libraries evolve to meet a broad range of user interests over time. For example, in today’s academic library environment, users of library services can be very sophisticated in their demands for supporting digital scholarship through sophisticated toolkits; in other contexts, users may be lacking in very basic information literacy or technology skills. Service design in academic libraries needs to be agile and responsive, changing as required to serve a wide variety of user profiles.

Examples of challenges that come with evolving services include:

Breadth, depth and nature of today’s information landscape and the skillsets to navigate Publications and all manner of grey literature have been stewarded and managed by libraries for many, many years. However, technology has enabled information to be generated at a scale and breadth that libraries have never before experienced. New areas of opportunity include the development of services to support data, both big and small, including structured and unstructured data. Other types of born-digital information need to be captured, curated, and otherwise accounted for, with possible intersections with libraries at all points of the information lifecycle. The variety of information containers poses all manner of challenge as we consider discovery, access, description, management, and long-term stewardship of the materials. Robust infrastructure and new skillsets are required to appropriately manage digital items across this continuum. Issues involving copyright and sharing of information are becoming increasingly complex. Library resourcing must make difficult decisions around where to invest resources to support users of physical and digital materials, with the models for digital licensing and purchase still evolving.

Libraries as collector, provider and publisher

Today's libraries have an opportunity to serve a variety of roles, including that of publisher, as they help to facilitate the sharing of primary documents, research, data, and many other types of information. Disintermediation of publishers and an interest in open access publishing has been a natural reaction to unsustainable pricing regimes set by publishers. With the coming of the web the traditional journal finds itself among a number of other potential publishing and communication platforms. Today's libraries are working their way through the opportunities and challenges of becoming content hosts and publishers, providing in many circumstances more direct avenues for information exchange.

Library as space

As Libraries evolve they realize that library spaces must also change. Shifting collections focus to digital materials, as well as declining interest in more traditional physical materials (e.g. reference volumes), creates an opportunity for libraries to refocus their spaces back to people -- creating engaging areas for collaboration, inspiration and creativity. Both public and academic libraries continue to evolve their spaces to better welcome and service their communities, with hybrid areas comprised of new technologies and well designed learning spaces. Libraries continue to put an emphasis on the "human experience" and are known as going the extra mile to ensure they are meeting the needs of their user communities.

3. How do libraries and archives measure outcomes of their service and community impacts?

The answer to this question is most likely *not well enough* though this response would not appear to be unique to the library sector. Libraries, or at least academic libraries, have traditionally attempted to measure and emphasize "inputs" such as number of volumes acquired, size of budget, number of staff, or similar investments. "Outputs" have been more elusive and difficult to measure, especially in terms of understanding how well we have been efficient and effective in meeting the needs of our users, contributing to societal and economic growth, and creating meaningful impact within the communities we serve. Many of today's libraries make reasonable efforts to undertake assessment activities in relation to their services, and have at least acknowledged, if not acted on, the need for better evidence for decision making and development of their service roles. However, despite progress in this area, demonstrating return on investment continues to be a difficult measure for most libraries to articulate. Much greater development of assessment programs need to be undertaken. It is interesting to consider opportunities for measuring outputs such as: how well does an individual library partner to accomplish goals as shared with other libraries? What efficiencies or resource savings come from those partnerships? What costs were avoided? How well are opportunities leveraged to achieve an overall greater good in our communities?

Worth noting, library organizations have attempted to measure outcomes in a variety of ways. For example, the Association of Research Libraries has assisted academic libraries with the development of measures, and have implemented a number of different programs, including LibQUAL which measures library users' perceptions of how their library is meeting their needs. User surveys and review of statistics (e.g. circulation statistics, gate counts,

web analytics) are also common tools. More in-depth research has also been undertaken in specific areas of librarianship and library service, e.g. measuring the value of hospital libraries, librarian involvements, and the impact on patient outcomes.

4. Are libraries the appropriate institutions to catalog, store, and provide access to research data? If not, which institutions should provide these services?

