Strategic Directions

2022-2025

Aligning strategy and resources to provide the best possible outcomes for our community of students, scholars, and artists
Strategic Directions

Oberlin College Libraries
2022-2025

Assessment Coordination
Elizabeth Sullivan, Assessment and User Experience

Drafting Committee
Rebecca Belford, Head of Technical Services, Conservatory Library
Valerie Hotchkiss, Director of Oberlin Libraries
Erik Inglis,* Professor of Medieval Art History
Tracy Sutherland,* Associate Director for Public Services
Julie Weir,* Reference and Instruction

Library Leadership Team
Barbara Prior, Clarence Ward Art Library
Deborah Campana, Conservatory Library
Ken Grossi, College Archives
Tim Keller*, Discovery & Metadata Services
Megan Mitchell, Reference and Digital Initiatives
Alison Ricker*, Science Library
Ed Vermue, Special Collections Library

Library Council
Alonso Avila, Information Literacy & Student Success
Lindsey Felice, Discovery & Metadata Services
Faith Hoffman, Conservatory Library
Anne Salsich, College Archives
Greg Solow (chair), Conservatory Library
Kay Spiros, Clarence Ward Art Library
Crystal Willer, Conservatory Library

General Faculty Library Committee
Matthew Bahar, Stephen Checkoway, Mark Edwards, Wendy Beth Hyman,
Erik Inglis (chair), Kara Leaman, and Mike Moore

Student Library Advisory Board
Gillian Merrill, Elliot Diaz, and Kiran Williams

Friends of the Oberlin College Libraries
Nathan Carpenter, President; Ify Ezimora, VP; Noah Pollaczek, Secretary
*Served with more than one of these groups

With thanks to all focus group leaders, respondents, and reviewers
Introduction

From September to December 2021, Oberlin College Libraries conducted surveys, met with students, faculty, staff, alums, and administrative departments, and convened focus groups with our constituencies and library staff to find out what people wanted from their libraries. Nearly 200 people told us what was working well and what areas needed improvement. We encouraged our users and staff to offer critique and new ideas for moving forward. We also met with our peers in the Ohio Five and reviewed current strategic plans from the Oberlin Group (over 70 elite liberal arts colleges in the U.S.).

After these wide-ranging discussions and in-gathering of data, we feel we are ready to articulate strategic directions for the Libraries that are responsive to our users and grounded in the best practices of our field.

This report includes an executive summary and six strategic areas with goals. To involve staff more fully in implementing change and progress, we will use this three-year document to inform the more particular goal-setting process in each department and unit of the library. Our approach will be both project-oriented and holistic, with quantitative results and qualitative assessment as integral components of the goal-setting process. We want to be a future- and user-oriented organization, evolving and transforming with our field and in response to our community’s needs.

Executive Summary

In general, we found that our users are extremely satisfied with the depth and breadth of the Libraries’ collections and our ability to provide additional content through resource sharing—particularly OhioLink. Though disciplines differ in attitudes toward format (print or e-resources), there is agreement that the Libraries’ collections have done very well keeping current with the curriculum and scholarly interests of the community. Both staff and faculty worry about the libraries’ diminishing purchasing power in light of modern publishing models. Inflation impacts the number of resources we can provide, and costs continue to rise for systems, data hosting, and library service platforms each year, with no additional funding beyond collections budgets to pay for them. Some faculty expressed a desire for more transparent communication of collection development practices, especially as they evolve in light of budget reductions.
We found that library services are well-aligned with our users’ needs and appreciated by the community. Librarians teach information literacy and research skills on a regular basis. Our interlibrary loan services were much praised. Library programming and engagement got high marks, with wistful hopes for more in-person activities to rebuild community in a post-pandemic environment. And programs like laptop lending and digital humanities workshops are deeply appreciated. Interestingly, during COVID the Libraries actually strengthened connections to students, finding new and more convenient (for them) ways to answer their research and reference questions through zoom or chat functions. There is also a desire to expand or reformat some of our instructional activities as asynchronous options—again, a byproduct of the pandemic age. In short, we became more responsive to the needs of our community when we had to do things differently. And these changes are here to stay.

In some cases, we discovered that the Libraries need to communicate better to faculty and students about the broad panoply of services we offer, especially in training and curriculum-supporting opportunities. Communication should be a constant focus. Collaborations with other units on campus increase our visibility and should be encouraged.

