



# Northeastern University

## *University Libraries*

### Strategic Directions 2016-2020

The changing aspirations and expanding research environment at Northeastern University demand that it supports a commensurate research library of the same breadth, quality, and global stature. It is in this context that this document articulates a set of broad initiatives, thrusts, and values that serve as an agenda for the Library's next round of strategic planning.

Northeastern University's Library, like many academic libraries, is evolving strategically beyond its role as a trusted repository of information to serve as a true partner in the teaching and research enterprise of the University. Snell Library undertakes to be a full participant in the development and support of new student learning goals and competencies as outlined in the new **NUpath**. Its librarians and specialists are actively engaged in teaching and co-curricular support, with a focus on information and media literacy and new skills such as data management, GIS, and data visualization.

An overarching and persisting goal of the Library is to attain levels of information resourcing, staffing, and service delivery that are properly aligned with those of Northeastern's agreed peers in the Colonial Academic Alliance and elsewhere. As befits an excellent research library, a higher aspiration is to meet the benchmark requirements of membership status within the Association of Research Libraries. Both of these goals imply a significant institutional commitment to the resourcing of the Library and need to be addressed by the University's leadership.

Underpinning the Library's strategic directions for the next several years are several broad themes and values to which the Library and its staff adhere:

- User-centricity
- User privacy
- Excellent customer service
- Innovation and creativity
- Preservation of unique knowledge
- Intellectual freedom
- Open access to information
- Diversity and cultural competence
- Sustainability
- Accessibility
- Continual assessment
- Deep and extensive collaboration
- Respect for colleagues and co-workers

The starting point for Library strategic planning is the University's Mission and Academic Plan, with which all Library planning must be consistent. The following strategic goals are grounded in the context of Northeastern University, especially the institution's increased emphases on experiential learning, use-inspired research, and innovation and globalization in higher education. They affirm the directions that will guide the Library's work for the next several years and in which context annual action plans will be developed.

## 1. User Experience

- a. Personalized Services – As the Library moves further into a heavily online information environment, it will need to develop services that both engage with users at the point where they encounter and create information, and also promote new approaches to information and media literacy. This will include a shift towards online tutorials, interactive/intelligent reference guides, “My Librarian” personalized services, and various synchronous and asynchronous means of working face-to-face and virtually with diverse individuals and groups, both locally and abroad. Personalized support for faculty members and researchers will need to be developed for delivery through new digital scholarship services.
- b. Multiple Modes of Delivery – The Library will further develop the processes for ensuring that the content it manages is device- and location-agnostic. This includes development of a formal usability testing process, more intense negotiation with vendors (and with ITS with regard to VPN and related technologies), and greater emphasis on mobility and accessibility. At the same time, the Library will explore and support new technologies, and develop virtual engagement environments in venues with the greatest likelihood of student uptake.
- c. Promotion and Communication - In response to needs assessment and market research, the Library will direct promotion toward raising awareness about library offerings, using creative new media and traditional tools. These communications will open a wider space for dialogue with users that the Library can use as inspiration for new programs and services.

## 2. Learning and Teaching

- a. Instruction – The Library will transition from mostly traditional in-person, class-based information literacy sessions to an instruction program that more closely aligns with University-supported research-based methods, to be developed in collaboration with the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning through Research (CATLR), CPS, academic departments, and other centers of expertise in learning support on campus. These components will encompass media and other emerging information platforms, such as visualization and data-based information.
- b. NUPath – The Library’s approach to teaching and learning will increasingly be informed by the implementation of the University’s new core curriculum and by its points of emphasis, particularly in addressing learning goals for information literacy, creative expression, understanding society and institutions, analyzing and using data, and several other related core requirements.
- c. Learning Experiences - The Library will increase curricular collaboration by working with faculty to develop new types of learning experiences outside of class such as leading students in recurring reading or working groups or

creating opportunities for experiential project work tied to the curriculum or course credit. These opportunities will have the potential to benefit a wider constituency of learners, including students on co-op and research assistants. The Library will also increase curricular support by developing new forms of publications tied to class needs, such as Open Educational Resources or online exhibit spaces via platforms like the DRS Toolkit or Omeka.

