

Strategic Priorities

2022-2025: Successes,
Learnings, Futures

Joseph S. Stauffer Library

In 2022 Queen's University Library employees worked together to create a forward-looking and innovative three-year strategic plan. Priorities were identified using open discussion and feedback among all departments and teams across the library and archives. Robust consultation was supported by the non-profit research and advisory service Ithaka S&R, which works with research libraries across North America.

The resulting list of fifteen strategic priorities reflected university priorities and emerging opportunities and trends specific to research libraries. Out of this, the library formed groups of experts to guide, evolve, and execute this important work.

This report briefly outlines meaningful progress and positive impact of the efforts of library staff to advance these priorities from 2022- 2025, in addition to identifying barriers encountered along the way and considerations for the future.

Large scale organizational effort, change, and innovation can only happen as the result of outstanding work of individuals and teams. Heartfelt thanks are due to everyone involved in the creation of the 2022-25 strategic plan and its execution. Exciting and positively impactful results, not to mention insightful learnings and perspectives on the future, included in this report are due to the hard work, dedication, and expertise of the team at Queen's University Library.



Priority 1.1: We will develop and execute an action plan with respect to sustainable and accessible scholarly publishing across the breadth of disciplinary practices. In 2023, we will build engagement among individuals and groups impacted by the evolving scholarly publishing environment and publish a position paper on Queen’s University’s approach to supporting open scholarly publishing. We will develop a related action plan in 2024 and begin regularly reporting on progress back to the community.

This work focused on strengthening the library’s approach to promoting a sustainable and equitable open scholarly publishing ecosystem. A key milestone of this project was the development of a position paper that examined the sustainability of article processing charges (APC), pitfalls of transformative agreements, and benefits of investing in scholar-led infrastructure. To better understand and manage spending across the university, a new APC account code was established and communicated to research teams across campus, enabling more systematic financial tracking, which will provide data for ongoing related analysis and decision-making.

These milestones were achieved despite delays in the release of the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy, competing institutional priorities, and fiscal challenges impacting library operations during the period of the strategic plan.

Next steps will include continued engagement with researchers about upcoming changes impacting scholarly publishing and implementing recommendations outlined in the position paper once tri-agency policy is finalized. There is also an opportunity to enhance repository deposit services and develop a formal open access (OA) policy at Queen’s, alongside continued focused efforts to communicate the importance and impact of OA.

Priority 1.2: We will develop a strategy to define and operationalize the library's role in research data support at Queen's. In 2023 and 2024, we will consult with partners and users to define the scope of data support, management, and service from the library perspective and in the context of university-wide, provincial, and national directions and resources. We will complete a data service strategy and will begin formally delivering on the strategy in 2025.

The group's work centered around building a foundation for campus-wide research data services strategy. To gain a clear understanding of the current landscape, initial work included an environmental scan, literature review, and institutional analysis. Collaboration with a related [Ithaka S+R initiative](#) strengthened these efforts. This framework enabled the development of key planning resources, such as a draft work plan, landscape analysis, and a curated Zotero library of resources to inform decision making and continued strategy development.

Progress was made despite challenges, including capacity constraints and competing priorities of team members. Additionally, the absence of recognized and widely accepted models for library specific research data services strategies made it more difficult to define scope. The inherent complexity of the research data ecosystem also makes it challenging to develop a clear, actionable strategy.

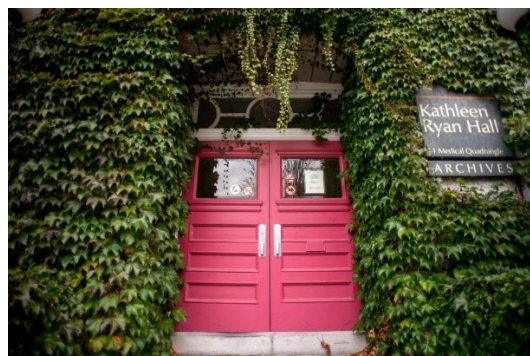
Continued effort on this priority should focus on refining processes and approaches, with particular attention to strengthening information gathering and generative feedback loops. Developing flexible implementation plans that factor in the presence of additional staffing or lack thereof will help support progress. Finalizing the draft strategy and advancing university-level coordination of research data services will be key.

