Library Strategic Focus Areas, 2016-2018

Since 2005, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library has been engaged in an unprecedented effort to recover from an unprecedented disaster: Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. That effort has come at great cost, but is at last drawing to its conclusion. The Library can take justifiable pride in the success of these endeavors. But we will now need to turn our attention from rebuilding what was lost to building for the future. We must explore and adopt innovative means to advance the teaching and research mission of Tulane with as much energy and determination as was marshalled for the recovery and rebuilding projects.

To guide that process, the Library will emphasize three areas in the coming years: Spaces, Services, and Stewardship. The areas are distinct, yet highly complementary and interdependent, with sufficient flexibility to allow for the inevitable changes that will arise as economic, educational, social, and technological advances present themselves. The Library Administrative Group and staff will be working to flesh out action items for each focus area, with an annual review of actions and revision of activities.

Spaces

Library spaces must evolve to become user-and service-centric, with onsite collection storage reserved for new, high-demand, or selected rare materials. Spaces will be transformed to permit collaborative work by students and faculty alike, enhanced by appropriate technology, and assisted by library subject specialists and technology staff. New or renewed spaces for exhibits, lectures, and other programming can bring scholars, students, and the community together to (re)discover the treasures in Tulane’s outstanding collections. Working together with Technology Services, the Office of Research, CELT, the Academic Success Center, and other partners, the library will seek to create flexible spaces suitable for a variety of uses during all hours of operation. As a “neutral” space on campus, independent from any particular college or school, the library is particularly well-positioned, both physically and administratively, to serve as a hub for cross-campus connections at all levels.

Services

The greatest collections and most attractive spaces will mean little without highly qualified staff to provide services that promote the university’s teaching and research missions. Traditional user instruction, collection building, and research assistance will continue, but data management consultations, metadata and digitization services, digital humanities projects, and creative outreach approaches that put librarians out into the campus community will also need to grow and flourish. Partnering with appropriate groups on campus to improve services to faculty; graduate students; first-generation students; students from underrepresented groups; alumni; and campus decision makers will help us build Tulane’s institutional capacity and enhance learning and teaching across the university. Cross-institutional partnerships with libraries, museums, and other cultural heritage organizations will also help scale services to reach broader audiences with greater impact.

Stewardship

Stewardship encompasses a range of internal and outwardly-focused activities crucial for the library of the future. Stewardship inherently requires the most prudent use of existing funds, directing money to high priority needs wherever possible. It also involves building a broader, stronger financial foundation for the library that will enable the services and spaces outlined above to be created and sustained.
embraces the library’s traditional role as a custodian of institutional and cultural memory, recognizing the acute need to preserve our tangible treasures for future generations while also addressing the growing challenge of preserving resources in digital form, particularly resources created at Tulane. And it means investing in ourselves so that we can continue to grow as an organization.