It was heartening to learn that the staff of the Libraries greatly appreciate one another and hold their colleagues' skills and commitment to service in high regard. They desire more avenues for communication and increased opportunities for collaboration within the Libraries and beyond. Many noted the need to improve morale and the general work environment, expressing various views on achieving that: some want empowerment, others desire clear directives. Some pointed to the need for more supervisor training. All asked for better physical working conditions (HVAC, ergonomics, workspace redesign). Finally, there was general agreement that we should incentivize and support professional development for all staff.

Not surprisingly, all respondents recognize that technology touches every aspect of modern libraries and will continue to evolve. Libraries must anticipate these developments whenever possible. Faculty and librarians are especially aware that open access, streaming media, digital collections, user experience, resource discovery, and digital preservation loom large. There may be some catch up for Oberlin in some of these areas. Any successful college library must evolve and change continually to maintain the resources and services our users require. We recognize that technology pervades every aspect of these changes—and of our strategic plans.
Space issues loomed large in almost every meeting and survey. Though students, faculty, and staff appreciate the variety of study spaces and the different vibes of each of the libraries, facility issues were by far the most common concern for all. Respondents cited deferred maintenance issues, of course, but more important, was the overwhelming conviction that the physical presence of the campus libraries is as essential as ever. Usage data shows that Terrell Library is the busiest physical academic space on campus, and that over 1.2 million patrons come through the Libraries’ doors each year. Additionally, as measured by online use (270,278 downloads and landings in FY20), the Libraries are also one of the most heavily used virtual spaces on campus. The consensus is that library facilities have suffered due to years of deferred maintenance and lack of investment in upgrades. Oberlin’s Libraries are central to campus life and the educational mission and should be a priority in facilities planning.

Students ask for more group study rooms and large communal study spaces, new furniture, and renovations in general. Librarians want proper space for collections, exhibitions, and teaching with resources, as well as appropriate lighting and environmental control. Faculty want flexible spaces where they can teach with collections, hold interdisciplinary conferences, and collaborate with the Libraries in such areas as information and data literacy, material culture analysis, and book studies.

Because of the overwhelming number of space and facilities concerns, we have included a separate addendum to expand upon this area of strategic focus in more detail.
The Library staff reviewed its mission and values statements to be sure they still reflected our core values. We made a few tweaks, but in general we concurred that these statements reflect our identity, responsibilities, ethics, and raison d’etre as librarians and information specialists.

**Mission, Vision, and Core Values**

The Libraries play a central role in the educational mission at Oberlin. We collect, preserve, and make accessible diverse resources that make teaching, research, and creativity possible. We partner with faculty and students to foster learning and to encourage the development of informed scholars, resourceful artists, and engaged citizens.

At Oberlin, we acknowledge our responsibility to create an open-minded, inclusive, and anti-racist community. Among the core values of our Libraries, we hold especially dear freedom of speech, promotion of diversity, and recognition of our social responsibility to inform and educate for progress. At Oberlin, we believe that great minds do not think alike.

We will always align our strategy and resources (people, collections, services, and spaces) to provide the best possible outcomes for our community of students, scholars, and artists.

**Strategic Directions: Areas of Focus**

We have focused our Strategic Directions on six distinct areas that complement our mission, vision, and core values. Importantly, these areas also mirror the priorities of the College & Conservatory as expressed in Oberlin’s Mission and Values Statement, the One Oberlin report, and the Learning Goals of A&S and the Conservatory. For each strategic area, we provide overarching goals for the Libraries. These goals will shape departmental objectives as each unit develops plans and action items in general and project-oriented ways.

The articulation of our core values and these strategic directions will serve as a compass for our work over the next few years. It is also a document that we can build upon beyond 2025.
1. Support for teaching, student success, and lifelong learning

We take a whole student approach, supporting academic success, career readiness, and student well-being through programming, resources, services, spaces, mentoring, and student employment. We expand the curriculum through information literacy and critical thinking initiatives, cultural programming, deep and diverse collections, and in apprenticeship models for learning transferable skills.