Priority 1.3: We will make strategic use of operating carryforwards, endowed funds, and grant opportunities to improve facilities and equipment across Archives and Special Collections to enhance the work that staff do and the user experience, to better preserve and make accessible the world class collections, and to model and pilot potential solutions or designs for future expansion or development. Consultation, requirements gathering, design, grant writing, and renovations across W. D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections (Douglas Library), Maps and Air Photos (Stauffer Library), and Queen’s University Archives (Kathleen Ryan Hall) to be substantially completed by 2025.

This group focused on making strategic use of available resources to advance facilities improvements across the Queen’s University Archives and Special Collections. Funds were used to support minor upgrades to spaces and equipment, while larger progress was made on improvements to Kathleen Ryan Hall. Early work also identified and pursued grant opportunities to support more significant reimagining or new builds.

Barriers and challenges to progress on this priority included ongoing facility challenges that consumed organizational energy and hampered the ability to focus on developing a strategic vision for facilities for Queen’s archives, rare books and special collections. Continued progress will rely heavily on available funding and resources, with just more than \$1 million committed to further improvements in Kathleen Ryan Hall at this time and related renovations planning underway.

Next steps will focus on continued fundraising and design efforts with the goal of building momentum toward larger scale renovations and, ideally, a new build on campus. Plans for a new build would encompass a purpose-built facility to provide best-in-class stewardship of Queen’s extraordinary archives and rare books and special collections for the long-term, along with associated research, teaching, and conservation amenities, equipment, and spaces.



Priority 2.1: We will establish a working group to identify platforms, create processes, and determine annual priorities for the creation of learning objects on topics of broad interest to students (e.g., copyright, research data, primary/secondary sources, citation management) in 2023. We will launch at least one mass-scaled, virtual learning object in each of 2024 and 2025 and ensure their inclusion in the university's orientation, learning, and/or micro credential offerings, as appropriate.

The goal of this initiative was to create an accessible, self-paced learning object to support foundational academic research skills and student success. The final product includes four modules (What is Academic Research, Selecting a Research Topic, Choosing Information Sources, and Starting Your Search) which cover research fundamentals, topic selection, sourcing information, search strategies, and more. The group also implemented content review and worked together to choose the platform for the learning modules: Articulate Rise 360.

This process required a careful balance between maintaining relevance for first year students and appropriate depth of content. The work was also time and resource intensive, totaling 575 staff hours of work at a time when resource constraints were heightened, and competing priorities abounded. It also required a thoughtful approach to rapidly emerging and evolving considerations like artificial intelligence.

Next steps include tracking usage analytics to help assess impact, establishing governance for the ongoing development and maintenance of learning objects, and exploring solutions to support broader access to library developed content.

Priority 2.2: We will build and execute an action plan with respect to open educational resources (OER), including ensuring that more open access (OA) resources are accessible through library discovery platforms. We will engage with current and potential OER creators and users and develop an action plan to address resulting recommendations in 2023 and launch the action plan in 2024, communicating a formal report back to the community by 2025.

Dedicated to advancing the adoption and sustainability of OERs at Queen's, the group's primary accomplishment was the development of a comprehensive OER Action Plan that outlined three strategic priorities to enhance OER adoption at Queen's. Key accomplishments also included enabling Pressbooks Single Sign-On to simplify adoption, engaging with scholarly presses to explore sustainable publishing models, and supporting community-building efforts through the OER Ranger program, a network of Ontario post-secondary educators and practitioners interested in supporting the advancement of open education within their institution, and an OnQ virtual space.



Challenges included delays in funded OER projects, which created administrative hurdles, and sustaining engagement within the OER community of practice.