Libraries, particularly in the academic sector, are well positioned to be leaders in advancing research data management and stewardship in Canada. However, it seems quite clear that a digital scholarship ecosystem will only succeed through multi-sector collaborations at the local, national, and international levels. It will take true collaboration from a variety of stakeholders to enable research data management and stewardship in Canada to flourish.

Libraries bring a variety of strengths and expertise to the table. Proven experience in organizing and describing information is an obvious asset, and libraries are well positioned to work with others on the development and incorporation of standards to help manage and enable discovery of data to happen both now and in the future. Libraries are well positioned to work with researcher communities to ensure that needs are being met and have always enjoyed close relationships with these groups. It is reasonable to assume that metadata and description are roles that many stakeholders will find to be burdensome, and will look favorably at libraries for any assistance and support they might provide.

Libraries have been involved with research data management efforts for a considerable period of time, and established infrastructure networks like the Canadian Research Data Centre Network demonstrate library expertise in handling sensitive and confidential data. Many academic libraries are awakening to the opportunities of playing a stronger role in supporting, if not leading, campus data initiatives by developing or enabling infrastructure, shaping policy and discussion, and ensuring well-trained staff are made available to support planning efforts happening locally or further afield in national or international networks.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

1. Would Canadians know of, or understand, the contribution you make to library/archival service in Canada?

The contribution of large academic libraries to the library and archival landscape in Canada is probably not well understood by the average person outside of those institutions. However, many students, researchers, faculty, alumni and interested members of the public are engaged users of libraries and archives and very vocal in their support of the collections and services offered.

The University of Alberta Libraries, inclusive of the Archives, welcomes members of the public and provides a range of services to help them find and use the materials they seek whether they are available in print or electronically. UAL has an extensive digitization programme and provides freely accessible search interfaces and open access to the digital

objects to all. Many of UAL's digitization projects have broad appeal to members of the public, especially when there is a focus on local history, public figures or regional publishing, such as with Peel's Prairie Provinces, the Steele Exhibit or the Archives. In addition, UAL extends services and collection access to identifiable groups outside of the immediate student and staff community including, for example, high school students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate curriculum at local schools and members of the Edmonton Francophone community, who find a rich resource at Bibliothèque Saint-Jean. Further, a regular series of exhibits, special events and occasional book launches draw the public into UAL buildings, exposing them to the riches found within.

A number of library users have also come to understand that membership at one library often leads to services available from another library. UAL, like most other post-secondary libraries in Canada, participates in many partnerships and consortia, one result of which is that members of the University community have on-site borrowing privileges at partner institutions across the country and find their reading needs filled by local and distant collections through interlibrary loan and document delivery.

2. Describe the services provided directly to users within your context, or whether they are consortial in nature; please describe the mechanisms in place to define, refine and measure the impact of the services.

UAL, inclusive of the Archives, provides a wide range of services typical of large, Canadian academic libraries, both directly to patrons and through consortia and partnerships:

- Access to over five million catalogued titles of print and electronic books, serials, journals, maps, music, video and other publications represented by twelve million individual copies, including over 60,000 rare and special items in the Bruce Peel Special Collections Library. Many of our electronic resources are purchased through consortia or partnerships such as COPPUL, CRKN, HKN.
- The Integrated Library System (ILS) used to catalogue, discover and circulate much of this collection is hosted at UAL and made available to the NEOS Library Consortium.
- Access to a vast array of unique digitized materials from a range of collections focused on local, regional and national interests in a variety of formats. Many digitization projects are done through internal and external, national and international partnerships.
- Preservation of and access to University and non-University archival records. Other archival services including consultation in records management, record retention schedules, the identification of records of enduring value and archival description of records for research use.
- Information, reference, consulting and instructional services, in person and virtual, for individuals and groups, guiding patrons in the access and use of information resources within the academic and research context.
- Digitization and digital preservation services in addition to an institutional repository and emerging data management services.
- A vibrant website with a range of embedded web-based services.
- Appraisal services for donated collections.

- A full range of circulation services based on UAL collections as well as special services for distant students and students with disabilities
- Interlibrary loan and document delivery services based on many partnerships for materials borrowed from other libraries worldwide.
- Physical library buildings with varied seating and work space for individuals and groups and access to computer workstations, the wireless network and public printing and document scanning.
- See answer to question 3 below for more detail on digital services.

