

**University of Nebraska at Kearney
Calvin T. Ryan Library**

Academic Program Review Report Prepared by:

- Dr. Judy Henning, Assistant Professor, Chair of the Faculty Senate Library Committee, College of Education PS-12 School Library Program
- Dr. Chris Steinke, Associate Professor, History, College of Arts & Sciences
- Dr. Heather Meyer, Professor, Marketing and Agri-business, College of Business & Technology
- Kia Pflaster, UNK student
- Daniel Daily, Dean of Libraries & Assistant Professor, University of South Dakota

1. Abstract

The leadership, faculty, and staff of the Calvin T. Ryan Library are a dedicated group of information professionals who deliver student-focused programs, resources and services.

The Calvin T. Ryan Library stands at the juncture of opportunities presented by a leadership transition, upcoming renovations, a relatively new faculty, and strong campus interest in the future of the library. Campus leadership and the incoming dean of the library will need to invest substantial time and effort in ongoing engagement with stakeholders, including the library faculty and staff, to inform planning and the ongoing evolution of library services for the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

During the May 4-5, 2022 site visit, the Academic Program Review (APR) team did not identify any major deficiencies or concerns with library policies, procedures, personnel, services, and resources.

2. Evaluation of the Self-Study Document

The leadership and faculty of the Calvin T. Ryan Library (hereafter, the library) prepared a thorough and well-organized Self-Study. Along with the library data, policies and procedures that one expects, the library administration and faculty contextualized peer-comparison data, provided information that reflects the value of cooperative purchasing through the University of Nebraska Consortium of Libraries (UNCL), and presented the challenges and opportunities facing the library.

The Self-Study concisely communicated budget and finance information (51-53). Accordingly, the discussion in the Self-Study informed the APR team's inquiries into both budget processes and adequacy. In a similar fashion, the Self-Study presented

information about the upcoming renovation, which informed the APR team's questions to various stakeholders. The above examples speak to the positive value of the Self-Study as a planning document.

3. Evaluation of the Mission of the Department / Program

The vision and mission of the library are aligned with the vision and mission of the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK). Moreover, alignment of the library's mission with national trends in academic libraries is evident. The library's information literacy program, integration of technology with public-facing services and operations, elevating the role and visibility of archives and special collections, the development of the institutional repository (IR), attention to the librarians' role in scholarly communications, library support for UNK's Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative, and cooperative purchasing at the state, system and national levels demonstrate the library's alignment with trends in academic libraries, the university, and the University of Nebraska system. In summary, library leadership and the faculty demonstrate a firm understanding of their role in advancing scholarly teaching, learning, research, and service at the university, as well as in the community and state.

4. Evaluation of Department / Program Resources

The distinct programs and services of the Calvin T. Ryan Library are well-organized and aligned with the overall mission of the library. They are typical of an academic library at a regional university in the Midwest. The library policies and procedures support the programs and services.

Library leadership, faculty, and staff strive to improve programs and services and as such they receive and respond to student and faculty recommendations. During the site visit, administrators, students, faculty, and staff commended the library dean, faculty and staff for their commitment, expertise, and willingness to "go the extra mile" for UNK and the Kearney community. The APR team noted repeated praise for Archives, Special Collections, and the Digital Repository program; the Library Hour of PAWS University (located in the library and part of the PAWS summer camp); and the staff and faculty's resilience through system migrations, delivering library services during the height of the pandemic, and a recent mold outbreak within the collection due to an HVAC failure.

UNK has hard-working library faculty and staff who have the educational credentials and experience that one expects in an academic library. Each member of the library faculty holds the terminal degree (MLIS, MSI, MAS), the majority have earned an additional graduate degree, and two of the seven have earned tenure. In regards to teaching, librarianship, scholarship, and service, there are clear expectations of the faculty. The managerial, professional, and service staff

consistently articulated a clear understanding of 21st century academic library services, especially the role of technology in such services. They are very committed to UNK students. Library faculty and staff indicated they have the professional development opportunities they need to their jobs. The APR commends the dean of the library for developing, leading, and supporting the staff and faculty.

Additionally, the APR team commends the library faculty and staff for their expertise and work ethic. The APR team also notes that the faculty and staff exhibit a willingness to expand services but are unsure of how they will find the time and energy to do so. The incoming dean will need to lead the faculty and staff in setting priorities and developing practices, e.g., flexible schedules, that help faculty and staff from becoming over-extended and experiencing burnout.

The library has invested in technologies that: 1) facilitate the discovery and access of information, e.g., Ex Libris Alma/Primo and ArchivesSpace; 2) help students and faculty use library services and resources, e.g., the Springshare suite and the web presence; and 3) are essential to study and learning, e.g., PC and Mac workstations. The overall technology environment is well-managed by the Library Technologies Services Group.

