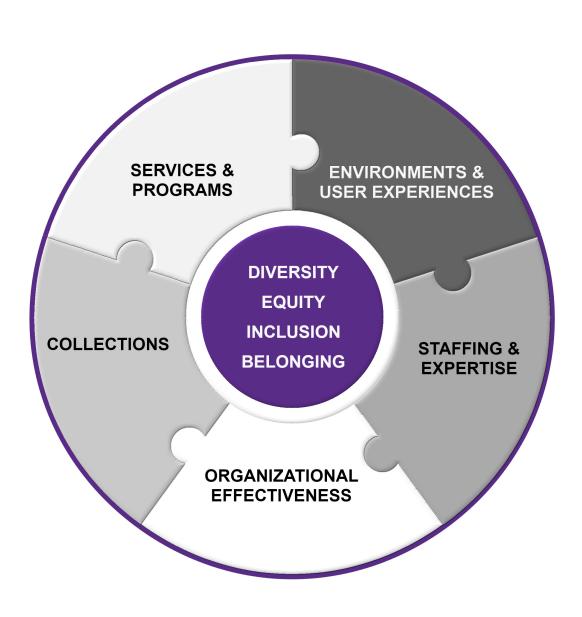# THE ADAPTIVE LIBRARY
Hunter Library Strategic Priorities 2022+

(version August 2023 updates)

Office of the Dean of Library Services
Western Carolina University

SERVICES & PROGRAMS

ENVIRONMENTS & USER EXPERIENCES

COLLECTIONS

DIVERSITY
EQUITY
INCLUSION
BELONGING

STAFFING & EXPERTISE

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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What Is An "Adaptive" Library?

Libraries serving academic institutions face significant challenges that range from changing user expectations and behaviors, unsustainable year-to-year increases in the costs of information resources, competition from for-profit information service providers, rapidly changing needs for new skill sets and greater diversity within the library workforce, and increasing pressure from institutional funders and decision-makers for the library to more clearly assess and explain its contributions to the institutional mission.

At the same time, there are abundant opportunities for academic libraries to do more, and to engage with users in new ways. This combination of challenges and opportunities in a world of finite resources means that libraries need both clearly-stated priorities to guide decisions, and the ability to respond quickly and evolve as external circumstances change.

The following statement of strategic priorities explains Hunter Library's continuing priorities as well as examples of more immediate aspirations and objectives for the organization. These priorities are framed around the themes of adaptation and sustainability, meaning:

1. Evolving quickly in response to continual and often rapid environmental changes.

2. Anticipating and responding in innovative ways to changing circumstances.

3. Ongoing environmental monitoring and analysis; agility in changing and adjusting; and robust and iterative evaluation practices.

4. Valuing organizational experimentation and learning from experiences.

5. Delivering high-value services and resources that can be sustained through periods of both abundance and scarcity.

On behalf of the library's leadership team, I hope this document makes clear that Hunter Library is committed to maintaining our tradition of excellent core services, but also anticipating and responding in innovative ways to the challenges and opportunities we face.

Chuck Thomas
Dean of Library Services

Our Mission

Brief Version: Hunter Library supports lifelong learning, discovery, and engagement. We enrich student learning, facilitate research, and engage with our community and users by providing services and resources that help them succeed and grow.

Long Version: Hunter Library is integral to the mission of Western Carolina University. We provide scholarly information resources and tools, expert instructional and advisory services, inclusive physical and virtual spaces, and employees dedicated to helping users explore, discover, learn, and produce new scholarly and creative works. The library supports WCU's regional engagement mission through local partnerships and other activities to collect, preserve, and make available the rich intellectual, cultural, and environmental heritage of the region.

Our Vision

- The library is a center for lifelong learning and enriching experiences;

- We expand users' expectations of what they can find and do in the library;

- We are responsive to our users' changing library needs and expectations;

- We help users understand and respond to ongoing societal transformations;

- Our spaces and services are welcoming, accessible, and encourage diversity, intellectual curiosity, and freedom of scholarly and creative expression.

Our Commitments

- We will prioritize library resources and services that support Western Carolina University's mission.

- We will be responsible and trustworthy stewards of the resources we are given.

- We will be open to innovative thinking, testing new ideas, and change.

- We will rely upon data and evidence to inform important organizational decisions.

- We will prioritize partnerships as key to future sustainability and resilience.

- We will seek new ways to operationalize and model diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- We will value feedback from the community we serve.

- We will set ambitious goals and will hold ourselves accountable for achieving them.