The measurement of the impact of these services is described already in question 3 above.

3. In the digital era, what support for patrons do/should libraries provide?

UAL has long provided a wide range of digital or electronic services and collections and continually pushes forward with new initiatives, often partnering with peer institutions in early development and adoption. The list of digital support the UAL offers is long and ranges from the very basic to the leading edge:

- Hundreds of public workstations throughout eleven library buildings, in open work spaces and group study rooms, both Windows and Mac, thin client and fat client, with Internet browsing and a range of software from basic office productivity tools to specialized packages and plug-ins for access to licensed content.
- Centrally supported wireless access. Both wired and wireless networks are free for all to use although members of the public must present identification for login credentials.
- Access to hundreds of thousands of licensed electronic databases, journal articles and books in a variety of ebook formats.
- Access to hundreds of thousands of locally digitized, unique materials, including books, newspapers, diaries, maps, postcards, letters, other archival items, etc.
- EZproxy service, permitting members of the University community to access licensed resources while off-campus.
- Basic scanners for public use to convert print or microform items to digital copies. High end scanners and editing workstations for researchers to use in partnership with UAL Digital Initiatives staff.
- An electronic journal publishing system and service (Open Journal Systems) currently hosting thirty-six scholarly journals.
- An open repository system and service, the Education and Research Archive (ERA), to collect, distribute and preserve the intellectual output of the institution, including an electronic copy of all UA theses and dissertations.
- An emerging suite of digital preservation services and long-term preservation storage, intended for a variety of digital files, objects and data sets.
- A range of web-based services to support patrons in their discovery and use of materials, including user search interfaces, chat, SMS and email help services, hosted bibliographic management software, etc.
- A range of workshops to support patrons in their use of digital services and collections, from course-based sessions to such specialized topics as citing print and electronic materials using a variety of styles, using persistent author identification systems such as ORCID, digital citizenship, etc.

- Widgets embedded in the campus learning management system (Moodle), leading students to targeted library resources, information and help.
- Rich digital parallels of Special Collections print exhibitions.

4. What in your opinion are the specific roles of libraries and/or archives and/or museums and other heritage institutions in community building and memory building?

**Note: While museums are very important partners in community building and memory building, the response is from the perspective of libraries and archives.*

Collecting and Acquiring

Libraries and archives are well positioned to identify and collect information that is of value to building the cultural record. Working with our user communities ensures that we do not lose sight of information that is relevant and of value to today's users, but with an eye to ensuring we acquire and preserve what will be of interest to future generations as well. What is collected or not collected may very well define our history so it is crucial for society to have libraries and memory institutions ensuring that the scholarly and cultural record is as full and comprehensive as we can possibly make it. History shows that governments and private interest are subject to bias and therefore, should not be the gatekeepers of memory building.

Discovery

Discovery of collections requires well thought out strategy. Information that isn't easily surfaced in today's discovery tools and indexes (e.g. Google) means to many people that the information does not exist. Libraries have always served a role in ensuring people from all socio-economic backgrounds have access to not just the most easily findable information, but to the best and the most relevant information. Libraries are a crucial check and balance, both in society and in the academy, to ensuring that information from a variety of sources, perspectives and vetting processes is discoverable and accessible.

Access

Libraries and archives provide access to a wealth of information. Physical access remains important, especially when materials are scarce and digital surrogates are not available. Through digitization and born digital publication, information access has been greatly expanded via the internet. Online access opens up a world of possibility, but it also creates enormous challenges for resource sharing, licensing, copyright, and use.

Stewardship and Preservation

Information must be available and usable in the future. Many assumptions are made around the availability and easy access we have to information in today's highly networked environment. However, the risks around digital information are well documented; many examples exist of materials that have already been lost to history. As with the digital, assumptions around the preservation of physical materials must also be continually questioned and taken seriously. Libraries and archives, and by proxy their funders, must be willing to make investments in infrastructure - both physical and digital - to ensure that last copies, rare material, research data, and all manner of other materials easily lost to history are going to be preserved.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Digitization

1. What are the main challenges of born-digital material for your institution?

Born digital materials create many challenges for our institution. Born digital materials include items like: e-theses, multimedia, websites, ebooks, ejournals, research or other kinds of data, databases, digital manuscripts, photographs, maps, and much, much more.