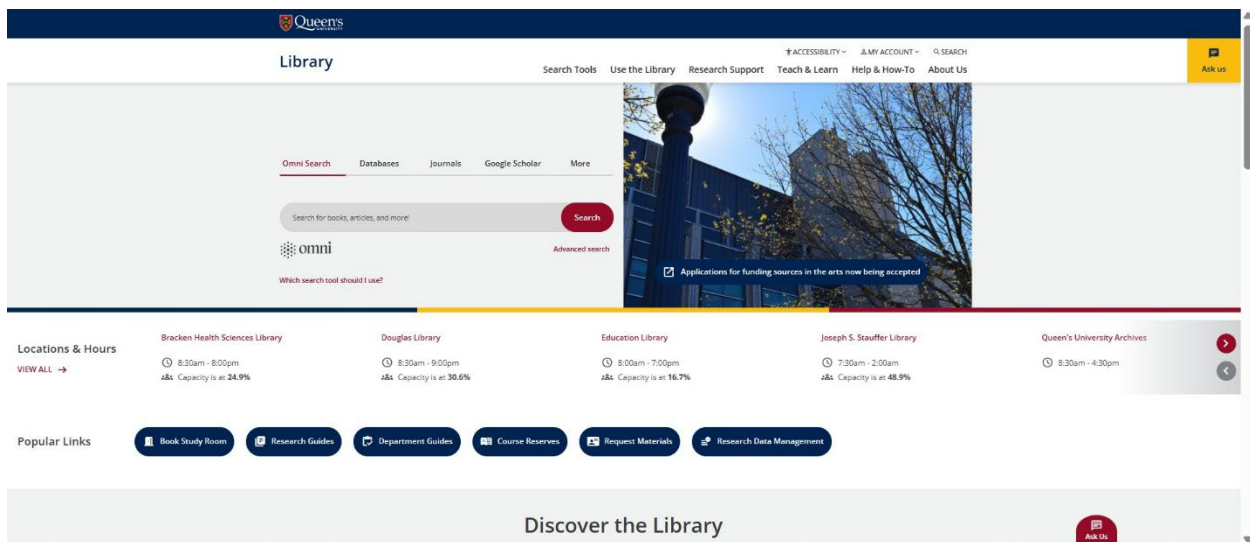
Looking ahead, priorities include launching partnership-based grant programs in 2026–27, formally offering Pressbooks as a supported service with promotion, expanding community programming and faculty outreach, and creating a support network database to assist OER development.

Priority 3.1: Recognizing that the library’s web presence is foundational to connecting users to interconnected research and teaching resources, we will strengthen and update the library’s website. We will engage users' perspectives as the foundation for a redesign process in 2023, launch the updated website in 2023-24, and continue post-launch refinement through 2024 and 2025.

Delivery of a modern, accessible, and user-centered web presence required effort and input from team members across Queen’s University Library. In August 2024, the redesigned website successfully launched, prioritizing team goals of user engagement, inclusion, and accessibility. The project also established new web governance and management teams and integrated user-centered, mobile-first, and Indigenization - Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility (I-EDIAA) principles.

Challenges were to be expected in such a large-scale and consultative process, and included: recruiting users for engagement and testing, staffing changes that impacted timelines, and real-time adjustments to plans and products to align with Queen’s branding updates and associated communications guidance.

Future priorities for continued success as a responsive and easy to navigate student resource include ongoing site maintenance and development, advocating for additional technical support and maintenance capacity, and continuing to leverage external expertise, balancing benefits with cost and administrative complexity.



Priority 3.2: We will leverage the library's profile, resources, and spaces (virtual and physical) to build or expand at least three partnerships to create opportunities for students to present and disseminate their work in a public forum or medium and to be part of the community of researchers. Consulting with undergraduate and graduate students and faculty in 2023 will prepare us to implement at least two related opportunities (e.g., spaces, events, digital assets, or showcases) in each of 2024 and 2025.

This work focused on strengthening support for undergraduate research engagement, including opportunities to grow the positive impact of the annual undergraduate research conference Inquiry@Queen's. An analysis of past Inquiry@Queen's posters and presentations identified relative disciplinary representation, individuals and groups who could be considered strong champions of the conference and related efforts, and opportunities for growing support for this work.