Goals

- Identify early interventions, including first-year experiences, that create bridges for incoming students, especially first-generation students, those lacking basic research skills, and students who may not have experienced professionally staffed libraries. Increase awareness of the many ways the Oberlin College Libraries support students as they begin college-level research.
- Teach 21st-century research, critical thinking, and digital citizenship. Encourage pre-professional development, entrepreneurship, knowledge production, and the ethical use of information and scholarly content.
- Facilitate interdisciplinary communities of learning and practice for digital scholarship and collaborate with departments and programs to integrate digital scholarship into curricula.
- Encourage faculty adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) and other shared curricular content, focusing on access and accessibility.
- Identify, develop, and experiment with innovative technologies and approaches that support teaching, learning, and research.
- Scale/implement Digital Competencies/Information Literacy curricula. Develop and pilot workshops, that can be offered in classes (perhaps as a part of integrated concentrations). or other experiential learning opportunities.

2. Partners in research and scholarship

We support the scholarly information needs of our campus through physical and e-resources that are both owned and shared, facilitated through staff expertise. Librarians with subject and information expertise are essential partners in the research life cycle.

Goals

- Engage in responsive collecting, collaborative resource sharing, demand-driven acquisitions, and collection management to meet user needs and expectations.
• Improve access to collections: Expand discoverability and long-term access to research material that we own, license, create, or identify; enhance metadata and linked data; improve library and LibGuide integration with CMS, e-resource innovations; organize content and improve access to digital and physical collections. This is the groundwork for Integrated Library System migration within five years, preferably collaboratively with other state institutions.

• Broaden discussions to consider implications of decreasing budgets and increasing operating and capital costs for library resources, access, cataloging utilities, streaming platforms, student wages, consortial memberships, etc.

• Participate in collections partnerships, consortial agreements, controlled digital lending programs, open access, and other access solutions.

• Develop thoughtful approaches to collection development, deaccessioning, and cancellations, involving stakeholders and mindful of long-term research needs.

• Build upon distinctive collection strengths and in new and underrepresented areas with research and teaching potential.

• Invest in infrastructure and systems to support short and medium-term digital projects.

• Lead the College toward open scholarship and open science as standard practice.

3. Welcoming and safe spaces for users and collections

We offer spaces that inspire, support social interaction and access, and lead to personal discovery. As stewards of the collections at Oberlin, we are responsible for maintaining our physical and e-resources through proper housing, sustainable storage and retrieval, care, and preservation. We must ensure that current and future generations have the spaces and the resources they need for teaching, learning, and research.

Expanded section. See Space and Facilities addendum below for extensive report on space and facilities issues in the Libraries.

4. Inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility

Meet users where they are by facilitating equitable access to content in any format. We recognize the social responsibility of libraries to inform and educate for progress. We champion free speech, inclusive perspectives, information equity, and anti-racist
principles in our collections, programs, and library ethos. The Libraries contribute to the institution’s aspirations, and work to meet accessibility standards as we alter spaces and implement tools, resources, and services.

**Goals**

- Audit our physical spaces as part of an overall buildings study plan conducted by Campus Facilities to enhance accessibility. As we renovate, we will pay particular attention to ADA issues as a guiding principle.
- Support student equity through access to affordable course materials, including adoption of OERs, and sustainable technologies.
- Continue to promote diversity in programming, collections, and research, acknowledging that "great minds do not think alike."
- Create partnerships with communities represented in our collections and continue research into the provenance, cultural representation, care, and preservation from the perspective of the cultures of origin.
- Foster an inclusive and diverse workplace through equity in recruitment, hiring, training, and staff development, integrating IDEA priorities into the workplace.
- Enhance representation of historically marginalized groups in collections to highlight diverse voices, perspectives, and absent narratives.
- Commit to closed captioning for all lectures, workshops, and meetings.
- Review and improve internships and student employment opportunities to strengthen commitment to equity and inclusion.
- Work to improve and maintain research and discovery systems, content and collection management systems, and websites that meet web accessibility standards.

**5. Communication and collaboration**

We want users to have a great experience each time they visit a library at Oberlin College & Conservatory. We listen—and learn—by actively assessing user satisfaction and our progress. We will establish multiple avenues for communication, collaboration, and connectedness in the Libraries, on campus, in the region, and beyond. We will build and implement models for systematically gathering feedback from the community.
Goals

- Enhance public engagement, transparency, and connections: Highlight community research, partner in public scholarship, and connect scholars, instructors, and students through research and analytical tools, programming, and engagement.
- Increase awareness and engagement: Create and implement assessment, communications, and outreach plans for the campus and in the community.
- Focus on website maintenance and accessibility upgrades. Reassess website user experience and improve access to resources we have but may not promote effectively.
- Continuous assessment to monitor and improve services, content, effectiveness, accessibility, and inclusivity.
- Responsive collection development and user experience awareness in support of the educational and research needs of the campus.
- Build strong ties with College Communications and Advancement.