The allocation of fiscal resources to the library rests upon general appropriations from the state to UNK and the University of Nebraska system as well as student fees dedicated to the library. Processes by which the dean presents a budget as well as articulates needs, opportunities, and challenges appear to be limited to the dean making requests to the Senior Vice Chancellor (SVC). Limited support and opportunities exist for the dean to seek donor support. Perhaps the dean has the greatest opportunity to influence funding for the library through University of Nebraska Consortium of Libraries. The incoming dean and SVC may want to explore opportunities for the dean to educate stakeholders about revenue, expenditures, challenges, and opportunities.

The library delivers access to a well-curated suite of information resources that support scholarly teaching, learning, and research priorities at UNK. This report discusses databases, journals, and other information resources in Section 5.

Discussion of the facility occurs in Section 6 of this report.

5. Evaluation of Department / Program Effectiveness

Dean of the Library Janet Wilke along with the library faculty and staff clearly contribute to the academic success of UNK students, including UNK online students. Dean Wilke, as a number of administrators noted during the site visit, sees the library as a partner with other academic units at UNK, and thus fosters cooperation with the Learning Commons, Undergraduate Research, and the Honors

Program. Dean Wilke clearly “walks the talk” in regards to the mission of the library. She has imparted this same spirit to the library faculty and staff.

The library’s strengths and effectiveness are demonstrated in the following areas:

Electronic Resources and Collection Services

In the Self-Study (54), the authors note that the library “provides a combination of electronic resources – including both e-books and e-journals – that is larger than several other [peer] institutions that are higher in FTE student enrollment,” and Appendix 30 provides the supporting data for the assertion.

The library ensures that the academic programs and departments have the information resources that faculty and students need. During the May 4 and 5 meetings, administrators, faculty, and students indicated they have access to the information they need for scholarly teaching, learning, and research. Moreover, the Self-Study (24) outlines UNK student and faculty access to electronic resources provided through the University of Nebraska Consortium of Libraries (UNCL). UNCL cooperatively licenses essential scholarly resources that otherwise may be too costly for the library and UNK. Administrators and faculty acknowledged the benefit of UNCL cooperative purchasing and licensing.

Furthermore, faculty recognized that UNK and UNCL cannot purchase or license every publication needed, and thus positively commented on the expertise and quality of the interlibrary loan services.

Archives, Special Collections, and Digital Repository

UNK, through the library, has developed a thriving and respected archives and special collections program. One faculty member asserted that UNK has one the best archives in the state of Nebraska. Strengths of the program include the discoverability of the collections, the librarians’ expertise and excellent service, and outreach to the campus and community. The Digital Repository is growing and providing open access to scholarly and historical resources.

Information Literacy, Library Instruction, and Reference Services

The faculty lead a sound information literacy and instruction program, especially with its focus on general education and 100/200 level courses. The outreach to area high schools is noteworthy, too. The library faculty are revamping the information literacy program and, as noted above in Section 4, the focus on improvement is indicative of the library faculty’s commitment to students.

Reference services utilize both in-person and virtual platforms. During the site visit, several faculty members noted the expertise of the librarians. The library faculty noted that they respond to questions and requests for assistance beyond their normal schedules. The service ethic is commendable, but the APR team noted that

some faculty struggled with life/work balance because students seek assistance anytime and every day of the week.

Access Services

The Access Services team ensures that students have a safe and welcoming environment, manages a building that is open nearly ninety (90) hours per week during the semester, and is home to both general and special collections. Moreover, this team manages the e-Reserves system.

Assessment

The Self-Study addresses assessment through a discussion of library-use statistics and the assessment of student learning during information literacy efforts (54-56), as well as a discussion of the Reference Effort Assessment Data (READ) scale (17). Furthermore, site visit interviews elucidated efforts of the Collection Services Librarian and his team to analyze the use of e-resources and participate in system level analyses of e-resources.

For purposes of planning, program improvement and telling the library's story, the library faculty will need to both continue current assessment efforts, as noted above, and develop more tools, including validated surveys, frameworks for gathering and analyzing qualitative feedback, and using tools such as Tableau to visualize data on library use.

6. Recommendations for the Future

The APR team recommends investment in the Calvin T. Ryan Library in the following three areas: 1) ensure that the upcoming renovations promote the library as the academic destination on campus; 2) develop and implement a plan to communicate with students, faculty, and the public about library services; and 3) support the incoming dean in initiating a strategic planning process.

One, ensure that the renovations promote the library as the academic destination on campus. As the university undertakes a \$25 million renovation to address deferred maintenance in the library – a failing HVAC system, the entrance and other deficiencies related to accessibility, and basic infrastructure needs – the campus community, including the library faculty and staff, envision the library building becoming the academic destination for faculty, students, and the Kearney community. The APR team repeatedly heard students and faculty express a desire for the library to be the “heart of campus,” “a study hub,” and a place that fosters community on campus. As noted throughout this report, the UNK community has a strong library program and team of dedicated professionals. The UNK community hopes for a great library facility, too. Hence, the APR team recommends that campus leadership and the incoming library dean dedicate wisdom, energy, time, and treasure into the opportunity presented by the renovation.