With grateful acknowledgment to the team who worked on this initiative, staffing reductions and transitions, time constraints, and competing priorities were significant barriers to advancing this priority in the fullest way.

Moving forward, the library will continue to play a strong role in supporting undergraduate research, including through Inquiry@Queen's and widespread efforts in teaching and research support across a wide variety of disciplines. Opportunities for collaboration with faculties and departments should continue to be prioritized.

Priority 4.1: We will make a greater diversity of resources at Queen’s freely available online and easily discoverable through digitization, controlled digital lending, and/or born-digital collection stewardship. Based on an evidence-based process to identify community needs, we will identify three priority collections in 2023 and have 100% of those identified collections discoverable and available by 2025.

With its emphasis on expanding and strengthening digital collections through coordinated digitization strategies and efforts, the group reports significant progress in digitizing key archival and special collections, including *the Alfred Bader, John Buchan, and A.A. Chesterfield fonds*, as well as rare maps and multimedia materials incorporated into the Queen’s University Library Digital Collections (QULDC). New high-end digitization equipment and enhanced workflows supported these efforts, alongside standardized metadata schemas, repository integration, and staff training. Initial steps were also taken to develop copyright guidelines and embargo policies that will benefit future related efforts as well.

Challenges included metadata loss, system performance issues with large files, storage limitations, fragmented platform use, and reliance on temporary and sometimes already stretched staffing structures and capacity, which collectively slowed workflows and publication.

Future work will focus on finalizing and disseminating digitization workflows and metadata standards, improving integration between QULDC and Omni for better discoverability, and continuing development of clear access and copyright policies.



Priority 4.2: We will assess the collection for the presence of and gaps in global perspectives and I-EDIAA. In 2023, we will identify two areas of representational focus and the priority collections on which a diversity audit will be performed in 2024. We will create and release an action plan to ensure sustained commitment to inclusive collections in 2025.

The group centered this work on improving the accessibility of library collections. A key accomplishment was an environmental scan of Collaborative Futures partner institutions' accessibility practices and policies, which helped establish a baseline for library practices and provided evidence for local decision-making. The group also conducted an accessibility audit of 45 licensed self-hosted streaming video platforms and implemented accessibility icons on 45 multimedia databases, improving the discoverability and inclusivity of electronic collections. A captioning request form was created and the team identified next steps for operationalizing captioning workflows and developed an accessible multimedia clause to support more equitable and proactive licensing practices. Overall, this work strengthened cross-departmental collaboration by bringing together librarians, technicians, and co-op students to learn, share expertise, and build collective capacity.

Challenges included coordinating local efforts related to inclusive collections with national initiatives, such as those emanating from North/Nord, to avoid, for instance, duplication of effort or competing initiatives proceeding at cross-purposes. Incomplete or non-standardized resource data, reduced staffing capacity in the context of university-wide budget restraints, and varied levels of expertise and experience also impacted the scale and progress of this priority work.

Queen's University Library has been committed to strong attention to I-EDIAA principles and related challenges and opportunities for many years. Looking ahead, this priority will continue to inform work related to building collections and ensuring they are discoverable for researchers, instructors, and students. Future work will involve establishing an ongoing group focused on I-EDIAA and accessible collections priorities, building shared workflows and knowledge sharing across departments including ensuring to involve Metadata and Discovery Librarians and other experts early in collections planning, and continuing to coordinate effort with provincial and national initiatives.

Priority 5.1: We will consult with the Queen’s community to identify needs and related solutions that leverage the library as welcoming and accessible social infrastructure available to the Kingston community. Consultation will take place in 2023 with the goal of expanding or refining existing solutions or developing at least two new solutions in each of the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years.

Given Queen’s University Library's natural role in facilitating community engagement with the university, this work aimed to strengthen our approach to community engagement and access. In 2024, initial progress included engagement with the Special Advisor to the Principal on Community Engagement, a collaboration with the An Clachan community group to provide helpful information to graduate students, initiating a community outreach plan including exploring a research project into community user perceptions of the library, and proposing a Library Guide for Community Access in response to user needs.