Our Values

Our organizational values are shaped by the American Library Association, the Association of College and Research Libraries, and related professions:

- Provide excellent service to every library user;

- Employ user-centered approaches to service design and delivery in both physical and virtual environments;

- Protect intellectual freedom and freedom of inquiry;

- Protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality;

- Ensure freedom of equitable access to information and information services;

- Respect intellectual property rights and advocate for balance between the interests of information users and those of rights holders through policy and educational programming;

- Resist all efforts to censor library resources;

- Support academic integrity and deterring plagiarism through policy and education;

- Treat both library users and co-workers with fairness and respect;

- Advocate for the rights, safety, and welfare of members of our community; and

- Provide an environment that is welcoming and safe for all those who wish to use the library, regardless of identity or differences.

We support Western Carolina University's **Strategic Direction 3: Inclusive Excellence** to "prepare our students for the diverse world in which they live". Our library offers support to help all members of the WCU community develop intercultural knowledge and skills that are critical for effective citizenship in the 21st century. In support of these goals, we strive to eliminate barriers to information access, foster increased community with our underrepresented and underserved populations, and build our capacity for cross-cultural and intergenerational engagement.

We value the well-being of our community and visitors, and invite you to join us in creating an environment that embraces our values.

How to Read Hunter Library's Strategic Priorities

Each of the following strategic priorities includes sections for:

- **Aspirational outcomes** that we will achieve or be able to say are true about the library over the next 3-5 years.

- **Performance metrics** we will develop and use to measure our progress toward each aspirational outcome.

- **Related actions** that increase our ability to achieve outcomes and measure our successes.

As part of implementing these priorities, Hunter Library and other partners on campus will utilize performance metrics, regular assessment and reporting on our progress.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) are foundational to Hunter Library's mission and operations. We strive to make our library welcoming to all users, regardless of their differences. Our facilities, services, and programs are intended to be accessible and inclusive. We actively review all aspects of library operations, to identify and remove barriers to equity and access. The library provides thoughtful collections and dynamic programming to help users better understand DEIB, and to be better prepared to work for a more equitable future.

The library's DEIB efforts connect to and directly support Western Carolina University's strategic emphasis on "Inclusive Excellence" and its related five pillars:

- Access & Success
- Institutional Climate & Belonging
- Curriculum & Scholarship
- Infrastructure & Commitments
- Community & Partnerships.

To advance our DEIB work and commitments, beginning in Academic Year 2023-2024, the library's DEIB Committee will work with the support of Library Administration to perform an environmental scan and conduct surveys of library users and library employees. That work will provide greater clarity about what we already are doing well, identify gaps or areas for improvement, and help us define realistic goals and benchmarks to measure our success in coming years.

Strategic Priority 1: Adaptive & Sustainable Collections

Aspirational Outcomes:

- Information resources are regularly and formally assessed using best practices to ensure alignment with WCU programs and priorities.

- The library provides access to high-quality and trustworthy information resources that reflect diverse scholarly perspectives.

- Growing collections of electronic resources increase options for discovery, access, and use of library materials.

- Cooperative partnerships greatly expand users' access to scholarly resources and cultural heritage materials.

- The library develops and maintains robust capabilities and capacity to create, manage, and provide access to born-digital and retrospectively digitized collections and data.

- Physical collections increase users' engagement with the library, are regularly assessed, and invite use.

- Distinctive special collections document the full range of individuals and groups that have contributed to the region's history.

- The library highlights and provides access to the scholarly and creative works produced by faculty, students, and other members of the WCU community.

- The library provides a growing collection of nontraditional items that encourage a culture of sharing, ignite curiosity, support healthy recreation, and connect community members.

Performance Indicators, Metrics, and Related Actions:

Collection Spending per FTE	Collection Use	Avg/Median Year of Publication
Peer Rankings	Resource Sharing	Research Output

1. Evaluate and report on sufficiency and responsiveness of library collections to support academic programs.

2. Enhance the relevancy, browsability, and appeal of library print collections.

3. Assess WCU research papers, scholarship, and creative works for evidence of the use of library collections and services, and for evidence of information literacy learning, etc. in their creation.

4. Enhance the quality, accuracy, and reach of information about library collections.

5. Use interviews, surveys, and focus groups with faculty and staff to identify unmet needs and areas of growth for the library.

Strategic Priority 2: Adaptive Services & Programs

Aspirational Outcomes:

- Library instruction and expert consulting services are responsive to and align with existing and emerging user and curricular needs.

- Library services and programs prepare students to successfully search, find, evaluate, and use trustworthy information responsibly.

- Inclusive and engaging library services and programs, like the Scholar Studio, strongly support informal learning, community building, student enrichment, and creative expression.

- The library collaborates with and integrates programs and services into other WCU student-focused centers to support student success and well-being.

- Library services intentionally incorporate high-impact practices and directly contribute to student success, research productivity, and institutional program accreditations.