Issues that arise include:

- Digital preservation and the long-term survival of born digital information (Issues of digital preservation are well documented. The library community has been an active player in ensuring digital preservation is being considered at the local, national, and international level.)
- Requires new workflows and often new ways of thinking about collections. For example, materials may be licensed or purchased, but ongoing access to purchased born-digital material requires different actions than putting a physical book on a shelf. Material “published” to the web presents a cascade of challenges, ranging from legal questions around intellectual property and the right to acquire copies, to very practical issues of identification, discoverability, and means for acquiring or “harvesting” content in a wide variety of formats, standards (or lack thereof), and styles, e.g. dynamic, database-driven content.
- Metadata and description of born-digital materials requires thoughtful prioritization. The internet and technology offer a firehose of potential material.
- Digital materials, unlike physical materials, can in theory be easily shared. Opportunities for collaboration across institutions, regions, and beyond make sense though sometimes become difficult to manage.

All of this work requires budget and resources adaptation, as well as employing professional and paraprofessional staff with skill sets that can meet the demands of a rapidly changing environment.

2. What will be the function and future of a brick-and-mortar library or archive in a paperless future?

Within the academic library context, brick-and-mortar buildings remain extremely important community spaces, especially for students but also for visitors and members of the public, although decreasingly for faculty members and researchers. The rising dominance of electronic collections and services allows many faculty members, graduate students and researchers to access library resources, services and staff expertise from the convenience of their offices. By contrast, most undergraduate students spend long days on campus with no “fixed address” and turn to the libraries for spaces in which to study quietly, work with fellow students on group projects, and to socialize, rest and reflect when they are not attending lectures, labs and seminars. UAL provides a variety of individual and group settings, both quiet and conversational floors, and a range of carrels, tables and soft seating to welcome students and accommodate their needs.

Brick-and-mortar buildings also allow libraries to provide robust computing resources equitably, regardless of the financial circumstances of individual patrons or the relative wealth on campus of one faculty compared to another. And, of course, the buildings also house extensive print collections despite the trends to purchase electronically and to move low-use print collections to off-site facilities. Large academic libraries of older Canadian universities have obviously acquired a wealth of print resources that retain long-term value to the community, but most do not have sufficient off-site capacity to house all of the low use materials.

Finally, brick-and-mortar buildings continue to provide very important spaces in which librarians and other staff meet with patrons in person to consult with and support them in their navigation through the increasingly complex maze of information resources at public service desks, in private consultation spaces and in library classrooms.

Education

1. What changes, in your judgment, are necessary in the professional education and training of librarians/archivists in the 21st century?

Professional librarian and archivist training needs to be reviewed regularly in order to ensure relevant skills are being taught. Increasingly, both fields may require more specialist training in order to deal with the challenges and complexity of our environment.

Archivists need more training and exposure around the issues of privacy, copyright, and born-digital materials, including web archiving and electronic document and record management systems. Digital preservation is a key area that archival programs need to spend more attention developing.

MLIS programs need to better prepare graduates for the realities of the current information environment, and must ensure not just solid grounding in digital literacies, but a real demonstration of digital fluency and insight into our very layered and rich information environments. Library education in Canada might benefit from closer ties between library schools and research libraries, including those on the leading edge of service development. Library and information studies programs often make heavy use of sessional instructors to inject relevance and new ideas into their programs, which is a useful strategy.

2. What conversations do you think need to take place with library, archival, and information studies programs about professional competency requirements, and have they begun?

As indicated in the previous response, there is opportunity for better collaboration between libraries and library schools to ensure graduates are well prepared for the challenges we face. The degree to which programs have adapted appears to vary by institution.

Resources

1. Public libraries are primarily funded by local municipalities, with little funding from any other level of government. Many towns and rural communities are too small to support needed technology. How do we encourage the creation of library systems (or

consortia) that can meet the increasingly sophisticated technology-driven needs of libraries—whether urban or rural?