Challenges to work related to this priority included institutional capacity for broad community engagement, lack of existing structures and pathways for ongoing and meaningful engagement with community members, and staffing and financial transitions and constraints in a time of considerable change. A particularly difficult element of this work flows from the complexity of navigating the university’s stated and laudable goal to invest in community engagement, limited capacity to engage in the broadest possible way, and the needs of a diverse set of potential users and interlocutors across numerous communities and with differing expectations of the university and the library.

The library continues to be committed to working with communities external to Queen’s employees and students, including partnerships with like-minded institutions like Kingston Frontenac Public Library and local school boards and expanding access to licensed research e-resources to local non-profits through the Community Scholars Program.

Priority 5.2: We will develop relationships with local high schools to demystify the academic experience and build better pathways to university from Kingston's diverse communities. We will design a program in 2023 with input from at least one on-campus partner and one off-campus partner and welcome our first cohort of students per term by 2024.

This group focused efforts on continued participation in the First-Generation Student Admission Pathway's March Break Event. The First-Generation Student Admission Pathway is an on-campus group that offers comprehensive support and programming for equity-deserving high school students in Kingston and area who are pursuing post-secondary education. As a result of this partnership, the library welcomed 150-170 students from across Kingston, the greater Toronto area, and Ottawa which helped demystify the research library and university experience for them.

Work related to this priority required identification of appropriate partnerships and careful consideration of the library's capacity to support a pilot or ongoing program. Team members from across the library have willingly stepped up to support this initiative despite competing priorities in a time of change.

As a result of this team's work, the partnership with the First-Generation Student Admission Pathway has continued and more than 200 students were welcomed for library tours and related information in the winter 2026 term. The library looks forward to continuing to build on the success of this project and partnerships and to increase its profile and positive impact in creating welcoming experiences for first-generation university students.



Priority 5.3: We will implement physical changes in all libraries and the archives that will make the spaces more accessible. In 2023, we will complete an audit of accessibility opportunities in partnership with an external expert and create a corresponding action plan to be written and executed in 2024 and 2025.



This initiative focused on advancing accessibility in library spaces through a collaborative and structured approach. A project team was established and included an expert from Queen’s facilities. The team designed a process and extensive checklist to evaluate library spaces, completed a space audit, and gathered feedback from students with disabilities. These insights informed the development of a prioritization framework to guide “quick win” improvements, alongside plans to apply for funding to support higher-cost upgrades through the Queen’s accessibility fund. The identification of these priorities has already added value, as several actions have been advanced, including improvements to elevators and staircases.

Challenges encountered for this priority include determining the appropriate scope of the work that is extensive and ongoing, and managing the team’s ability to advance this large-scale project and the resulting (and sometimes potentially costly) improvements, amid competing priorities and in a period of fiscal restraint.

Looking ahead, plans have been made to extend this work to staff spaces, as the initial scope was confined to public spaces. In addition, a library accessibility signage working group has been formed to advance focused effort related to wayfinding in library facilities. Additional steps will include continued annual improvements within budgets, goals, and institutional priorities, and growing partnerships with experts across the university to continue to build on successes.

Priority 6.1: We will map the library’s values onto the university’s values to guide our actions and behaviors in our workplace. We will define and implement this process in 2023 and widely communicate these values within our organization. In 2024 and 2025, we will review internal guidelines and procedures with an eye to ensuring that our values are embedded in our organizational culture and daily interactions, including at least one program annually to engage all staff.

This work focused on strengthening our organizational culture and living clearly defined values. Through a series of thoughtfully designed engagements with all employees of the library and with the support of Organizational Development and Learning, five core organizational values were established: Collaboration; Curiosity and Learning; Inclusion, Diversity, and Belonging; Building Trust; Wellbeing; and Connection.