6. Organizational and operational effectiveness, excellence, & sustainability

We recognize that libraries are in a constant state of evolution and change. As we evolve, we want to improve our processes and workflows. We will keep pace with change to provide our users with the best services and resources while maintaining staff morale. We will develop and deploy employee expertise, recognize excellence, and empower innovation and change.

Goals

- Organize ourselves for maximum effectiveness in workflows, collaboration in networking, and satisfaction in the workplace, striving for transparency in our practices and in how we structure ourselves (org chart, committees, working groups, etc.)
- Morale matters: Build and sustain a supportive workplace, recognizing and appreciating our multi-talented and devoted library staff.
• Understand best practices in equity, inclusion, and anti-racism and share with student employees through on-the-job training. We aspire to create model work environments that students will want to replicate as they embark upon their careers.

• Develop cross-departmental plans to improve creation, accessibility, and sustainability of OCL-owned and created digital resources based on established standards, policies and best practices in digitization, digital access, and digital preservation.

• Align internal Libraries practices with the College’s Environmental and Social Responsibility report.

• Reinstate a Rank & Promotion system for professional librarians. Encourage professional development for all staff, develop an onboarding program for new employees, and explore the possibility of peer mentoring program.

• Foster and build consortial relationships for collections/access, professional development, and outreach.

STUDENTS

From the survey: What do you appreciate most about Oberlin College Libraries?

FACULTY
Addendum

Space and Facilities Addendum

We include this Space and Facilities Addendum to focus on the most significant findings of our surveys and focus groups during our fall semester self-study. Staff, students, faculty, and alums universally expressed serious concerns about space and facilities issues. We feel that this special report might be helpful. We also believe that many of the space and facilities ideas below are ripe for advancement opportunities.

Summary

Users want welcoming spaces with modern amenities optimized for sustainability. Students are particularly vocal about the need for access to more open and group study areas and upgrades. Students and alums tend to focus on public spaces, suggesting renovations and renewals of current spaces, new and more accessible furniture, more spaces for individual, group, and open study, and upgrades to equipment to facilitate group work and undergraduate research. Staff and faculty asked for improved spaces for teaching information literacy and working with primary resources. This group also noted the need for improved accessibility. Collections space dominated staff and faculty discussions of good stewardship for Oberlin’s significant holdings.

Issues of deferred maintenance and its impact on Oberlin’s collections arose repeatedly. The concerns are many and varied. In this report, we offer goals, actions, and ideas for improving our spaces, for good stewardship of collections, and for tackling deferred maintenance issues such as storage needs, environmental conditions energy efficiency, and accessibility. Most respondents encouraged sustainability and environmentally sensitive renovations.

The physical presence of the campus libraries is as essential as ever. Usage data shows that Terrell Library is the busiest physical academic space on campus with an average of over 1.2 million visits each year. Additionally, as measured by online use (270,278
downloads and landings in FY20), the Libraries are also one of the most heavily used virtual spaces on campus. Terrell is often called “the student union,” and the Conservatory Library serves a similar function with usage numbers indicating that the majority of music students are in the library at least once a day. The Ward Art Library and the Science Library branches have their own personalities, popularity, and facilities/space needs.

The clear desire of all respondents is to restore and reimagine library spaces to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff while addressing long-term maintenance and infrastructure deficits to protect collections of valuable research resources. Respondents made it very clear that they appreciate library space for study, contemplation, and social interactions. Many expressed displeasure with the repurposing of much-desired library spaces for centers, offices, storage, and other services unrelated to libraries.

**Welcoming Spaces for Users**

We work closely with the Student Library Advisory Board, the General Faculty Library Committee, and Campus Facilities to ensure that the Libraries are welcoming spaces of discovery, creativity, innovation, and collaboration. We believe that libraries stand for both access and accessibility and that ADA compliance is a diversity, equity, and inclusion issue. Library spaces on campus should offer lively and engaging public programming including workshops, concerts, booktalks, and cultural and multidisciplinary gatherings.

