LSC Priorities for 2023 Summer Update

Further to the Library Strategy Council’s (LSC) message of March 8 in which we shared a list of priorities for 2023, we now write to share updates on those priorities. While this is only a sample of the hard work being done across the Library, we hope that these updates provide insight into some of the topics that LSC has been discussing over the past several months, both as a group and as smaller divisional collaborations. As always, these and all of LSC’s activities are guided by PUL’s North Star Statements.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Conducted in Fall 2022 was the DEI-focused Staff Climate Survey developed by PUL staff with the Provost’s Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity. Spring 2023 launched four (4) large-scale PUL Climate Survey Results Town Hall Meetings to share the survey results with all PUL staff, which included a presentation of the executive summary of results and a Q&A open discussion co-led by Ufuoma Abiola and Shawn Maxam. Multiple Town Hall meeting dates were offered to accommodate staff in all Library locations.

In the Fall of 2022, LSC and the Library Administration Team (LAT) reviewed the original five actions of the PUL Racial Equity Action Plan (developed in the Fall of 2020) and the progress associated with each action. We have made strides and are committed to advancing this important work. In Spring 2023, the PUL Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan was updated and developed. The DEI Action Plan update was intended to provide ongoing organization for the DEI work within PUL and covers the next two-year period (through FY25). The draft plan was shared with all PUL staff for comments/suggestions prior to submission to the University. LSC reviewed all of the staff feedback submitted via the Google Form and incorporated it into the final draft plan submitted to the Provost’s Office in Spring 2023 here.

The PUL DEI Listening Sessions Tour across all PUL locations is well underway. These sessions represent a large-scale strategic effort to learn more about PUL’s people, services, and culture, which will help to intentionally inform future decisions around DEI at PUL. Ufuoma conducted in-depth visits/tours of all PUL branch locations and 2-3 hour 1:1 DEI listening sessions with PUL leadership/managers, and she has begun DEI listening group sessions with all PUL staff. Each group session is organized based on job function to encourage conversation flow (kindly note that managers/supervisors are not in the same group as their staff). Group sessions are 2.5 hours each and have been scheduled through the end of Summer 2023 to accommodate all PUL staff.

Ufuoma regularly shared information with LSC on DEI initiatives among peer institutions and with campus-wide partners, including the Provost’s Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity, Campus Life’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Campus Life, and HR.

Library website

The Library Web Team recently reported that the Library website migration project is moving from the ‘discovery’ phase to the ‘design’ phase. In this phase, OIT Web Discovery Services will take what they learned in the discovery phase and develop a migration plan to map our website’s content into a new Drupal 9 template. The migration plan will also include a schedule. The Library Web Team is building a project page on Confluence where you can view past communications, results of user studies, and general information about the project. Staff are encouraged to provide feedback through any user study posted and general feedback through this form.

Content and discovery

The emphasis in content and discovery has been driven by North Star statement #3. The following examples offer a sense of the kinds of diversity we are building in print, manuscript, and digital collections:

- A full-text database of Native American Tribal Histories (1813-1880)
- Censuses and population data from more than 20 countries focused on Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities
- Digital ephemera from Iran’s Woman Life Freedom Movement, Documentary films on gender diversity and working-class lives in Pakistan
- Books in the Amazigh language and from or about the Amazigh peoples of North Africa (to support growing University research interests)
- A small but growing print collection of works by Indigenous authors housed in a new, prominent Firestone location
- Web archiving (e.g., on MeToo and the Women’s Rights Movement in China, LGBTQ+ Communities of the Former Soviet Union & Eastern Europe, US Women’s and Girls’ Magazines, Uyghur Human Rights, and many others)
- Expanded contemporary African American Newspapers collection to 95
- Digitized 843 codices from the Library of Amin b. Hasan al-Hulwani al-Madani al-Hanafi (d. 1898), making our Islamic manuscripts more discoverable
- A digital presentation of the Miriam Y. Holden Collection on the History of Women
- In the Public Domain, created to celebrate works that have recently entered the Public Domain, with a focus on voices that have historically been excluded from the canon
- Digitizing materials related to indigenous cultures, which started last year with Print Culture in Indigenous North America, has now been extended to our extraordinary Mesoamerican manuscript collection
- Additions to the growing LGBTQIA+ Periodical and Ephemera Collection, and the Latin America Ephemera: Digitized Microfilm sets, particularly those subsets on Gender and Sexuality, and Race and Ethnicity