### 3. Research Services

- a. Researcher Engagement – All Library staff are encouraged to more actively engage in the research and scholarly life of the faculty and students, mindful of new approaches to research and scholarship. The Library’s objective will be to create a vigorous and healthy ecosystem accessible to and interacting with the University’s research community, with the Library offering, for specific disciplines or technologies, expert partnerships involving specialists (ex. in GIS and data visualization) and a range of generalist professionals.
- b. Scholarly Communication - The Library will continue to advocate for emerging scholarly communication models, particularly for open access deposit of scholarly output into the DRS. It will collaborate with other organizations and individuals to respond to copyright issues such as author rights, fair use rights, and orphan works. Through its publishing program, the Library will sustain the important legacy of Northeastern University Press by digitizing and distributing open-access editions of out-of-print titles. The publishing program will also support open-access journal publishing on campus, provide a platform for researchers to produce and disseminate output in nontraditional formats, and increase the visibility of Northeastern-produced intellectual content.
- c. Data Management Services – The Library will develop a wide-ranging and flexible data management program that offers a range of services from basic (assistance with grant-writing requirements) and practical (depositing/versioning tools that allow faculty to work with their data in the DRS during their research) to advanced (developing customized data access portals atop the DRS framework).

### 4. Space

- a. Rebalancing Library Space – The Library will redeploy as appropriate space no longer required for physical collections, in order to meet a range of needs, including space for study and to support new modes of collaborative work and knowledge creation.
- b. Library as Intellectual Center - The Library will strengthen its role as an intellectual center on campus by hosting performances, workshops, lectures, and exhibits.

- c. Library as Creative Center - The Library will provide a central focus, with accompanying services and showcases, for students and scholars producing and sharing creative, innovative, and artistic work.

## 5. University Expansion and Community Engagement

- a. Campus Expansion – As a key component of the University’s successful expansion strategy and its Global Network, the Library will embrace different models for information delivery, provision of information resources, service engagement, and assessment in many areas of activity.
- b. Cultural Competency - The Library will foster the cultural competency of staff members and the organization as a whole, and specifically with regard to the deployment of its services and information resources. It will place increasing emphasis on assuring equally sensitive and appropriate service and civility to all members of the University’s diverse and increasingly international community, paying special attention to the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.
- c. Community Outreach and Engagement - The Library will adopt a strong, leading position in building partnerships and services with communities beyond the campus.

## 6. Collections and Resources

- a. Electronic Collections – The Library will continue to work through the implications of its transition from an e-preferred to e-only (with appropriate exceptions) collections policy. As funding permits, legacy print materials will be converted to online versions, preferably in partnership with other institutions. Major emphasis will be placed on providing powerful yet intuitive interfaces to digital information, whether “owned” by the Library or not, and on promoting discovery of Library resources wherever users start their searches. Subject to appropriate funding, the Library will also help to support the University community with the recommendation of digital resources appropriate for data mining, and with general negotiation with publishers to allow data mining of licensed resources.
- b. Streaming Media - The Library will make more of its media collection available via streaming technology, to complement an existing rich collection of DVDs, CDs, and aging VHS. It will strategize to ensure sustainable licensing and purchase models and improve discoverability and accessibility (via video captioning) of open access and licensed media assets.
- c. Demand-driven Acquisitions – The Library will concentrate on providing access to information which is immediately required by the patron or in direct support of the curriculum, through models such as patron-driven acquisitions, purchase on demand, faculty requests, etc. Local resource-sharing networks and collaborative purchasing will continue to be explored and expanded.
- d. Purchase Models – The Library will work with colleges and departments to develop hybrid management-based models for the purchase, lease or cost-

sharing of major information resources required mostly by one revenue center on campus.

- e. Archives and Special Collections – The Library will identify and promote specific special collection/archives foci with closer ties to the teaching and research mission of the university and aggressively seek funding opportunities to develop these collections. It will identify interdisciplinary themes in archival and special collections material (e.g. health, social justice) that closely align with the major emphases of the University and promote these to the faculty. The Library will place special emphasis on the role that the Archives can play in supporting campus diversity and increasing knowledge of and sensitivity to the nature, significance, and societal role of groups under-represented. It will greatly expand its related teaching functions and integrate materials with class projects. In collaboration with the campus partners and larger Boston community, the Library will create sustainable models for the digitization of its unique resources (and the preservation of originals).
- f. Print Collection Management – Over time, much of the remaining print collection will either be transferred to on-site compact storage or be withdrawn in favor of efficient and economical “as needed” access via the Library’s participation in the EAST (Eastern Academic Scholars Trust) distributed repository project.
- g. Digital Repository Service – The Library will continue to expand the DRS by more fully engaging the widest possible spectrum of campus constituencies to assess needs and areas for innovation. Through the participation of appropriate library staff, the Library will develop procedures and policies to ensure that a) content is deposited in preservation-friendly formats, with appropriate metadata, and b) all due diligence is given to ensuring the preservation and long-term access to and use of this content. This includes working with ITS on developing auditing systems, storage allocation and business models.