**Goals:**

- Flexible, collaborative, open, accessible, and clean spaces.
- Welcoming and well-equipped spaces that enhance learning, inspire research, and cultivate innovation and creativity.
- Accessible facilities, furniture, resources, and services.
- Organized, environmentally-sound, and safe housing for all collections.

**Actions:**

- Conduct an assessment of Terrell, Conservatory, Ward (Art), and Science Libraries and Carnegie storage areas to identify necessary maintenance needs
and determine the potential to renovate, restore or build new for each as needed.

- Make all Libraries fully accessible.
- Complete a master plan with the Facilities department and architects to produce a 5-year plan for addressing space and facilities issues.

**Ideas**

**TERRELL LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, AND COLLEGE ARCHIVES**

NB: Terrell@50 in 2024

**GENERAL FOR TERRELL**

- Tone down 1970s pop décor while maintaining mid-century/contemporary aesthetic and beloved iconic features (including “womb” chairs).
- Equip seminar rooms on 2 and 3 for regular library instruction.
- Re-carpet/flooring, window, roof, and HVAC upgrades.
- Assess current uses of small group study rooms.
- Assess and improve wayfinding and signage.
- Renovate for energy efficiency and sustainability.

**MAIN FLOOR:**

- Redesign/refresh Academic Commons to create more space for open study in the Reference area to gain more group study—both enclosed and open.
- Refurbish library instruction space in 113 (currently temp card office)
- Make Reference Librarians and Research Services area more visible (remove shelf barrier, glass doors, signage).
- Replace front doors.
- Redo Cafe/Periodicals Area.
- Create exhibition space.
- Renovate Technical Services area.
- Update staff workspaces.

**FLOOR TWO:**

- Reconsider furniture, especially 4-person problematic carrels.
- Regain group study and seminar rooms; create new ones.
- Maintain significant LC book shelving on this floor; consider compact shelving.
- Undertake Periodicals and microform deaccessioning project.
- Consider redesign of cushion pit.

**FLOOR THREE:**
- Consider, with all stakeholders, the lightwell/Asian Studies Collection area (incorporate books into the stacks? activate as study area?).
- Consider use of two seminar rooms there (currently Digital Imaging Lab and Temp Break room).
- Return group study rooms to original use.
- Consider redesign of small cushion pit.
- Maintain significant LC book and periodical shelving on this floor. Consider compact shelving.

**FLOOR FOUR:**
- East side of the floor ideas: 1) Consider creating a Library Information & Data Literacy training area; 2) Material Culture, Book Studies, Public Humanities lab and teaching area; 3) Expansion for archival collections.
- Activate classroom (456) near AV for college classes and information literacy instruction.
- Expand Preservation Lab.
- Rethink the south side of the 4th floor by finding better storage for Archives and Anthro collections.
- Remove collections (only possible if collections facility issue is addressed) from West 4 to create open flexible study/event space that students and faculty strongly desire there. Consider material culture study lab or seminar rooms along west wall (requires relocation of ca. 17K books and significant archival collection).
- Consider locating staff break room/caterer’s kitchen on this floor.
- Move Archives to a new facility that will house its collections and include public spaces and staff work areas.
- Expand Special Collections into the space vacated by Archives for care of and teaching with distinctive collections.
- Activate Sundeck--enable ADA entrance, repair, repave, green, and revive with comfortable furniture and regular programming.
- Assess security in the Special Collections area.

CONSERVATORY LIBRARY
- Rethink student study spaces.
- Soundproof classroom.
- Redesign Circulation desk configuration.
- Seek naming donor.
- Find space for overflow collections.
- Ensure that world-class collections can continue to grow.

ART LIBRARY
- Reimagine the Art Library to provide better communal space and to make it ADA accessible (elevator issue).
- Consider the distinctive collections in the Art Library and make best institutional/best practices decisions about housing and use.
- Physical collections in this area will continue to grow and current facility is at 100% capacity.
- Create more teaching and social space.
  (NB: We have architectural drawings from several years ago that creatively rethink the space).

SCIENCE LIBRARY
- Consider, in collaboration with STEM faculty, what the Science Library should be for the 21st century.
- Incorporate group study space in design.
- Create a hub for information and data literacy training.
- Collaborate in formal student success programs for STEM.
- Seek naming donor.
GENERAL FOR ALL LIBRARIES

- Upgrade HVAC/environmental systems.
- Redesign and rationalize exhibition spaces.
- Improve lighting and add motion detectors where possible.
- Proceed whenever possible to complement and adhere to Oberlin’s Environmental Policy Implementation Plan.
- Install UV museum blinds; upgrade furniture, and renew flooring (all libraries).
- Improve staff working environments (cubicles, ergonomic furniture, noise, environmental issues).
- Continue to improve the public art displayed in the Libraries, cycling collections from storage to meaningful display in our public spaces with a goal of giving public art increased attention and diversification.
- Improve wireless network connectivity.