Coordinating data and teaching programming and services
Work on data and teaching services has focused on coordination and collaboration with campus partners and internal coordination. Related to campus-level work, our programs for data and teaching services have been enhanced by active coordination, leadership, and participation in several groups coordinated by the McGraw Center, Research Computing, Office of Undergraduate Research, and the Dean for Research Office. PUL staff have collaboratively led key parts of a project to develop new materials and curriculum for the University’s Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) program for graduate students and faculty. PUL staff have also developed open workshops for the Summer Research Village and a campus calendar through the Education, Training, and Outreach (ETO) group. PUL staff also convene regular conversations and engage with the Research Website Coordination Group, Alliance for Data and Computation Initiatives (ADCI), the TigerData initiative, and research data sourcing with ORPA and DDSS. Within the Library, relevant steering and affinity groups, including the Open Research Steering Committee, the Teaching Research Steering Group, and the Teaching Affinity Group. A design-thinking breakfast for staff engaged in teaching open workshops has generated an excellent set of ideas to create a coordinated PUL workshop calendar for the next academic year, emphasizing digital scholarship and data analysis. Staff feedback has underscored the need for technology improvement in Library classrooms, especially in Firestone and Lewis/Engineering.

Space review and planning

Ongoing priority projects include:

- Preparations for Marquand Library to move back to its own physical space in fall 2024, including reviewing spaces on A, B, and C floors of Firestone that will be vacated once the move occurs, and discussing best use of those spaces to meet future anticipated staffing and service needs.
- Preparations for the opening of the new ES+SEAS Library in the Commons Building on Ivy Lane, which is expected to be ready by summer 2025.
- Renovation of 693 Alexander, which is in early planning stages by the University, including a recently completed Request for Proposal (RFP) for a planning study to improve the current facility, to be conducted by a commissioned architect.

Library’s role in support of mental health of students

PUL staff have responded proactively to recent concerns about mental health for graduate and undergraduate students by participating in several campus-wide trainings and gatherings. Staff meetings with graduate students led recently to an earlier opening, all seven days a week, for Firestone Library. Staff meetings with undergraduate students, especially through the TigerWell initiative, led to the creation of “re-set” rooms in Firestone and Lewis libraries, emphasizing the importance of stepping back from study for physical and mental relaxation. Supplies include soft bean bags, yoga mats, aromatic dispensers, herbal teas, jigsaw puzzles, adult coloring books and yarn-based crafts. End-of-semester study breaks and writing support clinics built directly on conversations with the Peer Academic Advisers and the Peer Health Advisers, who are undergraduates with responsibility for assisting peers with mental health challenges. PUL staff deepened involvement with the Residential College Fellows program and the Scholars Institute Fellows Program (SIFP) Staff Fellows program which emphasize personal connections with undergraduate students; SIFP focuses on low-income first-gen students. Staff development for all PUL staff included a special workshop by Calvin Chin from Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) on responding to students in distress. Training from the Gender and Sexuality Research Center (GSRC) is underway to help public services staff understand how gender-related microaggressions can contribute to suicidal ideation. A sub-group of LAT began considering Library interventions for student mental health in the Fall of 2022, and a task force will be established soon to continue this work.

Data and metrics development

Two data dashboards will be available to all staff later this summer on Confluence - the first will reflect ARL historical data, and the second will summarize Firestone turnstile data compiled by the Access Office. Both were previewed at the Assessment and User Experience Department Open House in early June.

Regular reviews of staffing priorities

LSC has regularly reviewed vacancies as they have arisen, including 35 total staff who were hired in fiscal year 2023. Nearly all new hires were refills of existing roles. Two exempt HR vacancies were repurposed to respond to priority needs in Library Finance and in Special Collections. There are currently 39 vacancies across the Library that are in various stages of review and being filled.