The province of Alberta has long been home to robust regional public library systems, with only a handful or so larger municipal libraries opting to remain independent. In addition, The Alberta Library (TAL), a multi-sector library consortium, has provided support to all public libraries in the province to gain access to SuperNet, the provincially funded broadband network. TAL has also provided leadership at the provincial level towards the establishment of a single borrower card for all citizens and province-wide licensing of electronic content.

UAL, Alberta's largest post-secondary library system, of course sits outside the public library sector. However, UAL opens its doors to members of the public, provides access to its collections through no charge or minimal charge interlibrary loans in the province, and encourages staff to share technical and other expertise with the broader library community. UAL participates in many consortia, often taking a leading role in their establishment.

Despite the strength in Alberta of regional public library systems and the openness of UAL and other publicly funded libraries from other sectors, inequalities between rural and urban libraries no doubt continue and are exacerbated in the realm of new technologies. The pooling of expertise and resources around shared goals will continue to lead to initiatives that reduce inequity while extending the purchasing power of public dollars in libraries, whether for licensing of electronic content or the acquisition of new workstations, ebook readers and tablets, or the introduction in public libraries of "maker" spaces. Libraries in Canada have a long history of successful collaboration across sectors and between large and small, well-funded and poor, and rural and urban institutions. Such collaboration is likely to become stronger as technology driven needs and costs rise, especially if public funding does not keep pace.

2. Assuming academic host institutions have financial resource constraints, and assuming academic libraries are equally constrained, how might these libraries attract funding adequate to meet the expectations of their users?

Public universities worldwide face considerable budget challenges, and there is no indication that this trend will reverse in the foreseeable future. Academic libraries will retain the support of their parent institutions by remaining highly relevant to the teaching and research mission and by being responsive to the information resource needs of their primary constituents, all in an era of rapid change not only in how these activities are undertaken but also as the work of libraries moves increasingly into the arena of digital scholarship.

Academic libraries also need to tell their stories to their own administration and patrons but also to alumni, the public, government members, potential donors, leaders in business and industry and other educators in order to maintain a constant message about the value of education and the role of libraries in a strong democracy.

3. What percentage increase to your current budget would permit you to realize the aspirations of your users? If you received an increased budget and consistent adequate resources, describe your library/archives in 2017.

This is a difficult question to answer giving the uncertain nature of our current budget. There are, however, some issues that would increase and support our ability to serve our users. First of all, a stable budget would allow us and other libraries to plan over a longer period of time. As many activities, particularly in the newer areas of service including digitization and extending partnerships, do not fit neatly into a fiscal year, a longer term picture of the budget would allow for more effective planning and implementation of developing services. It would also provide an environment that supports sustainability as ongoing services and access to collections are what our users need and expect.

A percentage increase in the budget that allows for the ongoing increases in salaries and materials costs, while it would remove short term tension around cuts to service and collections, does not allow the library flexibility in developing new services or replacing outdated modes of operation. The budget needs to be aligned with the role that the library is expected to play within the parent organization.

Secondly, as roles change in libraries, particularly with the ongoing shift from collections to connections, it is essential that budget allocations be fluid enough to allow the library administration to shift funds to new areas. This requirement recognizes the development of labour needs in libraries from a larger number of low-skilled workers to a growing number of highly skilled workers, and the changes from acquiring resources with the costs attached to providing access. Budgets that are restricted, for example, into collections and operations limit the nimbleness needed to move forward quickly.

Some specific examples: as University Archives moves more strongly into digitization, with growing responsibilities for copyright and privacy concerns, there is a need for additional trained archivists, who are generally paid at the same level as librarians.

A longer term and stable budget picture would allow the library not only to plan ahead for the implementation of new technology but would also allow for the evergreening of existing requirements. It is difficult for the library to continue to keep pace with the new technologies employed by our users without stable funding.

Staffing needs are changing and requiring fewer support staff and more professional staff. Libraries need to have a flexible budget model that allows for this change. At the same time, there is a need for ongoing discussion about the roles of librarians and archivists versus those of support staff.