Facilities for Collections

As places for discovery and inspiration, the Oberlin College Libraries take seriously our role as stewards of the research and teaching collections, distinctive holdings, and institutional archives at Oberlin College & Conservatory.

Goals:
Safe and environmentally-sound spaces throughout our library system to provide good stewardship of Oberlin’s significant physical collections in publicly accessible stack areas, in secure vaults, and in a ready-retrieval collections facility location.

Actions:
- Perform audits of the collections—maintaining physical collections with public access where needed, deaccessioning when warranted, reviewing distinctive collections for conservation and housing needs, and designating items for off site collections facility (with easy retrieval).

- Consider adding compact shelving in Terrell, Ward (Art), and Conservatory Libraries.
• Ensure that there are secure, environmentally monitored spaces for all collections.

• Install special controls (security and environmental) for distinctive collections in Terrell and Conservatory Libraries. Audit and determine appropriate housing for distinctive collections in the Art Library.

• Plan for growth of College Archives in the near term.

• Plan for born-digital collections and college records and put digital preservation and access plans into effect.

• Find a solution to house collection overflows now held in a substandard facility: See except from The Carnegie Report below. For full report, link here.

The Carnegie Conundrum

350,000-375,000 volumes are currently housed in the old Carnegie Library stacks together with several hundred archival boxes. The area has only rudimentary radiant heat and no cooling, air filtering, or air circulation. There are no humidity controls. In summers, the temperature on the upper floors stays above 80° F for prolonged periods. Leaks regularly damage collections on the top floor, custodial services have not been provided to the area for years, and the building has been broken into several times. Carnegie as a collections facility poses significant risk management and safety issues.

The overflow library collections in Carnegie are called for on a regular basis by students, faculty, OhioLink borrowers, and users around the world. It is not a “storage” area, but rather an auxiliary collections facility. At this point, however, we can no longer move collections into to the building. Carnegie’s stacks are full. It would also be unconscionable to put more volumes at risk even if there were space. In some cases, we have begun to move items out of Carnegie because environmental conditions there are so detrimental. But we have little room to go elsewhere, nor can or should we deaccession on a large scale. So, what can we do?
Do Nothing
For the many reasons cited in *The Carnegie Report*, inaction is not an option. The building is full, and the safety of collections is at significant risk. Water is penetrating the structure. Doing nothing risks a catastrophic disaster and the consequent loss of collections and mitigation costs.

Shrink the Size of the Problem
It is often suggested that deaccessioning books is an effective way to alleviate space problems. That would be welcomed by library staff who know that “pruning” our legacy collections can improve user experience when researching. We should note, however, that these books are regularly requested by users. Nonetheless, books that have been digitized by our library or other institutions are often (though not always) candidates for deaccessioning, especially those brittle materials manufactured on acidic paper since the 1850s. Deaccessioning, however, is at least as costly as adding to the collection. Books must be retrieved, transported, examined by subject liaisons, processed, records updated and deleted, and then delivered to third parties who charge us for their removal. Faculty and student uproar at deaccessioning projects at UT Austin and Yale also provide cautionary lessons. Past studies of this problem have concluded that renovation or new construction is a cheaper and more research-conscious alternative. Nevertheless, some deaccessioning should be considered a viable component of any future strategy for Carnegie Library.

Renovate Carnegie
Past comments from campus engineering staff have questioned the viability of installing HVAC equipment on the roof. The structure may not support the weight, and construction on the roof will add to the number of penetrations through the surface. We do not have a cost estimate for bringing the building up to code for fire safety, lighting, new windows, adequate insulation, and security. The cost of a major renovation may exceed that of new construction. A proposal from the architectural firm of McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture to renovate a Carnegie Library on Vanderbilt’s campus, for example, priced out at approximately $19 million (for the entire library, public and stack spaces).
A renovation of the stack towers, moreover, would not necessarily gain more space for collections since compact shelving would be impossible, given the structural design of the hanging floors which are not load bearing.