During the site visit, comments from UNK administrators, faculty, and staff took shape around two concepts that are found in the literature of academic libraries and succinctly articulated in *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* 2022 report "The Library of the Future."

Build on the strength of strategic partnerships in a common space. Faculty, staff, and students value the library as a home to the Learning Commons, Undergraduate Research, Thompson Scholars, and the Honors Program. How can building design both further foster current partnerships among library services and academic programs and yield new synergies?

The APR team offers a guiding tenet for this effort drawn from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* report: "Academic libraries want partners, not tenants (14)." The report (15) goes on to state, "The primary resource the library offers isn't actually square footage, it's librarians...[Thus,] administrators should choose departments that have a connection to library expertise to enrich students' educational experience."

Understand the library as a "third space." *The Chronicle* report rightly states that academic libraries are increasingly serving campuses as a "third space" – a space that is neither work nor home (25). Libraries, if well-designed, are places where academic work happens, academic and social interactions occur, and the community is welcomed into the intellectual life of the university. With the renovations just around the corner, UNK has a wonderful opportunity to imagine and develop a signature place for the students, faculty, and the public.

The APR team heard and documented many comments and ideals for the renovation. The comments noted below provide specificity to the concepts noted directly above. The APR team recommends that campus leadership and the incoming library dean keep the following comments in mind as planning proceeds. Stakeholders offered specific guidance on what is needed and/or desired in the renovated facility, including:

- A west entrance along with the east entrance.
- Entrances on the north, south, east and west sides.
- Welcoming entrances.
- An entrance that is elegant.
- Entrance needs *feng shui*.
- Patio space.
- Accessibility (ADA).
- Obvious way-finding throughout the building.
- More study rooms and with a range of different sizes.
- Better delineation between quiet study spaces and group teaching and learning spaces.

- Spaces that promote both quiet studying and collaboration, e.g., working on a group project.
- Open spaces.
- Highly flexible spaces.
- Flexible learning spaces.
- Ubiquitous technology including interactive screens; software programs – data visualization, SPSS, and specific lab resources; technology in the study spaces; and technology to reserve study spaces.
- A range of technology – from being a place to check out laptops to a place for Virtual Reality labs.
- A busy hub for students and faculty that is front and center in the building.
- Open space + Technology + H2O [beverages] + Power = a place for students.
- Coffee shop.
- Lots of glass.
- A place for events and lectures in the library.
- Standing desks and other types of furniture – not just more tables and chairs.
- Spaces that create and foster community.
- Whiteboards.
- More screens.
- Mothers’ room.
- Meditation room.
- Space that is both studious and supports being social.
- A center for teaching and learning.
- Warm and comforting colors.
- Book collections. (Specific comments related to book collections included: Retaining some physical collections onsite is important because they support scholarly teaching and student learning. Collections communicate to the public that the place is a library.)

Two, develop and implement a plan to communicate with students, faculty and the public about library services. Many stakeholders noted students and faculty are not aware of library services. Students, staff, and faculty who visited with the APR team joined voices in a common refrain: better communication and more outreach from the library. Moreover, stakeholders offered specific guidance, including:

- Use technology, including apps for mobile devices that push out information about the library.
- Use multiple channels to reach all campus audiences.
- Focus on intentional messaging and ensure that faculty know their liaisons.
- Gather feedback from students to strategize communication and outreach.

- Emphasize that the library is a center for undergraduate and graduate research and experiential learning.
- Work on how to deliver and/or communicate about library services to the West Campus where STEM, Business, and Health Sciences programs, as well as the Frank Museum are located.

APR team member and Professor of Marketing, Dr. Heather Meyer, offered to develop collaborations between students in her courses and the library to improve communication and create outreach plans. Likewise, the incoming dean may want to budget for hiring students who have participated in the collaborations to implement the plans.

Three, support the new dean in initiating a strategic planning process. The library faculty and staff are dedicated to serving UNK faculty and students, but some did express that they are struggling with balancing priorities, finding time and resources to develop and expand services, e.g., scholarly communication services for faculty; and maintaining work and life balance. Staff asked for more of a voice in planning and the setting of priorities. The APR team noted both the potential for burnout among some faculty and staff and faculty concerns about earning tenure, e.g., having enough time for scholarship. The campus leadership should plan for supporting the dean, faculty, and staff through the upcoming changes, especially the renovations.

The APR team recommends a strategic planning process that focuses on the mission and vision of the library and results in a flexible plan that accounts for the fact that the library serves the entire campus, and thus needs a set of objectives that leave room for unanticipated opportunities and challenges.