- The library supports scholars throughout the research lifecycle and helps expand the reach and impact of their research and creative works.

- The library engages in community outreach to celebrate, enrich, and preserve the cultural heritage of the local communities and their peoples.

- Library programs and services enhance the library's reputation as the intellectual center of the university.

Performance Indicators, Metrics, and Related Actions:

Consultations (# questions, etc.)	Instruction (% students reached)	Event Attendance

1. Administer student survey to measure awareness and perceptions of library collections & services.

2. (Re)Design opportunities to strategically connect information literacy instruction with the university curriculum and student learning.

3. Engage the local and regional community with programming, partnerships, and library-sponsored events.

4. Create a research plan to measure and explain the library's contributions to student success and persistence.

5. Engage students and student groups with programming, library-sponsored events, and relationships.

Strategic Priority 3: Adaptive Environments for Improved UX

Aspirational Outcomes:

- Library physical and virtual spaces are welcoming, engaging, and adaptable to accommodate users' needs.

- Library physical and virtual spaces are vital to the university's mission and are shaped by tenets of Universal Design and User Experience Design with the involvement of the university community.

- Resources, service points, and other locations within the library are easy to find.

- The library invests in improvements that enhance the users' experience with locating and connecting to information and services.

- Library physical spaces, exhibits, and decorative elements reflect and celebrate the diverse scholarly and creative contributions of the university and regional community.

- The library creates informal and formal learning spaces that encourage experimentation and support creative exploration.

- The library provides spaces and social environments for sharing ideas and building community among users.

Performance Indicators, Metrics, and Related Actions:

Visitors (building + web)	Investment (facilities + tech $$)	Innovation (sandbox offerings)

1. Create and execute a space plan based on student perceptions of comfort, inclusion, and representation.

2. Redesign Hunter Library main floor to create user-centered flexible learning spaces.

3. Create a process to review and improve services and technology offerings in library sandbox spaces (e.g., Scholar Studio, VR/Gaming Room, tech lending, a "library of things" and leisure collections).

4. Advocate for building and facilities enhancements that meet 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

Strategic Priority 4: Adaptive Staffing & Expertise

Aspirational Outcomes:

- The library recruits, trains, and develops library professionals for the skills needed in a 21st century university library.

- The library provides robust onboarding and mentoring of all new library employees.

- The library strongly supports high-value continuing education, professional development, and professional growth opportunities for all library employees.

- The library values employees from diverse backgrounds, and tests and evaluates new approaches to build and retain a diverse workforce.

- Physical and virtual workspaces for library employees are modern, safe, and secure.

- Library employees' job descriptions and associated compensation accurately reflect 21st century library work.

- Rewarding and retaining knowledgeable, skilled library professionals is a priority and improves organizational health and effectiveness.

- The library regularly analyzes workload, capacity, and anticipated future staffing needs, and adjusts its plans accordingly.

Performance Indicators, Metrics, and Related Actions:

Employee Retention Rate (turnover/positions)	Training & Professional Development	Number of Career Progressions/Promotions
EEOI Report %	Salary Task Force, etc. Adjustments	

1. Create robust onboarding procedures, training, and support mechanisms for new library employees.

2. Align professional development and position levels and responsibilities with the skills needed for the next 5-10 years of library services.

3. Review and assess current library position classifications and salary scales and address deficiencies.

4. Formalize support for library internships, including structures, policies, and evaluation.

Strategic Priority 5: Adaptive & Effective Organization

Aspirational Outcomes:

- The library commits to improving organizational health (communication, healthy and safe environments, equity and inclusion, employee recognition, employee growth and development).

- Library administration prioritizes strengthening and increasing philanthropic support and other unique external fundraising opportunities for the library.

- Library administration pursues new approaches for increasing and sustaining both recurring and non-recurring funding for the library.

- Library administration provides clear guidance to employees on organizational decision-making and communication roles and processes.

- The library provides opportunities for external institutional stakeholders to participate in strategic direction-setting and advocacy for the library.

- The library's organizational structure aligns with its strategic directions and operational needs.

- Strong collaborative relationships with other libraries and consortia are a key component of the library's sustainability strategy.

Performance Indicators, Metrics, and Related Actions:

Cost Avoidance (ROI)	Increased Funding	Increased Friends + Donors/Donations

1. Implement recommendations from the Internal Communication Task Group and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging committee.

2. Ensure program review report recommendations are addressed: collections funding challenges; issues of culture and library engagement; building renovation/lack of space for core operations; vacant positions; lack of diversity among library employees; lack of fundraising; library advisory group.

3. Create a framework for evaluating cooperative partnerships.

4. Create a targeted plan for improving organizational health with measurable milestones.

5. Pursue new approaches for increasing and sustaining both recurring and non-recurring funding for the library.