**Lease space to “store” collections**
We have explored consortial repositories (none currently available to us) and the possibility of leasing storage space. This is not a good solution for a collection like ours that is regularly used in teaching and research. These are active collections. Nonetheless, there are collections storage spaces in the Cleveland area where we could lease space. The turnaround time for retrieval is 24-48 hours. Cost for storage and retrieval of ~500K volumes: $10,000/month (based on a 10-year contract with Assurevault in Cleveland).

**A Proposed Solution**

**Build a Net-Zero College Archives and Oberlin Collections Facility**

Build a Net-Zero Building close to campus as the overflow Collections Facility with 40,000 linear feet for shelving book collections and ca. 15,000 linear feet for the College’s world-renowned Archives. Placing the Archives in a “near in” off campus building has advantages for the city and alumni/ae, without diminishing engagement with students and faculty. We envision a public-facing research, teaching, and exhibition space coupled with a quick-retrieval annex for overflow collections (ca. 400K volumes) and archival storage (including cold storage for photographic materials, map cases, and art storage). This building could also house a preservation and digitization lab since the collections most in need of those services would be in the building.

The Archives are a jewel in the crown of Oberlin. The rich collections of original historical materials offer insight and documentation of Oberlin’s involvement in many of the significant social, religious, civil rights, and political movements of our time, such as anti-slavery, African Americans in higher education, coeducation, missions, Native American archives, women’s suffrage, temperance, diversity, and the environment. These archives, along with papers of notable faculty and alumni and, of course, the records of the College, all make the College Archives a centerpiece for research by current students and other researchers, as well as a favorite gathering place for visiting
alumni/ae. We see a lively public space with much-needed, high-density housing for archival boxes, realia, books, and journals.

Collections overflow space is crucial; leaving Carnegie is prudent; and elevating the Oberlin Archives in this way makes good sense for alumni relations, for teaching and research, and for advancement potential.

**Alternative solution: Collections Facility without Archives**

Such a collections facility could also be built to house (in separate and secure spaces) the overflow from the Allen Art Museum and the many “dangling” cultural heritage collections at Oberlin that are not under the Libraries’ care.

The cost of such a remote collections center (holding 1.14 million volumes) with a public-facing function at Rice University was built in 2005 for $7.5 million. A modular system at the University of Illinois that also houses Preservation and Digitization labs and a reading room and classroom has been built in phases to control costs.

High-density, dark remote collections centers place priority on materials first and therefore have multiple advantages. Items collected by cultural heritage institutions can be stored in cooler and darker settings more conducive to collection preservation. Such spaces, if designed thoughtfully, are prime candidates for environmentally sound or even carbon-neutral buildings. Further, these buildings are ideal for digitization and/or conservation labs since they are closer to the collections needing such services.
By the numbers

A snapshot of Oberlin College Libraries usage, holdings, spaces, instruction and overall expenditures. These data have been compiled from a variety of sources for the fiscal year 2021 unless otherwise noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library visitors</th>
<th>ANNUAL GATE COUNTS</th>
<th>Pre-COVID average</th>
<th>2019/20</th>
<th>2020/21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrell</td>
<td>657,516</td>
<td>556,546</td>
<td>560,516</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatory</td>
<td>419,013</td>
<td>416,100</td>
<td>311,300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>120,949</td>
<td>82,554</td>
<td>97,865</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>20,787</td>
<td>19,154</td>
<td>17,404</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC/UA</td>
<td>1,371</td>
<td>1,319</td>
<td>1,983</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td><strong>1,219,636</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,075,673</strong></td>
<td><strong>989,068</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collections use

- 85,472 items borrowed
- 270,278 Pageviews
- 9,184 ILL -- Lending
- 5,032 ILL-Borrowing
- 11,237 Reserves (p & media)
- 31,395 Libguide views
- 121,820 E-resource downloads

Print holdings

Instruction, reference & research consultations

Research services FY21

[Graph showing research services FY21]
Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Net sq. ft.</th>
<th>Seating</th>
<th>Study rooms</th>
<th>Permanent employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Church Terrell Library</td>
<td>112,526</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>6 (currently)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Ward Art Library</td>
<td>8,729</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatory Library</td>
<td>19,216</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Library</td>
<td>9,916</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie Stacks</td>
<td>21,727</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditure trends

**OhioLink Access FY22**

$523,000