## 7. Technology

- a. Systems – The Library will continually investigate, integrate, and implement systems and interfaces that best support its strategic directions, fulfill the research needs and behavioral expectations of its users, and streamline its work. These systems should also support the development of collaborative collection development, technical processing, and resource-sharing networks.
- b. Innovation and Experimentation – The Library’s staff will investigate, develop (as appropriate), and implement cutting-edge software solutions that best meet the needs of its patrons and staff. The Library needs to be technologically responsive and focus on the unique needs of the Northeastern community to determine a road map for sustainable technology, and will develop partnerships with campus and external

partners that allow Northeastern to be viewed as a leader in the innovative use of academic and library technology.

- c. Digital Preservation - The Library will develop a digital preservation infrastructure to support a more sustainable future for online scholarship and to preserve library assets, digitized archival materials, as well as selected administrative and departmental materials from across the university. This will be undertaken with due regard to the potential of partnerships with broader consortial or national initiatives such the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). The Library can offer a special contribution to the University's diversity goals here, in conjunction with related Library initiatives, by providing a safe and long-term digital haven for legacy materials supporting diversity awareness on campus, and by ensuring the persistent digital memory of community and otherwise under-represented groups.

## 8. Staffing

- a. Realignment to New Work – The Library will continually review its staffing models and associated workflows appropriate to the context of the evolving academic research library. This may include a move to collaborative staffing with other institutions.
- b. Developing Library Staff - The Library will develop and encourage a culture of continuous education and improvement, emphasizing project management skills, discipline knowledge, research support, and technical and public service skills as appropriate. This will require collaboration with academic departments to identify, advocate for, fund, and assess positions created as part of this ongoing process. In addition, the Library and individual staff should seek opportunities for service on campus committees and participation in campus life.
- c. Contributing to the Profession – As part of the Library's commitment to innovation, and to complement its mission to advance the range of services and spaces it offers to the University community, Library staff will seek to expand their contributions to the professional literature, and investigate ways of furthering the development and success of the profession (including by such forms of engagement as presenting at conferences, mentoring, and supporting internships.)

## 9. Assessment

- a. Data Gathering and Analysis – To create an outstanding user experience and support data-driven decision-making that is responsive to user needs, the Library will analyze user preferences and behavior, as well as outside trends and factors affecting library programs and services. The Library will engage users individually and in aggregate to determine unmet needs and identify gaps in awareness about library offerings, and recommend directions for new offerings.

- b. Outcomes and Outputs - Library Assessment will focus on exploring and strengthening the contribution of Library use to research and to student learning and retention outcomes, and on supporting the cost-effectiveness of library operations.

**10. Funding and Development**

- a. Advancement - To implement these Strategic Directions will require the realignment of existing Library resources. The Library will identify and secure diverse sources of funds or revenue including: intensified identification of new donors, active participation in the University's Empower Campaign, the exploration of naming and sponsorship opportunities provided by new and existing Library spaces, and the more effective cultivation and development of existing donor contacts.
  
- b. Other Funding Sources - The Library will focus more closely on opportunities for additional funding such as: ongoing identification of grant opportunities, the submission of compelling applications, and successful award outcomes; the negotiation of cost-sharing based on mechanisms available through the Hybrid Management framework; the negotiation of a Library-related indirect costs component of University research grant awards; and other innovative approaches.

**11. Cooperation and Collaboration**

- a. The Library will further leverage collaborations and partnerships across and beyond the campus in order to improve the delivery and development of services. This will include deeper engagement with Northeastern partners such as ITS, CATLR, the Colleges, and the University's other administrative units, as well as with institutional groups such as the Boston Library Consortium and Boston Public Schools, and with project partnerships such as the EAST, Digital Commonwealth, Duraspace, DPLA, and HathiTrust communities.

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