The group then operationalized these values by developing “values in action”—concrete, behavior-based commitments that bring the values to life in daily practice. In addition to this, focused training on psychological safety and managing difficult conversations workshops were delivered for staff and supervisors to reinforce a culture of openness, safety, and respect. A values-based recognition program was also launched to acknowledge and celebrate individuals and teams demonstrating these values. Additional efforts included seeking staff input on concrete reminders of our values, such as swag items and sending one another kudos.

As with any consultative process, a diversity of ideas emerged related to the identification and definition of values for Queen’s University Library. Through strong engagement protocols, significant dedication of time from facilitators, leaders, and team members, strong consensus developed around the proposed values as they developed. Maintaining the momentum of the work required particular attention amid varied and evolving demands on the team’s time.

Going forward, Queen’s University Library will continue to emphasize communication, collaboration, recognition, and value-aligned decision-making, with ongoing efforts to strengthen psychological safety. This continued focus on multi-directional conversations on workplace culture will help keep values embedded into everyday work.

Priority 6.2: To support all employees in their success and engagement in the workplace, we will perform an audit of professional learning needs and resource allocations currently available in 2023. In 2024 and 2025, we will source and roll out new or updated professional learning resources to address gaps or opportunities identified in that audit.

To strengthen Queen's University Library's responsive approach to staff learning and development, a gap analysis was conducted using staff surveys and focus groups to better understand learning needs across the library. These insights informed a proposal for Learning Forums on identified topics that were staff led and well attended. In addition to this, a presentation was given that increased awareness of professional development funding available to library staff at Kaleidoscope (an annual library staff conference that provides an opportunity to discuss projects, ideas, and current trends in libraries, special collections, and archives that recently expanded to include all Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Performing Arts staff at Queen's). In collaboration with the wellness team, a learning calendar tool was also proposed to improve visibility and coordination of learning and development opportunities.

Challenges included time and budget constraints, as well as competing time commitments that sometimes made meeting or coordinating work difficult. Prioritizing among an array of potentially impactful professional learning opportunities also gave the team pause.

Looking ahead, the next phase of work will focus on developing role-specific ongoing training in partnership with supervisors and continuing to build Learning Forums to promote staff engagement and continuous professional development. The library will continue to support and expand professional development activities through ad hoc (e.g., annual calls for applications to the Liz Fox Fund or administrative) and continuing funding.

Priority 6.3: We will review the library's project management processes, leveraging in-house expertise with an eye to improving communication pathways, simplifying processes, advancing initiatives with more agility, and creating more inclusive opportunities for participation. An environmental scan of project management approaches by peer organizations will be completed in 2023 towards design and implementation of a new model in 2024, with initial evaluation of outcomes in 2025.

Admittedly and regretfully, this priority did not advance in any formal way during the life of the 2022-25 Strategic Plan. Reasons include staffing transitions, reduced human capacity, and competing and quickly changing priorities.

That being said, lessons learned from the experiences of those participating in strategic initiatives, some of which are reflected in this report, in addition to meaningful and generous feedback provided to leadership as a result of a series of departmental conversations related to Queen's University Library's reduced capacity in this period of financial constraint are informing future directions that are being implemented.

Most significantly, with the sunseting of the 2022-25 strategic priority groups, five library steering groups are being created to prioritize future work, improve communications pathways, and provide more inclusive opportunities for participation, all while recognizing legitimate and recognized limits on the organizations' ability to support varied, diverse, and myriad opportunities for innovation. These groups will be launched in the spring of 2026 with intentional and clear structures that are the result of engagement with employees. In many cases, the steering groups will build on successes, processes, and learnings of the 2022-25 strategic priority groups, as they take us in new and interesting directions that will expand and enhance the positive impact of Queen's University Library in the context of the inspiring mission and vision of Queen's University.



“Among the most important strengths of our planning process was ensuring that we are informed by research in trends and opportunities for 21st century research libraries while seeking out and listening to perspectives from all parts of our library system,”

says Vice Provost and University Librarian Mark Asberg. “This strategic planning project brought forward valuable insights that informed the creation of our priorities and the pathways envisioned for their completion. The depth and responsiveness of this plan is a testament to the expertise of our library team members, not to say their common goal of having an enduring and positive impact across the communities we serve.”